**DEAD FISH KILLING THE BUSINESS - CHICKEN TO BREED NEW LIFE**.

A few weeks ago, more dead fish appeared along the south west coast of Trinidad in proximity of the famous Pitch Lake and fishing village of La Brea. The fisher-folk continue to suffer from a reduction in catch and sales. The bulk of catch is to supply Rakando Fish Processors. Rakando is La Brea’s and South Trinidad largest fish processor. A longstanding wholesale and retail establishment for over forty years, it is a multi-million dollar organization employing over 200 persons. Customers who received a reliable high quality supply of fish can no longer be dependent on Rakando to fulfil their needs.

The Company is looking at sustainable alternatives to keep the business afloat since the fish supply is no longer reliable. The buzz word around the organization and in the village is for Rakando to diversify and supplement the business by processing chicken meat products as an alternative protein. The data shows that for over two decades chickens have scratched and picked their ways into the hearts and stomachs of thousands locally and regionally.

The wholly state-owned National Pitchoil Company treated the oil spill areas with the chemical “corexit.” This toxic chemical was widely treated to the specific areas to dissipate the tar like substance on the ocean surface. Local environmental lobby groups believe the chemical is the main culprit for the mass killings. The chemical has the tendency to settle on the ocean floor where the majority of the fish feed. For the past months the doubts on health issues have not inspired the public to return to buying and eating fish and perhaps not in the very near future.

With some urgency the Trinidad and Tobago Government has promised to address the root cause of the series of oil spills that has appeared spontaneously along the south western coast. The fisher-folk believe this to be the reason for the dead fish appearing alongside the Gulf of Paria coastal shores and river mouths. Additionally, the environmental institutions have to grapple with the national debate on the deeper question of the safety of consuming fish in the future since more spills are likely to re-occur.

Rakando management must reassess their business model, diversifying from fish to now include chicken processing. Furthermore, with the economy declining due to globally falling oil and gas prices impacting local spending patterns, the restructuring of the business will need careful planning. Jim Pompano, no relation to any fish, is the HR Manager and must prevent the business from going belly up. Jim is scheduled to meet with the Executive Committee and Board of Directors in three weeks to discuss the strategic direction, diversification and staffing. However, he must first provide and discuss with the CEO Roger Carvali a new plan so the business can be sustained in the short term. Jim has a lot of responsibilities “on his plate,” fish being the biggest worry.

The major problem as Jim sees it is to preserve as many jobs as possible until business picks up. Termination of employees is furthest from his mind since he is aware of the loyalty of the current staff. Training is going to be expensive since chicken processing is a new area of development. Jim is wondering whether there might be some other ways to remove slack from the system while at the same time preserve as many jobs as possible. Could employees use their current unused vacation to now work overtime during the transition? Could employees be encouraged to take unpaid leave of absence? Perhaps early retirement, voluntary separation packages to be offered? One thing for sure, Jim must be clear on how he intends to re-organize and prioritize these ideas concisely if he is to approach CEO Carvali for the first meeting.

Meanwhile, Fister Rambo, the head of Pitchoil Workers Trade Union (PWTU) which is the representative bargaining unit for the workers is sceptical about any new direction the Rakando Company is taking. He smells something fishy with the planned re-organization and believes maybe this is the opportunity for mass layoffs and ultimately “get out of business.” He believes fish can be sourced from other ports throughout the island and from our regional neighbours to maintain current operations.

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 END

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