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**MADAM SPEAKER TOOK THE CHAIR AT 1.00 p.m.**

### **OPENING PRAYER**

**MADAM SPEAKER (N. RATTLE):** Honourable Members please be seated. I would like to give special acknowledgement and appreciation to our Pastor for his special message to guide us in our deliberation this afternoon.

Greetings to all Honourable Members of Parliament who have entered this Honourable House this afternoon. It is a beautiful day for all of us this afternoon as we are blessed with the presence of the Prime Minister's wife, Mrs Akaiti Puna in this Honourable House. We are very happy to welcome you into Parliament today. I also welcome our media today and our officials who are with us today and also encompassing all the Northern Group, the Southern Group and Tumutevarovaro into our greetings from Parliament today.

I don't have a lot of announcements to make today. However, there is one that I am very, very pleased to share with you as I am told that the observations of the protective measurements for Covid-19 that we have been observing, I believe have been revoked at our Cabinet this morning. It was only last night I received an email from the Secretary of the Ministry of Health to confirm with me that everything will continue until later.

So, today we are very pleased that we are able to go back to normal tomorrow. Where we will not have the screen in front of the Honourable Members. So, today if you would like to stand to debate and make any comment you want to make. You may do that and we will not suspend the Standing Orders 224 for us to be able to practice what we have been doing.

So, we will move on, and I believe there is a Ministerial Statement that the Prime Minister would like to take the Floor. I give the Floor to the Honourable Prime Minister.

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**HON. H. PUNA:** Kia Orana Madam Speaker and all Honourable Members of this House. I rise today to announce my decision of intent to commence a process of succession to new leadership for our country.

This is not a farewell speech. But I want to acknowledge my wife. Madam Speaker this was a very important decision to make and whilst the steps involved have taken many months to put in place. Every consideration has been made to uphold the integrity of my administration and to sustain the sound performance of record of its governance over the past almost 10 years.

Timely, succession and a smooth transition to fresh and vibrant leadership has been the hallmark of quality in leadership that has already been laid for us today. It has been part of my political outlook since I have gained the leadership of the Cook Islands Party in 2006. I therefore pay tribute here to the lady Sir Geoffrey Henry in whom I had been shown the respect to allow a tradition for those younger, motivated and insightful to step forward and serve at the highest level.

I am encouraged that as I allow this challenge to be assumed by my successor in the months ahead our part forward as a nation is assured and steady. Therefore, this opportunity I take today in announcing my intention is one in which there are many to thank and acknowledge when the time allows.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, I am not yet resigned or retired but I do want to extend my heartfelt appreciation firstly to the people of Manihiki, the home of my heart and the source of propound support over many years since I first entered this Honourable House in 2004. Pearl farming, fishing, the lagoon and its riches are a part of me as are all of Manihiki. The achievements of our Government would have not been possible without us working together and supporting our future together.

Nearly 10 years of administration and this third term of Government have provided us the stability of a firm foundation of principles, not just to lead the country but to drive the teamwork to create wealth, opportunity, benefits and the promise of something greater and better. Sadly, the global pandemic presented by the Coronavirus has set us back there is no escaping from that reality. We have our challenges there is no denying of that reality.

But all of us, the Cook Islands can be proud of where we are today. We are locked into a predicament but we are bound together to get free of it. Many have contributed to alleviating the pressures of the Covid-19 threat and continue to work tirelessly to keep us safe. As recent events have shown us the risk of dropping our guard on protective measures is too high a price for us to pay. We need to stay vigilant and preserve our health and our safety.

The opportunities will come but we will need to work together to ensure those avenues are ready and available. Madam Speaker in the months ahead the succession process I have now initiated has coincided with an opportunity to serve to serve beyond the Cook Islands. As of yesterday my candidacy to serve the pacific region has also been lodged and my official nomination to head the pacific islands forum secretariat in Suva, Fiji will be on the agenda for the consideration of all the leaders of the pacific islands forum.

This process is presently on the way although the date of the next forum leaders meeting has not yet been finalised in order to determine that appointment. In the event that the appointment to the post of Secretary General of the Forum Secretariat will proceed before the end of the year. I have confirmed my availability to add value to the

organization and its mandate to serve the interest of the Pacific region, as a whole, should my nomination should be considered favourably.

Our present efforts in the meantime, Madam Speaker are directed to the governance of the responsibilities before this House and as Prime Minister I can affirm our commitment to the continued stability of our administration going forward.

In closing my colleagues and I as the stewards of our way forward through these challenging times shall uphold the integrity of our Constitutional role and preserve the interest and wellbeing of all our people.

Thank you and Kia Manuia. I now lay this on the Table.

*(Applause)*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Prime Minister. I can only say that we hope for a very favourable outcome of the decisions of the Leaders of the Pacific where you can bring your wisdom, your strong leadership beyond our country as you have done, and from everybody, I wish you all the very, very, best.

Thank you very much.

We will now go to Question Time. You are first up for Question Time, Question Time will be for half an hour so we begin with the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

### QUESTION TIME

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Internal Affairs. Before I ask the question, I want to give a little explanation. Last year, we discussed the topic on benefits for the old age pensioners and the child benefit. We were told that these benefits are being looked at and my question is, whether the Ministry of Internal Affairs are still looking into the old age benefit and the child benefit.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, and I see the Minister Vaine Mokoroa.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to all of us and thank you to the question raised by the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

I do recall that this has been an ongoing prompting from yourself and your colleagues in terms of the reviewing of the current pension especially for those at the age of 60.

As the House can recall, the Government of the day has amended the Legislation especially in terms of the benefit to increase the age of collecting the child benefit from 14 years to 16. In terms of those in the age category of 60, the Government have not taken that step, however, the Government is currently looking at reviewing those who are collecting the Disability Pension. The main reason behind that is the Government feels that these are the group that is most vulnerable.

Honourable Speaker, I will be talking more on this next week when the Budget is discussed. Thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Minister. I see the Honourable William Heather you have the Floor.

**MR W. HEATHER:** Thank you Madam Speaker. My question is to the Prime Minister who will be retiring, and congratulations Prime Minister, hopefully you will get that position.

Madam Speaker, it took a long time for a letter to reach me to tell me that I have been fortunate to get this position in my constituency, then I asked my Leader if I could take my time to speak.

Madam Speaker, in 2018, I sent a request to the Office of the Prime Minister for street lights for my constituency but the reply to my request was not sent to me but was given to my wife. It was only after the COVID period that the letter got to me.

Therefore, the question to our Prime Minister is, who will be retiring, the envelope is addressed to Honourable William Heather but the letter inside is addressed to the Ruaau Constituency and at the bottom of the letter is the name, Nooroa Baker.

Madam Speaker, I have been waiting to receive this letter for the request for my constituency because this is where we are reaping the benefit in my constituency. Therefore, Mr Prime Minister, can you please clarify who have you approved this street lights for, for my constituency or for the Honourable Nooroa Baker's constituency. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, and I give the Floor to the Honourable Prime Minister.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you Madam Speaker, and thank you Honourable Member and welcome back. You have been absent from this House for a long time and maybe that is why the letter was lost. Thank you for the question.

By way of explanation, I am not sure how this mishap happened but just to assure you that I do not handle the details of these applications. All I do is, when I receive the application form, I sign it and it is then passed on to Te Aponga Uira. It is their duty to process all of these, and when you look at the assistance, you are the same family so there is no loss from your family, you will still benefit from the application. Give me time to seek clarification from Ben Ponia who is in charge of this area.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Member, Agnes Armstrong you have the Floor.

**MRS A. ARMSTRONG:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to everyone in the House this afternoon, those listening on the radio and livestream, Kia Orana and if anyone from Ivirua or Mangaia is listening in, Kia Orana.

I understand that there are some Government Agencies or Ministries, which are under investigation by PERCA. So as PERCA comes under the Minister of Finance, my question is to the Minister of Finance, can you confirm which Government Agencies or Ministries are being investigated?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, and I see the Honourable Minister Mark Brown.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Firstly, let me make it clear to everybody that the PERCA Committee reports to Parliament. I myself is not aware of what the current PERCA investigations are and nor should I be aware of what the PERCA investigations are. Complaints that are received by the Public Expenditure Review Committee, are dealt with by that Committee. It is dealt with independently of the Minister. This is to ensure the integrity of the PERCA Committee and to ensure that there is no interference in the work that they do.

In due course, I am sure their report will be Tabled before Parliament on whichever Government Agency is under current investigation. But I will be quite happy to communicate with the Chairman of this Committee and pass on this request from the Member of the Opposition. Perhaps, he will be in a position to be able to advice this House without comprising their investigations as to their current work load.

Thank you Madam Chair.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. I see the Honourable Wesley Kareroa, you have the Floor.

**MR W. KAREROA:** Kia Orana Madam Speaker and all of us in the House. Greetings to us all.

My Question is to the Minister of Health. Last month, there was an emergency Parliament Sitting and I, along with the Member of Parliament for Tamarua were on the plane to come here. The Member of Parliament for Mitiaro was also on the same flight. On that particular day, there was an article written in the newspaper, that Atiu and Mangaia have received their ambulance.

When we arrived for this Parliament today, there has been a change. One of the ambulance have been directed to Mauke, that arrangement is good as we have two ambulances from last year which is a new one, and the other one is and older one which is not working anymore.

I was part of a team that requested for some funding through the Japanese assistance before I became a Member of Parliament. One thing that I noticed at that time was that it is difficult to make changes when there is an agreement settled with the Japanese Government. So, here is my question. Has the Japanese Government been made aware of the changes, as in the future, people from that organisation will travel over to check or look over their donated things?

That is what I am wanting to know, if the Japanese have been made aware of these changes.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, I give the Floor to the Honourable Rose Brown.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to all of us in the Honourable House and to all of our people listening in to our Parliament.

If you may allow Honourable Member, I will hand over your question to our Leader to answer because all the funding requests to Japan, is under his Portfolio.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you Madam Speaker.

I am quite happy to answer the question with some clarification. When the request was submitted to the Japanese Government for aid in terms of providing ambulances for the Outer Islands, a list of countries was given. Sorry, a list of islands that needed the ambulances and it was provided. There were five islands of that list which were Atiu, Mangaia, Mauke, Mitiaro and Aitutaki. When the response came back from Japan they agreed to send two ambulances in the first instance. But it just so happens that the list of the islands that were given, was listed Atiu, Mangaia, Mauke, Mitiaro and Aitutaki, in that order.

So, it was assumed that the two ambulances that arrived first, would go to those two islands first. When they arrived in fact it was found that, Mangaia already had an ambulance that is operating whereas Mauke did not have any. So, it was decided that it is better to give the ambulances to Atiu and Mauke. But when the next two arrives, hopefully it will come in twos, then it will go to Mangaia and to Mitiaro. So, the news report was not correct, that the two ambulances were destined for Atiu and Mangaia. I have to admit that I was concerned, if there was a changed in the allocation because it would not be a good look if Japan was to find out that one of the ambulances were diverted somewhere else.

I did some enquiries with the officials and they assured me that no, the ambulance could be taken to Mauke and was not specifically destined for Mangaia. It makes sense given the fact that Mangaia already has an ambulance that is running and Mauke do not. But the next two ambulances will be coming soon and they can have their new one.

Mangaia is very fortunate and I am waiting for the Honourable Member of Tamarua, to say thank you for the bus, the school bus that arrived in Mangaia, as was promised to her and the people of Mangaia when she raised the matter in the previous Parliament. I am so happy that the second bus is operating now, for the benefit of the school children in Mangaia. So, the request here to the Member of Oneroa, please be patient. It is right the ambulance have been diverted to Mauke and you will get your new one for Mangaia. Thank you Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Prime Minister and I give the Floor to the Honourable Member Tamaiva Tuavera.

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. On my way home from the gym this morning, I turned into our Puna in Muri. This is the question asked by the Chairman of our Puna. He heard that all the Puna on Rarotonga will be shut down. I heard you mention Madam Speaker, that the measures and restrictions of COVID-19 will be lifted, in our Parliament.

My question to the Minister of Health is, when is the closure of the Puna in our villages? I am sure that you are aware as well, that there are two new cases in New Zealand. There are 200 people returning to the Cook Islands, on June 19<sup>th</sup>. I am concerned for our vulnerable in all our villages. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and I see the Honourable Minister Rose Brown.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Madam Speaker and to the Honourable Member, thank you for the question. I seek to hand over the question to the Prime Minister, as he is the Chairman of the National Health Emergency Task Force.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you Minister and thank you Honourable Member for the good question. Madam Speaker, it is a concern that there are two new cases in New Zealand, with the virus infection. However, I think it is important to be aware of the circumstances, giving rise with those two cases.

There is no question that there is no evidence of community transmission of the virus in New Zealand. In fact, for nearly three weeks, in fact for over 3 weeks, there has been no report case of community transmission.

These two cases were recent arrivals from England and these were cases that fell under their exemption provisions, but as Prime Minister Arden acknowledged that somewhere along the line, somebody stuffed up. But I think the fact that they got on to it immediately Madam Speaker, speaks volumes to the control and the management capability that they have in New Zealand. So, they have isolated these two cases and I am sure that contact tracing is already on the way.

But the point is and I agree with the Honourable Member, we must continue to be vigilant in our control of our borders. We cannot afford to relax but we have every confidence in the abilities of our medical professionals to give us the best advice that has so far seen us through this covid-19 challenge. And so far we have not received any new advice or any changes in our protocols in terms of opening our borders on the 19<sup>th</sup> of this month.

Madam Speaker, if we receive anything different or new we will definitely advise this Honourable House. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. Our Question Time is up. Did you have a supplementary question?

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Yes, I just wanted the answer, is the Puna going to be opened or closed?

**HON. H. PUNA:** On that question, Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Health is quite keen for our Puna's to continue. And we agreed with them and the reason is for the first time our medical services are now able to reach out into our communities at the grassroots level. And on top of that if and when our borders are open to everybody we may need the Puna's to carry out tracing that for us. But primarily for the reach of medical services into our communities that is the reason for wanting to keep the Puna's open. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much that completes our Question Time, Honourable Members. We will now go back to orders of the day.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

Is the Agriculture Bill 2020 on the interrupted debate on the Second Reading and when we adjourned yesterday; the Honourable Manuela Kitai requested for the Floor. And you may continue.

**MR M. KITAI:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to all Honourable Members of this Honourable House. Kia Orana also to you Madam Speaker and all the staff of the Parliamentary Services. If I may, Madam Speaker I would like to acknowledge the people of my constituency.

Greetings to you my constituency Ngavaitau this afternoon. To all the different churches and your leaders – greetings. To all the Island Councillors and you families, greetings. To all the elders, adults, the young people and our children – greetings to you all this afternoon. Special acknowledgement to my paramount chief Manarangi Ariki and all your Mataiapo and Rangatira – greetings to you all.

Madam Speaker, I speak on the Bill before the House on Agriculture. First of all, congratulations and thank you to the Minister of Agriculture, your Head of Ministry, Ms Marama Anguna for the assistance provided to my constituency through machineries and tractors for the agriculture work in Aitutaki. Madam Speaker in my constituency there is no tractor. Hence, my request to the Head of Agriculture to provide funding to buy us a tractor for our agricultural planting.

Madam Speaker, this machinery was provided and I want to assure the House, today in Aitutaki the people are planting everywhere. When we go into the planting areas inland, parents and their children are in the plantation working on their crops. In a way I must say that this Covid-19 has somehow prompted our people to go back to planting the land. Before this virus scare there were only a few people planting and for most people they are buying off the planters. But today our Aitutaki people are planting and growing their crops.

My only concern is when we come to harvesting all these crops there is no market. So, you exchange your crop to another planter for what he has grown, that is the situation on our island, using the bartering system. So, my request to the Minister is to please search for a market for our produce, maybe Rarotonga or the Northern Group. That is my request maybe in the near future the agricultural produce from Aitutaki can be imported to Rarotonga or New Zealand.

My request for now Madam Speaker to the Minister of Agriculture is a tractor for Ngavaitau. And this is to assist the growers with their plantation. To the Associate Minister Patrick Arioka please hear our plea and maybe a second hand tractor will do us. So, I give my full support on this Agriculture Bill.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Member and I see the Honourable Wesley Kareroa and you have the Floor.



**MR W. KAREROA:** Kia Orana, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask Madam Speaker for a time for me to greet my island. Even though there is no radio broadcast over there but through the Facebook they will be able to hear us.

I greet all our people on Mangaia. The Religious Sector on Mangaia and all the Traditional Leaders of each Puna, greetings to all of you working hard on our island.

I will now return to the Bill before us. I would like to thank the Minister of Agriculture and the Associate Minister for the hard work resulting in this Bill. In the past years I have always supported this area of agriculture. I have requested Government to please consider this sector and not just to focus on tourism. Therefore, we will have two economic sectors, tourism and agriculture.

We see today that the economic machinery of tourism has been shut down and now there is growth on agriculture and animal husbandry. To me this COVID-19 has prompted and pushed us to work hard in both agriculture and our marine because these two sectors go together agriculture and fisheries.

When we look through the Bill under Article 3 right at the beginning it says, provide for the development of sustainable agriculture practice. A couple of years ago we had a pilot project which was assisted by Government but not enough funds. The young people joined agriculture and now it has disappeared and this phrase in the Bill is appropriate for what has happened over this time.

The programme has not just stopped but there were things that we did not have during that time. We could not get any seedlings because they ran out in those days, but today these have been revived again in agriculture.

When we look at the issue about fertilizer, it is difficult for growers to access chemicals because we are not being supplied with fertilizers as well as manure. Today, I have tried to assist our agriculture sector. I place orders for fertilizers that our growers need from the Ministry of Agriculture here on Rarotonga. Fertilizers, growing soil and other items for agricultural purposes, I order from Agriculture. It is not a business for me and my concern is that I had to pay for these chemicals before I sell them to our growers. I cannot give it free as this is the only way that I can continue to assist them.

Fortunately, during COVID-19 I was able to acquire some seeds and when I return to Mangaia these will be grown into seedlings to replace and continue what the Ministry of Agriculture sent to Mangaia.

Therefore, I fully support this Bill. There are other aspects of this Bill that I wish to talk about but maybe we will wait until it goes into Committee. Thank you, Madam Speaker I will end here.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Kareroa and I give the Floor to the Honourable Tereapii Maki Kavana.

**MR T. MAKI KAVANA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker for giving me the opportunity to speak in this House. Greetings to all Honourable Members in the House and may the Good Lord be with us in our Parliament debate this afternoon.

Madam Speaker, can you allow me to give greetings to my constituency. Greetings to the people of Arutanga, Reureu and Nikaupara and greetings to all those who have titles and all the Religious sectors, thank you for your Prayers at this time of the COVID-19. To all the different organisations on the island, to the youth and the children, greetings to you all. I give special mention to the hard working people in my constituency and I see that you are all still working hard and my special greetings to you all.

Madam Speaker, I stand to give my full support to this Bill before this House. I extend a big thank you to the Government of the day because I see the benefits that my people of Aitutaki are enjoying now. There are seedlings for the growers and they are now benefiting from it.

Since 2010, this Government have put aside a sum of money to look after us during times of need and now is the time that we are making use of those funds. The word of God says we should not just accept what is good but also the bad and now we can see that we are reaping what is good and we say thank you Lord. That is why I support this Bill two hundred percent.

I see the main spirit in this Bill is to help the growers and also in the Bill it shows support where it is needed and help the development of agriculture in the Outer Islands.

I note the importance of this chemical paraquat – this is my helper to clean my planting areas. So we should look at this chemical properly and I know that there are other chemicals that we are using. We have to help our people understand the use of these chemicals and I know that there are people in the Ministry of Agriculture who can help the growers make good use of these chemicals. So, it does not become harmful to our people. There is a bad side to every chemical but it is up to the growers to protect themselves so they will not be harmed.

These imported goods and food into our country, I believe, all the pesticides are bad for our health and our environment. This bottle that I am drinking from, will be washed away by waves and will become a problem for us in the days ahead.

I now would like to speak on the relationship between the Government and the Island Government and looking through this Bill, I can see that there is a good relationship between the two Governments. I hope the relationship remains a strong one and not to be one-sided where the Island Government is not in harmony with the Government.

The point I would like to make here is, the young people that have been introduced into the agriculture field. I would like to know whether these young people are capable of managing our agriculture.

So, looking at the relationship between the Government and the Island Government. I trust that the Government will support the employment and appointments of these youths who will be employed by Agriculture in the Outer Islands. I trust that the

selections to manage this area, should be given to these young people and not just the Island Governments.

The other issue on our island that we are facing is, the youth that are working in this area are facing problems themselves. For many years, on the island of Aitutaki, I see the staff members of the Ministry of Agriculture working hard to find ways to support our growers. It is then quite obvious that the local Government is thriving.

Another issue that I can see is, the lack of agriculture training offered on our islands. That is the reason that the Ministry of Agriculture is coming to Aitutaki to offer support to our youth on our island. I now request to the Ministry of Agriculture, not to forget us in the Outer Islands. We need support in the Outer Islands or bring our youth here to be trained in Rarotonga or better still to Fiji or Australia, so they can be highly educated in the field of agriculture.

The Member from Vaiepeka-Vaipae-Tautu earlier mentioned the lack of market and for Government to provide a market for our crops. I would like to inform the House that yesterday, I met a young man from the Ministry of Agriculture and he is on the way to Aitutaki to identify growers that can permanently supply produce to Prime Food. I can see that the Government is doing their bit and we growers should be doing our bit to grow produce.

At this time, I would like to convey my appreciation to the Ministry of Agriculture, and support the words of appreciation conveyed by the Minister of Agriculture yesterday. I also want to thank all those involved in putting this Bill together that is before us. We are now bringing their dreams to reality.

To Minister Rose Brown, your Associate Minister Patrick Arioka, the Secretary of the Minister of Agriculture, Marama Anguna, I believe these individuals have not slept well since 2018 when I came to this House, spending many hours and working hard to put this Bill together and have it ready for Parliament.

May God continue to bless you in your good work. I know many of us are requesting for assistance. Maybe in the coming years, we will receive some assistance from our Government.

I will conclude here Madam Speaker, and I thank you again for this opportunity to speak.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Member.

As we are nearing to suspension time, I can see two speakers, the Honourable Selina Napa and the Honourable Tingika Elikana. It is probably tidier if we take a suspension now and come back, and go straight into the Bill.

So, Parliament will suspend and will resume at 3.00 p.m.

**Sitting suspended at 2.22 p.m.**

**Sitting resumed at 3.00 p.m.**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Members please be seated. Parliament is resumed. And we are on the interrupted debate on the Agriculture Bill on the Second Reading.

Before we suspended, the Honourable Selina Napa asked for the Floor and you may continue.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. And I see that Agriculture is always a favourite topic for all to talk about as it concerns their livelihood. But firstly I just want to say – Kia Orana to all Honourable Members in this Honourable House. To you Madam Speaker and your hardworking staff, to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and your Cabinet Ministers and Government Members of Parliament and to our leader, Honourable Tina Browne and Members of Parliament in the Opposition.

I would like to take this time to go straight into the Bill because I think I will run out of time by the time I finished dissecting the Bill and leave the opportunity to greet my village at another time. This Bill I am not sure whether this Bill was derived from an agriculture policy and then drafted. There are a few concerns that I have with the Bill and hence the more reason for me for this Bill to be sent through the Select Committee.

For example, in Part 2, section 8 of the Bill in brackets (a).1 functions of the Bill is to encourage sustainable agricultural production including the production of crops, livestock and pollinators. And managing crop and livestock genetic resources. My bit of concern with this particular clause is that it is encouraging the growth of marijuana as a crop.

I do not know how everyone sees it but I see marijuana can be considered as a crop. I think in this particular section the Ministry of Agriculture should list the kinds of crop they are encouraging to plant so that there is no loop hole in the Bill at all. And also in section 8, (n) facilitating access to domestic and overseas markets for agriculture products. Because I have not seen an agriculture policy and I am just wondering whether domestic market should also be extended to the Northern Group.

The only problem I see with the sending of vegetable to the Northern Group is that by time the products gets up there the price of the product would be tripled. And we also have been trying to get our products on to the overseas, New Zealand market and other areas. I think from what I have seen in this Bill and I am not sure what the plans for agriculture but we should be action what we say.

Coming back to section 8, (h).1 supporting the marketing and use of agricultural inputs including pesticides. Does this particular section include banned products or substances in other countries? For example, in New Zealand they have banned the use of parquat in agriculture products but it is still used in commercial areas. And maybe when it goes through to the Select Committee for the consultation stage this can be put out to the public as a question. And also in section 8.1, developing quality certification schemes and value chains for agriculture sector.

Just wanted to ask as to what kind of certification schemes as there is no clear cut in here as what this scheme is. And I am still in section 8 (j) supporting stakeholder's participation in agriculture. We should be encouraging our own local people to actually

participate in the agriculture farming or are we opening this area up to foreign owned businesses.

For example, we already have a foreign owned business here in the Cook Islands and wanting to sell their farm for over a million dollars. Who to, not the locals because the locals cannot afford this price. And the question asked here is, are they helping out with the locals to share their knowledge. Under the business trade and investment code, agriculture should be classed as a local sector. And the Ministry of Agriculture role is to facilitate access to finance, investment and partnerships. Or the work closely with BTIB to source funding.

Under section 12, establishment of committees. It says here that the head of the Ministry establishes the committee. Although it says that the head of the Ministry establishes the committee I see this as a political establishment. Because whoever the Minister of Agriculture is of course you will want to reward your supporters by ordering your HOM to put them on the Committee regardless the level of technical subject. At the end of the day I guess there are at the mercy of the Minister.

This is the perfect opportunity for us to diversify from Tourism who we have just witnessed have collapsed to Covid-19. Until such time that our country recovers again. So, this committee should not be a political appointment. We must have the best people with a wealth of knowledge to be on this committee and take agriculture to the next level.

In section 22, offence and penalties, it says here that a person or entity that fails to comply with notice issued under section 21, commits an offence and is liable on conviction. And also it says here in the case of an individual a fine not exceeding \$10K or not exceeding \$50K in any other case. Whether the implementation of the fines is exercise. I am not sure whether implementation will work or have known it to work. Why I say this, what happens if someone cannot pay their fine. And I see in here you are given 7 days to pay it. And if the offence is continuing you are charged either an additional \$100 or \$500 pending on the amount you are fined. What will be the ultimate penalty for a farmer, will he be stopped from planting or.

Come to part 4, inspectors can enter with or without the consent of the owner or occupier either than a dwelling house. My only concern with this area is whether the rush of powers to the inspector will get to him with the position that comes with it. And also would you want somebody to enter your farming area without your consent and how is he going to implement remediation in Section 25, Part 3 because the extension I would say the damage is not just what you can see but what's gone into the soil.

I understand the Ministry of Agriculture also encourages organic farming and green farming and I also see that there is a couple of paragraphs mentioned the use of paraquat as stated in the example and it actually contradicts the promotion of certified organic farming.

At the home level the majority of vulnerable women are into home gardening and ornamental planting. This is what keeps them ticking at their age, it keeps them moving and as a de-stressing factor for them also and it will be great if the Ministry of

Agriculture can encourage them to grow chemical free plants only because of their health and at the age they are in.

I support this Bill to actually go into a Select Committee to take it out to the Community and to actually give the farmers an opportunity to look at it. Although some of the farmers and some of our MP farmers have indicated paraquat is their best friend, my plea to the Ministry of Agriculture is to look for another kind of chemical to replace paraquat to ease the work of the farmers.

I know also one of the biggest concern of the farmers today, they wish they had ten hands and ten of them doing the work and that labour force is a real issue for the big farmers and whether there is help in this area from the Ministry of Agriculture from out of this Bill.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I will interrupt you please because your time has expired.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Madam Speaker, I have actually reached the end of my debate and Kia Orana e Kia Manuia to all of us listening to the debate on this Bill.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes, remember if you require extra time one of the Members can put a Motion for extension and you can continue another ten minutes. Now I give the Floor to the Leader of the House, Tingika Elikana.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker for the opportunity to speak on this Bill before the House. Madam Speaker, may I be allowed some time to speak to my people on the island of Pukapuka. To all our people listening in to our Parliament this afternoon, greetings in the Name of our Lord and Saviour.

To you the King of Pukapuka and all the traditional leaders on the island of Pukapuka, greetings to you all. To the Mayor and all the Government workers on the island of Pukapuka, greetings to you all.

To the Religious sectors and the Churches and Leaders on the island of Pukapuka, greetings to you all and for what you do for our people of Pukapuka. To our people who will be helping on the work for our hospital on the island of Pukapuka I give you my best wishes and encouragement.

Thank you, Madam Speaker I will now resort to the business before the House in terms of the Agriculture Bill. I will be limiting my speech in regards to three areas on this Bill and at the outset I would like to give my support to the Bill before the House.

Madam Speaker, this Bill pave a new way of governance in the agricultural sector and this is clearly shown with the appointment of Committees to assist the Ministry in delivering the agriculture sector and also addressing the issues of food security in our Nation. For the first time, Madam Speaker we are including those who really participate in the industry to sit at the table of making decisions regarding the agricultural sector.

While my friend the Member for Titikaveka has reservations about the appointment processes and the selection of these Committee Members, I think we all grown up over the years to realise that we need to select the best people who will have to contribute to this sector. I think there is always the avenue of Regulations to govern the processes in regarding the selection and the criteria to be met by Members of this Committee.

My only disappointment, Madam Speaker is in Clause 13 (3) and that is the exclusion of Members of Parliament for appointment on this Committee. I think we have to be realistic with our Members of Parliament on these Committees or anybody relating the development of our country sometimes the officials depart from what is required to be done. So, my plea to the Minister of Agriculture and the officials of the Agriculture Ministry is to reconsider that decision.

Madam Speaker, the second matter that I would like to speak on this Bill is, with regards to Part 6 and that Madam Speaker, is Clause 31 of the Bill. In particular paragraph 1 and the wording of that paragraph, it currently reads – “in accordance with its functions and subject to the Island Government Act 2012/13 the Ministry may work collaboratively or in partnership with Island Governments”.

Madam Speaker, my view is that the word “may” should be removed and replaced with “shall”. History has shown that where it is optional, we in the Outer Islands have suffered the most. We have been ignored because it is optional and the Officials from the main island of Rarotonga say it is not worth their time to provide the necessary support to the Outer Islands.

So my view, Madam Speaker is that the word “may” should be replaced with the word “shall” which make it mandatory for the Ministry to work collaboratively and cooperatively and in partnership with the Island Governments that will ensure that the agriculture sector in the Outer Islands is taken care of and with the kind of Government that we have in at the moment I know it will be.

The third point, Madam Speaker that I would like to raise is in regards to Clause 32 and that is in regards to notices given by the Ministry and its Officials. My concern here, Madam Speaker is that where there is a conflict between the English and Maori version of notices, it clearly says that the notice in English prevails. In terms of our efforts to revive the Cook Islands Maori language in this country I think those wording runs contrary to those efforts.

I understand this is the hang-ups from our Constitution where it clearly states where there is conflict between English and Maori that the English version prevails. In respect of that I accept that because some of the Statute that we try to interpret that is written in our laws had some phrases that we haven’t in Maori equivalent has developed to translate.

I understand, Madam Speaker that this Bill will be put to the Select Committee and I hope that the Select Committee will look at this provision to ensure that we promote our language and strengthen the work of the Ministry of Agriculture and also the Maori Language Commission. Just because I am speaking in English does not mean that I am all for the English language to prevail in the Cook Islands because my preference would

be to speak in the Pukapuka language but then it will provide headaches for our translators.

So, if I cannot speak in the Pukapuka Reo I rather speak in English and let the Rarotonga people and other islands promote their own language. Madam Speaker, that is the end of my views in regards to this Bill and again I reiterate my full support for the Bill.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much and I give the Floor to the Honourable Terepai Maoate.

**MR T. MAOATE:** Thank you Madam Speaker, and Kia Orana to all of us this afternoon.

To the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and your Members in Government, Kia Orana. To our Leader in the Opposition, and to all the Members in the Opposition.

Madam Speaker, staff of Parliament and all our listeners Kia Orana.

Seeing that this Bill is going through a Select Committee for public consultation I give my full support to it. I expect when the Bill comes back to the House issues has been remedied. I acknowledge the hard work done by Government and the Ministry of Agriculture officials who have given assistance to us Members of Parliament to assist our people.

Due to the COVID-19 we in Aitutaki started to plant vegetables and other crops. Through the assistance provided by the Ministry of Agriculture some households are able to do this. For this I would to thank the Minister and your officials.

To date, we are harvesting the crops and vegetables. We are also replanting and looking forward for this program to continue as the tourism industry on Aitutaki is down. Therefore, this is a sustainable support for the households. Hopefully, in the future and through this programme, we may find some planters who can fill in the gaps in supplying crops and vegetables to the hotels and stores. We have planned in advance just in case tourist will start coming back, but seeing the new COVID-19 case in New Zealand recently, it looks like we have to keep our vegetables in Aitutaki.

The main objective of planting, is to enable our planters on the islands to provide the markets in Rarotonga instead of importing produce from overseas because we are taking money out of our country. However, we are also looking at ways to bring revenue for our planters by planting maniota, kumara, tarotarua and taro and exporting them on ships that comes directly to our island in the future.

During the last couple of weeks, I discussed with the Ministry of Agriculture how we can export our produce to New Zealand within six to eight months. Besides the shipping schedule, we also need to look at some sort of storage facilities such as freezers, because in New Zealand they have a system in place in terms of quarantine. This is our intention now.



One important area also is that if you are in the business arena, for example, if you own a restaurant, a cafe or a shop, you will need continuous supply of produce instead of you planting the crops yourself. Therefore, our planting programme is that, every two months we do our planting.

I mentioned earlier on that we are now harvesting our produce from our home gardens. The Honourable Member for Arenikau mentioned earlier on that some people from BTIB, the Ministry of Agriculture and the private sector went to Aitutaki yesterday. I think most of the food crops produced are from the village of Amuri/Ureia and not from Arenikau. However, the aim is for the benefit of the island of Aitutaki as we look to opening up into the market of New Zealand.

I am very thankful with the assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture as mentioned earlier on by my colleague, the Member of Parliament for Vaivaitau through the provision of machineries, seedlings, chemicals and so forth.

We also appreciate the assistance provided by BTIB through the provision of soft loans to the Agriculture sector. However, my request to the Minister of BTIB is that there should be a COVID interest rate applied of zero interest.

One area we are looking to is the establishment of food processing on the island especially right now on Aitutaki, bananas are in abundant and they are being fed to the pigs, so we are looking at Government assistance to provide, maybe solar powered processing facilities.

There are other avenues and as mentioned before, through the provision of machinery, our tractors are very old just like the one on the island of Mitiaro. However, I believe that at times it is better to give no grants to our people so that they are responsible for the repayments because too many times, there is abuse of transports.

One important part that we need to consider especially on the island of Aitutaki is the area of water. This issue with water is not only for agriculture but all areas. I am not sure as to what you are going to do but I am considering the idea of providing moulds so people can build water tanks for themselves. We are receiving good support from the Island Governments in these areas. However, there is this practice with these people when we receive resources like seedlings, manure and chemicals these end up in the homes that do not engage in agriculture. You would think that there should be consistent supply of crops into the hotels but these are being imported from Rarotonga.

And sometimes we do feel that it should be returned to the Ministry of Agriculture in Rarotonga. But I think this is only a management problem and should be corrected. What is insufficient with the Island Government is the lack of the Budget. When you consider the Budget for the island of Aitutaki and other islands there is insufficient funds for operation. I do support the submission from the Member for Pukapuka where he referred to the Outer Islands as out of sight and out of mind. My plea to this House if it is not too late to relook at this and consider diversification.

Last week I was on the radio and this Mama rang from Atiu about the problem of roaming pigs on the island of Atiu. I felt for them because this problem also exists on the islands of Mangaia, Atiu and Mitiaro. I feel that this is an area that Government

should look into because this is like a pest problem but this pest can be turned into food. This is a practice of people who look after animals and what they do is, they have two pigs in the pen and fifty outside the pen roaming.

Prime Foods is wanting pork here in Rarotonga but it is imported from New Zealand. This is also a problem with the goats on the Outer Islands and this should be considered for inclusion in this Bill. There is nothing wrong with the Bill but my concern is the selection of people for the post in the Bill. Firstly, the funds we will spend during this time that we are going through and maybe for now we should focus on training what is needed to implement this Agriculture Bill. I have learned from past experience in other Government agencies when people are given these positions and power they do the work like dictators. They are not true to the intent of the Bill but they end up detrimental to the intent of the Bill.

Those are my concerns and what should be corrected in the Bill and thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, are there any further speakers. I see the Honourable Tina Browne and you have the Floor.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Kia Orana to all Honourable Members in this Honourable House today. To you Madam Speaker and Deputy Clerk and all the staff of Parliament, the Interpreters, the livestreaming staff, IT and the Hansard staff including the two Mama that sets our table for our lunch dinner, Kia Orana in the Mighty Name of the Lord. To the Queen's Representative listening to our debate and your Lady and family – Kia Orana. To our Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers and all the Members of Government, Kia Orana. Including our side of the Opposition – greetings in the Lord. And all our people listening to parliament or watching us on livestream – Kia Orana.

With your indulgence Madam Speaker, may I ask to acknowledge the people in my constituency of Tapuahua. To the three denominations on the island, to the Mayor and EO your families and all Government public servants, the elderly, youth and all the children, Kia Orana. To all other organisations or groups on the island, Kia Orana. To our covid-19 task force on the island, I thank you very much for the good work and sacrifice that you did during these trying times. Even though this virus has not reached our shores the most important part is that we should be ready and when it gets here we are ready.

From yesterday to today, I have been trying to find a Bible text where I can use in summary to tell us about our Sitting of Parliament this week and next week. This is the Scriptural text that I will bring to us. It is in Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8. If you Madam Speaker would permit me to read the whole Bible verse as I do not intend to speak too long to the House. I feel it fits with the Ministerial Statement that was presented by the Honourable Prime Minister.

*It reads, "There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens. A time to be born, and a time to die. A time to plant and time to harvest. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build. A time to weep and a time to laugh. A time to mourn and a time to dance. A time scatter stones and a*

*time to gather them. A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing. A time to search and a time to give up. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace".* I believe Madam Speaker, this Scripture fits our situation right now.

Last week, two members who supported in drafting this Bill came to explain to us each clause of this Bill. I would like to commend the Secretary of Agriculture for giving her time including the staff from Crown Law Office to explain to us the purpose and the intent of this Bill. I believe this is the proper time for us to revise and renew this law on agriculture.

I am satisfied as I read the Bill especially Clause 3 of the Bill and that is to provide for the development of sustainable agricultural practices, to provide for new data collection powers and procedures to be used in relation to agriculture to regulate the agriculture industry, to provide for inspectors and specify their powers and the procedures they must follow to enable the regulatory regime in this Act to apply to all of the Cook Islands, to enable the establishment of specific Advisory Committees to assist with the carrying out of functions under this Act.

To me these are very important areas. These areas are very important that will support our planters and farmers. However, when I look to Section 8 of the Bill it does not really support and help the agriculture part. As an example for us, it was mentioned earlier the problem of the pigs in Atiu, Mitiaro and Mauke. It is no use for us to encourage growing if we are not going to fix the problem with pigs on these islands.

When I look at this Bill the Ministry is wanting to regulate pesticides then this should not be an issue for the Ministry to regulate these animals like pigs and goats as they can be classed as pests because we all know the damage caused by roving pigs to crops on the islands of Atiu, Mauke and Mitiaro. So I will ask the Ministry, the Minister in Charge to look at this and I believe this can be included in the Bill.

I understand in Clause 8 another function of the Ministry is to facilitate access to markets domestically and internationally. This is one area we should seriously look at because there is no use for growers to engage in planting when there is no market for their produce.

This is nothing new to us from past experiences when we have looked at Bills before the House. We do look at the aspect of marketing so that those of our people engaged in these areas they have a market to sell their products and their produce. So, to the Minister I do not see any issues with strengthening this area within this Bill.

Yesterday the Member for Akaoa mentioned the issue of cutting trees on our island. When we travel around Rarotonga today it is disheartening to watch and observe some of the cutting and felling of ancient trees. However, when I look at this Bill there is a provision for the Ministry to regulate the area of forestry.

I do not consider that tree cutting will come under forestry but I will request the Ministry to review and maybe include a provision for regulating tree cutting. I myself do not engage in the cutting of trees but we the women folk do plant flowers and when it comes

time to prune your plants women folk know how to do this. This is like the cutting of trees. So my request to the Ministry is to consider provisions in the Bill to regulate and licence people who trim and cut trees.

During our workshop last week with the two Officials who explained to us on the Bill I did raise the point of Inspectors entering into properties without permission because we all know that for landowners this is not a simple issue for them. This was a very important issue during the development of the Infrastructure Bill. I requested the Secretary of Agriculture because under this Bill the Inspector has a right to enter any land or property without the permission of the landowner. I do understand the reason for this in case someone is storing pesticides that is not permitted on the island. However, under our Constitution I the homeowner have the right to file an application to court to prevent you from entering my property.

When I look into the Bill there is no provision

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Member. Your time has expired and I see the Honourable William Heather.

**MR W. HEATHER:** Madam Speaker, I rise to move a Motion:

**That our Leader be granted extra time to speak on this Bill**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and is there a Seconder for the Motion?

**Seconded by the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera**

The extension will be for ten minutes.

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

You may continue, Honourable Member.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I was making reference to the area that I do not see any provision in the Bill to reply to the rights of the homeowner to prevent the entry of an Inspector under this Bill.

This is my message in our debate this afternoon. We can see the problems that is happening to us during this COVID-19 pandemic. I am heartened to hear the comments by Government to diversify which means that we should not depend on tourism alone and we should return and make use of our land.

This is nothing new to us. Growing and agriculture has been with us before time until today. This knowledge of planting has been left to us by our ancestors and our past Leaders, Papa Arapati Henry, Papa Tom Davis, Papa Pupuke Robati, Papa Terepai Maoate and Papa Jim Marurai.

So, I am encouraged if the Ministry is looking to supporting our growers so that we are able to achieve another area of economic development for our country. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Member and I see the Minister Vaine Mokoroa you have the Floor.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Kia Orana and thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Members of this Honourable House, staff and all of us, Kia Orana.

Before progressing let me take this opportunity to convey my sincere greetings to the capital of Rarotonga, Oire Nikao the hub of the nation, the centre of the core and the point of rejecting COVID-19.

Kia Orana to you Tenoa and your fellow interpreters. Kia Orana to all those living in Oire Nikao from Rangiuira, Atupa and all the way to Pokoinu. Kia Orana and thank you to Papa Orometua Oirua Rasmussen who have been assisting with our daily opening, your family and the Ekalesia Nikao. All those holding different titles and to other denominations within Nikao, Kia Orana.

To all the elderly, Mamas, youth and the new born living within Nikao, Kia Orana in the name of our good Lord. To all the Aronga Mana, Ui Ariki, Ui Rangatira, Ui Mataiapo and your Matakeinanga, Kia Orana. To all our people listening in to our radio, those in the Outer Islands and those overseas as well as those watching our livestreaming on Facebook, Kia Orana.

Let me take this opportunity to share my personal thanks to the Prime Minister who have made a sudden and surprising announcement pertaining to his stepping down and on behalf of our capital village which we both reside in, from the Pu Tapere, Aronga Mana and our Papa Orometua, thank you very much for your leadership and wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

On the same token I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to the new Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Honourable Minister Mark Brown as it is a seat whereby you are already accustomed to. Again on behalf of the Nikao Puna and even though you also party on Nikao Beach, I wish you all the best in your new post and may God guide both of you.

Coming back to our Bill today I would like to thank Honourable Minister Rose Brown and the Ministry of Agriculture under the guidance of Ms Temarama Anguna and your good staff for putting together this new Bill.

For the information of the House the Bill, when introduced in Cabinet was tabled together with the Ministry of Agriculture's five-year Strategic Plan. Along with this are the projects and programmes which are all about improving our livelihood not only for Rarotonga but for the whole of the Cook Islands.

I refer us to this verse that I think is relevant for us in this House, taken from Deuteronomy 28:12 – The Lord will open the heavens, the store house of his bounty to

send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. He will lend to many nations but will borrow from none.

This is very fitting for us at this very moment as we are all aware that COVID-19 has completely changed the way that we operate and sustain our livelihood today. COVID-19 has forced us to reset, reinvent and work from outside the box on how we are to create the new norm.

On a personal note I would like to thank Te Marae Ora, all the ten Puna's, all the volunteers and all the Government Ministries together with all of us in this House for an incredible effort in ensuring that COVID-19 do not enter on our soil.

I am therefore thankful that this Agriculture Bill is very timely. It correlates directly with the second stage of the economic response that the Government is to announce and deliver next week. So, to our people who are keen in agriculture and planting and wanting to improvise in their agriculture sector, please stay tuned.

Madam Speaker, I have heard our colleagues in the Opposition talking about critical issues that needs to be addressed such as the lack of machineries, tractors, implements and as such. The lack of markets and designated outlets whether in New Zealand, Australia to sell our produce, the availability of environmentally safe and organic chemicals, pesticides and fertilizers for our growers, the ongoing saga of wandering wild animals destroying crops in the Outer Islands. These are valid and genuine concerns but they are not issues and concerns that cannot be addressed.

I would now like to put to the House some of the good work that the Ministry of Agriculture have offered for Oire Nikao in giving some support and assistance towards our fishers and growers.

Firstly, let me thank the Ministry of Agriculture for their ongoing support through the supply of seedlings and technical support. In this instance we in Nikao are grateful for the assistance provided to us by Mr Takili Tairi who is from Nikao/Atiu/Pokoinu.

For all of our MPs in our respective constituency it has been mentioned that technical support, ongoing advice and ongoing oversight from Ministry of Agriculture is a much needed responsibility and I can say that it is indeed required so.

This is further demonstrated by the recent commissioning by the Atiu nursery and the Mauke nursery which I was so humbled to be part of. I also understand the hydroponic program will be established on the islands of Penrhyn, Suwarrow and Palmerston. I do not want to be boastful but to state the fact that Mr Tairi was able to provide technical assistance when we were able to harvest bok-choy in a matter of two weeks rather than six or eight weeks.

We also experimented on harvest of watermelon within 40 days rather 90 days as specified. These are some of the technical skills which our growers are requiring. I would also like to convey that our Nikao fishers and growers are also importing and selling pesticides and weed control chemicals that are seen to be one simple, cheaper and easiest options for controlling weeds.

Like other concerned environmentalist we too are also concerned with the use and the applications and we want to make sure that there is no abuse, misuse and to take extra precautionary measures to minimise the harm on both the users and the community at large. Hence this Bill is very timely because it addresses these concerns.

Madam Speaker, Nikao growers have acquired two 9 horse power two wheel tractors and it comes with its respective implements suitable for small time home growers. To give a classic example whilst Mangaia island who obtained the same implements for the price of one at \$35,000 we were able to obtain for the price of only \$12,000. We are currently exploring for acquiring for such implements and I am happy that through BTIB this support is available to all the growers. And if you need some assistance filling in your application please see the Honourable Terepai Maoate who is very experience in filling up these forms. Or come and see my good Minister Honourable George Angene and he will refer you to someone who is just as experienced.

Madam Speaker at the grassroots level, I am pleased to announce that the Nikao growers have opened the Nikao Social Centre market. I am also pleased to announce that the committee of hardworking ladies under the chair ship of Mama Rose has opted that one tenth of all the fees collected on that first day shall be given as an offering to each of the existing church denominations within Nikao. Last Sunday it was tithing to the Nikao CICC and this Sunday it will be tithing to another denomination in Nikao and it continues through out.

And on that note I would like to thank CIIC, Cook Islands Investment Corporation to those living in Nikao and those who were instrumental in the establishment of the Nikao Market. This is one alternative outlet that we need to exploit apart from the Punanga Nui Market that is already established. I am forever grateful for our supporting small dairy shops as well as our big superstore market such as the CITC and Prime Foods.

Both Honourable Members Selina Matenga and Honourable Terepai Maoate have mentioned the exploiting up North as a potential market and feeding the islands first and foremost. Madam Speaker, as I am in full support of this Bill I am also very supportive that this Bill be taken to the community at large to seek their input and to come up with the best way forward in putting in place the most relevant applicable and be fitting piece of legislation for this key sector within the economy, the Agriculture sector. On that note thank you very much Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, that is perfect timing Honourable Minister. As there is no further debate on the Agriculture Bill, I will now call on the Minister to conclude the debate.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** My thanks to you Madam Speaker as well as all the Honourable Members of Parliament for expressing your thoughts and comments on this Bill. I am happy to listen to the comments of encouragements even of critique and recommendations to the Bill.

Thank you for all your support in supporting the Bill and the notion in putting it to a Select Committee to take it back to our people to seek their thoughts. Honourable Members it is very obvious our people and our intentions to go back on to the land and

make proper use of the land. I believe it is not only because of COVID-19 that is why we have gone back to strengthen the area of agriculture and growing in our country.

I would like to acknowledge and give my thanks to the Secretary of Agriculture, Temarama Aunguna and on top of that our Associate Minister of Agriculture, Patrick Arioka. And all those who contributed to all thoughts and work behind the composing of this Agriculture Bill. We all know it is time to review and strengthen these legislations to give full support and encourage our growers in the field of agriculture. As well as the Select Committee that will be selected in seeking the views and thoughts of our people.

To our people, since I became the Minister for Agriculture, our Secretary of Agriculture and I are working hard together with the Associate Minister to encourage and redevelop agriculture through seeking the views and thoughts from our growers as we have been holding many meetings with them as well with our people throughout our Outer Islands. I can hear some thoughts and recommendations referring to the Budget for Agriculture but I think we should leave this until we come to the Budget allocation in the Committee of Supply.

The Select Committee that will be appointed will have the responsibility of reviewing and strengthening the clauses throughout the Bill. Later the announcements will be made as to the Members of this Select Committee. Some of the views that were coming out does not sound quite right. As if someone is saying that I created this Bill and these are my thoughts in the creation of this Bill. If not, it is only Government working on this Bill.

I am sure we all understand this is the reason for the creation of the Select Committee from both sides of the House, so that there will be a balance in the considerations of the Bill. You should all know that all your comments and thoughts raised have all been recorded and these should be brought out and discussed in more detail when we go through the Committee. I do not have much more to add to this but we shall see when we return this Bill to the House for discussion.

So my thanks to all of you in this House representing our people throughout the country as well as all of those us in the Agriculture sector for your support for this Bill. I would like to thank those of you who are visiting my office seeking help and also let me encourage the rest of you, do not wait until you hear it in the media before you make comments on these issues. Come and ask for help. The door is open to all of you Honourable Members to visit me or even the Secretary of Agriculture and visit us, seek help and on that note may God Bless you all.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Minister. I will now put the Question:

**That the Agriculture Bill 2020 be now read a Second time?**

**Motion agreed to**

**ACTING CLERK AT THE TABLE (J. DANIEL):** Long Title: An Act to Repeal the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Act 1978 and Provide for the Responsible



Ministry to have adequate powers to obtain information and prevent adverse effects on Agriculture.

**BILL READ A SECOND TIME**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much and I will ask the Leader of the House to move a Motion for the referral to the Select Committee.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In accordance with Standing Orders 234 and 259 I move:

**That the Agriculture Bill 2020 be referred to a Select Committee established by this House that the Select Committee consist of the following Members:**

**Mr Patrick Arioka – Chair Person**

**Mr Tingika Elikana – Member**

**Mr Tereapii Maki Kavana – Member**

**Mr Tuakeu Tangatapoto – Member**

**Mr Vaitoti Tupa – Member**

**Terepai Maoate – Member**

**Mr Wesley Kareroa – Member**

**That the Select Committee report to this House on its findings on or before the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

Madam Speaker, I have just been advised by the Leader of the Opposition that there are some amendments to the composition of the Committee and that is the Honourable Terepai Maoate will be replaced by the Honourable Nooroa Baker.

The terms and reference for the Agriculture Bill Select Committee will be to review the Agriculture Bill 2020, to hold discussions with relevant entities, communities and key stakeholders concerned with the Agriculture sector, to take notes of potential legislative changes that may be necessary to put into effect any policy recommendations and to consider and report those recommendations to Parliament.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, there is a Motion on the Floor can I call for a Seconder for the Motion please.

**Seconded by the Honourable Tina Pupuke Browne**

I will put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, Honourable Members it has been a very, very good day's work and very happy to put the Agriculture Bill to the Select Committee and we look forward to taking part in that as they start their meetings. Very good timing we have now come to the end of our day and before we go home we will stand for our Prayer. If I could ask the Leader of the House to commit us in Prayer before we adjourn Parliament.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Parliament is adjourned until Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June at 1.00 p.m.

**Sitting adjourned at 4.55 p.m.**