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HC/DEC/27/78 (NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

SPEECH BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT),
MR. HO CHENG CHOON, AT THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SINGAPORE
LIVESTOCK FARMERS' ASSOCIATION AT TOA PAYOH LUCKY RESTAURANT
ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1978, AT 7.30 P.M.

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Singapore Livestock Farmers' Association.

Over the last 15 years, livestock production in Singapore has undergone tremendous changes. Many of you will still recall the early 1950s when pig and poultry were reared in the open area without proper housing. Compounded animal feed was not available then and the nutrition of these animals were inadequate. Disease control was ineffective and often large numbers of livestock on the farm would succumb to outbreak of infectious diseases. The breeds were unproductive and it takes a long time and a good deal of feed before the livestock can be marketed.

With the establishment of the Primary Production Department in 1959, the government launched a series of programmes to accelerate livestock development in the country. Facilities were set up to carry out research into intensive forms of pig and poultry production. Veterinary extension and treatment centres were built in the major farming areas to provide a wide range of support services to the farming community. Improved breeds of pig and chicken were introduced. Farmers were taught modern methods of animal husbandry. Proper vaccination and disease-control programmes were instituted to enable expansion of production in the farms.

By 1967, Singapore had achieved self-sufficiency in pig, poultry and eggs. Self-sufficiency in these major food items was maintained since then despite a 44 per cent reduction in total land available for agriculture from 1969 to 1978 and a reduction in the number of farms from 20,357 in 1969 to 12,000 in 1978. Pig and poultry farming has now become a major rural industry. In 1977, 1.2 million pigs,

29.7 million2/-

29.7 million chicken, 4.4 million ducks, 514 million hen eggs and 48 million quail eggs were produced with a total value of \$437 million. In addition to this, \$7 million of day-old chicks were exported to neighbouring countries.

Self-sufficiency in these major food items besides providing considerable savings on foreign exchange has contributed very significantly in ensuring reasonable prices of fresh foods which has contributed towards the reduction of the consumer price index. While price indices of other consumer items continued to increase, the wholesale price indices of locally produced pigs and eggs have fallen from 126.7 and 118 in January 1974 to 90.9 and 84.8 respectively in September 1978. The index for imported fish on the other hand rose from 106.4 to 177.3 over the same period.

Pig and poultry production provides an important economic base in the rural areas. It also provides an important source of employment to that sector of the labour force which are over 40 years of age. The livestock industry also generates substantial growth to related agro-industry. The Animal Feed Milling Industry which employs a labour force of 1,000 people contributes to an entrepot trade in animal feed worth \$600 million per annum. There is also substantial trade in animal biologics and veterinary drugs which is valued at \$160 million per annum. The rapidly growing meat processing industry which is estimated to have a worth of \$30 million is also dependent on the local livestock industry.

The success of the livestock industry has largely been due to the ability of our farmers to adapt to changing circumstances rapidly. A case in point is the recent phasing out of pig farms from the Kranji catchment. The loss of 217,000 pigs from 2,926 farms in Kranji has been completely offsetted by some 300 farms in the Ponggol/Jalan Kayu area which are now keeping a total of 220,000 pigs.

There will be new problems to be encountered in pig and poultry production over the next 15 years with further intensification of the livestock within a limited area. Disease control within these farming estates will become more exacting. Direct and indirect

losses from3/-

losses from existing as well as new animal diseases will become more crucial with the establishment of larger farms. Greater production efficiency will be required through more sophisticated genetic improvement programmes and more precise feed formulation techniques. As Singapore develops into a modern metropolis the need for pollution control at the farm level will become more urgent. Farmers will have to adopt proper waste management as an integral part of the farming activities. Better house keeping will be necessary to improve general farm hygiene in view of the proximity of the farming estates to residential areas.

In order that the farming estates in Ponggol and Jalan Kayu do not become over-intensive, it is now planned to re-develop another area at the north western corner of the island in Lim Chu Kang which is outside the water catchment areas into another intensive pig farming estate. There are more than 100,000 pigs in this area. When further developed into an intensive pig farming estate this area will rear 300,000 pigs.

I note that the association has a total membership of 636. No doubt members of the association are the current leaders within the various sectors of the livestock industry. I am hopeful that you as leaders will set an example by adopting more hygienic methods of farm management so that the problems of environmental pollution from the farms are minimised to enable livestock production to continue to be an integral part of the overall Singapore economy.

DECEMBER 16, 1978
