

NFM spends \$25.5M on new packaging lines



Minister of Trade and Industry Paula Gopee-Scoon cuts the ribbon to commission two new packaging lines at the National Flour Mill, Port-of- Spain yesterday. Others in photo from left are permanent secretary in the Ministry of Trade and Industry Randall Karim, Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association chairman Roger Roach, Minister in the Ministry of National Security Keith Scotland, SC, chairman of NFM Ashmeer Mohamed, CEO Ian Mitchell and director Sonja Voisin. PHOTO BY VASHTI SINGH

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The National Flour Mills (NFM) has made a \$25.5 million investment in plant and equipment that will help the majority stateowned company manufacture more products, more quickly, while maintaining quality and sustainability.

One of the piece of equipment is a \$ 17.2 million 2 kilogram packaging line that replaces equipment that served the company for nearly 40 years.

Speaking yesterday at the ribbon-cutting ceremony at NFM's Port-of-Spain, Minister of Trade and Industry, Paula Gopee-Scoon said, "This acquisition will not only allow NFM to increase its production capacity, it will also enhance the precision and consistency of its products, help it stay ahead of consumer trends and remain competitive in a rapidly changing market."

The minister added the food and beverage sector remains an important industry in T&T's economy.

She cited Central Statistical Office data to indicate the sector accounted for about 10.5 per cent of T&T's (GDP) in 2022.

"This sector is not only crucial for our domestic consumption, but also plays a critical role in our non-energy export earnings," Gopee-Scoon said.

While she acknowledged that the country's food import levels are too high, the minister maintained that companies such as the NFM and others in the public and private sector have ensured T&T's food import bill has been reduced.

NFM's CEO Ian Mitchell said the state-of-the-art system brings significant benefits, including:

- Increased efficiency, allowing NFM to meet growing demand while reducing production downtime;
- Improved food safety and hygiene, ensuring the highest quality standards for customers;
- Reduced waste and a lower carbon footprint, reinforcing our commitment to sustainable manufacturing; and
- Enhanced ergonomics and workplace safety, providing a better environment for employees.

Noting that flour remains the foundation of NFM's success, Mitchell described the 2 kilogram product line as the cornerstone of its business, accounting for approximately 12 per cent of its non-industrial flour revenue.

"Many of our customers have grown up with our iconic Ibis All-Purpose Flour, and we have recently introduced our Lotus Cassava Blended 2 kilogram, reflecting changing consumer preferences for healthier alternatives with more local content," Mitchell added.

He said later this year, the NFM will commission additional advanced packaging technology, which will allow the company to introduce new formats to better meet the needs of customers.

This is scheduled for completion by June 2025, which will be another new state-of-the-art, fully automatic 10-kilogram packaging line to enhance further NFM's capabilities.

"At NFM, we understand that innovation is not just about equipment—it's about people. That is why we continue to invest in training and upskilling our employees, ensuring they have the tools, knowledge, and expertise to drive our vision forward," Mitchell added.