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**SPEECH BY MR LEE YIOK SENG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT), ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF
THE AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND FISHERIES EQUIPMENT EXHIBITION '82
AT SEMBAWANG FIELD EXPERIMENTAL STATION ON 20 NOVEMBER '82 AT 10.00 AM**

I am happy to be here today to open the Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Equipment Exhibition '82 organised by the Primary Production Department in conjunction with National Productivity Month. This Exhibition is the first of its kind organised to promote productivity in the farming and fisheries sector.

As all of you are aware, modern farming activity in Singapore today is really quite different from the small scale mixed farming of the past. Due to our limited availability of land, the old practice of raising a few pigs, keeping a few hundred chickens, a few fruit trees, several beds of vegetables or a certain number of fish in a single holding is no longer an economical land use practice. The Government has therefore embarked on intensive farming schemes. Farming activities have been gradually restructured to become specialised, competitive and viable commercial units. This is expected to lead to efficient utilisation of land, modern management methods, reduction in labour and production costs, competitive pricing of farm produce and higher productivity.

The Primary Production Department has undertaken various commercial schemes under the re-structuring programme and these include the establishment of pig farming estates in Ponggol, the orchid and ornamental plant production scheme in Jalan Kayu, the mushroom production scheme in Jalan Kayu, the tropical fish export centre in Jalan Kayu, the tropical fish farming estate in Tampines, the hydroponic vegetable farming scheme in Sembawang and the cage net fish farming scheme along the northern coastal waters. These schemes are currently being implemented.

As a result of the re-structuring of the farming sector, the number of licensed farms have declined by 39.5 per cent from 17,663 to 10,689 during the ten-year period from 1972 to 1981. The total farm area has declined by 42.4 per cent from 13,009 ha to 7,487 ha. Among livestock enterprises, the number of farms rearing chicken has declined by 31.2 per cent from 11,561 to 7,956 and that of farms rearing pigs by 79.1 per cent from 12,935 to 2,707 during the same period. The number of pig farms has further declined to only 1,420 farms as at August '82. In spite of the decline in the number of farm holdings and the total farm area, annual pig production has been maintained at the one million level while annual chicken and hen egg productions have increased from 25 million to 32 million birds and from 378 million to 538 million eggs respectively. During the same period, the average number of pigs produced per farm has risen from 98 to 401 while that for chicken and hen egg have risen from 2,212 to 4,115 chickens and 94,359 to 179,063 hen eggs respectively. A few indicators of the annual average output per farm would speak well for the increase in productivity. This clearly demonstrates the fact that there has been a substantial increase in the productivity of the farming sector over the past 10 years.

The production of farm produce with the use of efficient techniques is essential to maintain steady supply and stable prices. These will benefit consumers directly. An over-supply can lead to drastic drops in prices for farmers who will suffer heavy losses. Extreme fluctuating prices may cause consumers to change their eating habits.

In order to make farming more viable and competitive, it is necessary to further increase productivity. At present, a feasible means of increasing productivity is through automation and mechanisation in the face of today's labour shortage. The use of automatic feeding system in pig and poultry husbandry, automatic sprinkling system in nurseries and vegetable farms, the use of mini loader tractor in feed and fertiliser handling will help to reduce manpower requirement, put to better use the extra labour saved and reduce wastage to the minimum. The operators will have a lighter workload, more time to do their management job efficiently with a corresponding reduction in the cost of production. All these benefits can be achieved through

automation and mechanisation of major farming activities.

In today's Exhibition, 24 exhibitors are displaying equipment on agriculture, animal husbandry and fisheries. The Primary Production Department is also participating by displaying the achievements of automation and mechanisation in production techniques. By viewing these displays, we hope your knowledge will be broadened. The application of this knowledge should contribute to an improvement in farm productivity. This is the main aim of the Exhibition. I hope that all of you, especially those in the farming community, will make full use of your newly acquired knowledge to play an important role in increasing productivity through automation and mechanisation.

It gives me great pleasure to declare the Exhibition open.

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