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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Agriculture Appoints New Shrimp Industry Task Force

Belmopan. January 25, 2023.

Hon. Jose Abelardo Mai, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, has appointed a new task force for the shrimp industry. The task force will address constraints and a way forward to revive the industry.

Appointments to the task force take effect today at its inaugural meeting held at the Belize Agriculture Health Authority (BAHA) conference room in Belmopan. Minister Mai, who joined virtually, expressed his confidence in the members appointed and outlined his expectations of the task force.

The Task Force comprises eight members:

1. Hugh O'Brien, Program Director for Citrus and Diversification, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise - Chairman
2. Alvin Henderson, Chairman of the Shrimp Growers Association
3. Charlie Naresh Punwani, Owner of Quality Shrimp Farm
4. Silvia Mendez, Animal Health Officer, BAHA
5. Digno Polanco, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise
6. Dr. Osmond Martinez, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Economic Development
7. Richard Reid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade
8. Representative from the Development Finance Corporation

A three-month timeframe is being granted to the task force to complete its work and submit recommendations to the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, who will then submit them to Cabinet for final consideration.

Shrimp production in Belize peaked at 16 million pounds in 2014, earning over \$90 million in foreign exchange. However, in 2015, the industry was hit with the Early Mortality Syndrome, which decimated the industry. Production went downhill and since 2016, annual production has hovered between one and two million pounds, barely enough to supply the local market.

Ends

For more information, please contact:

Mr. Hugh O'Brien

Chairman

Shrimp Industry Task Force

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