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A DIRECTORY FOR THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

2026

1st Edition
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Welcome to Our Inaugural Edition



As we proudly present the First Edition of the Trinidad & Tobago Manufacturers' Guide, we do so at a pivotal moment. Manufacturers across Trinidad and Tobago are playing an increasingly important role in driving economic diversification, expanding non-energy exports, embracing innovation, and creating sustainable growth.

Against a backdrop of evolving global supply chains and renewed focus on regional competitiveness, the manufacturing sector has emerged as a dynamic and resilient economic pillar. From food and beverage to chemicals, construction, and technology, local manufacturers continue to compete, innovate, and succeed in domestic and international markets.

At the same time, challenges remain. Businesses must navigate shifting consumer preferences, rising costs, technological disruption, and competitive global markets. It is within this environment that this Guide seeks to serve as a valuable resource—providing timely insights and a comprehensive platform for showcasing the capabilities of our nation's manufacturing sector.

In this inaugural edition, readers will find features examining the trends, opportunities, and success stories shaping the industry, including:

- The outlook for Trinidad & Tobago's manufacturing sector in 2026/27
- Export expansion and opportunities in Latin America and beyond
- The rise of advanced manufacturing and Industry 4.0 technologies
- Agro-processing and the growing food security opportunity
- Green manufacturing, renewable energy, and sustainable production
- Skills development and the future manufacturing workforce
- SME success stories and pathways to scale
- Investment opportunities across Trinidad & Tobago's industrial landscape

This publication also serves as a comprehensive directory of manufacturers, suppliers, and industry stakeholders, creating new opportunities for business development, collaboration, and investment.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our partners at the Trinidad & Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA). Their support, guidance, and leadership continue to strengthen the manufacturing community and promote Trinidad and Tobago as a premier location for industrial growth.

As a hybrid publication, the Guide is designed to maximize visibility. Printed copies will be distributed to TTMA members, government ministries, diplomatic missions, investors, and attendees at the Trade and Investment Convention (TIC). Complementing the print edition, an interactive digital version will ensure the publication reaches audiences throughout the Caribbean and around the world.

Whether you are an investor, a buyer looking for reliable suppliers, a policymaker, or a business leader, we trust that these pages will provide valuable insight into the capabilities of our manufacturing sector.

This first edition marks the beginning of an enduring platform for celebrating achievement, sharing knowledge, and promoting the businesses shaping our economic future.

We thank our advertisers, contributors, partners, and readers for joining us on this exciting journey, and we look forward to growing alongside the sector in the years ahead.

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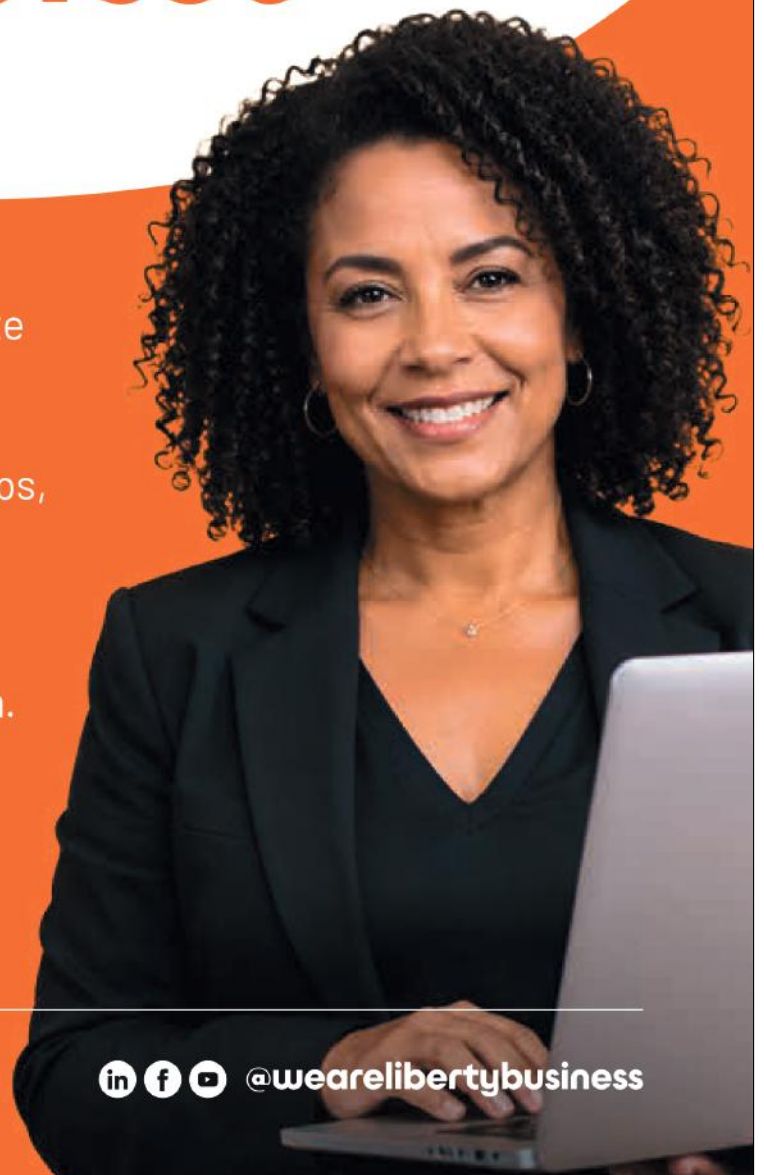
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AI AND THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY:

T&T's 2026 Digital Shift

BY GEORGE ELIAS

For much of its modern history, Trinidad and Tobago's economic competitiveness has been measured by the resources beneath its soil and offshore energy reserves. Today, however, a different asset is becoming increasingly valuable: human capital.

In a global economy increasingly powered by artificial intelligence, data, software, and digital services, the countries best positioned for growth are those capable of producing skilled, adaptable, and technology-enabled talent. Recognizing this reality, Trinidad and Tobago has embarked on an ambitious digital transformation agenda aimed at preparing its workforce for the demands of the knowledge economy.

The result is the emergence of a new investment proposition—one built not on natural resources, but on digital capability.

As artificial intelligence reshapes industries and businesses seek new locations for technology services, software development, and business process outsourcing (BPO), Trinidad and Tobago is positioning itself as a source of investment-ready talent for the Caribbean and beyond.

THE RACE FOR DIGITAL TALENT

The global demand for digital skills has never been higher.

From software engineers and cybersecurity specialists to data analysts, cloud architects, AI trainers, and digital project managers, organizations worldwide are competing for a finite pool of talent. At the same time, businesses are increasingly looking beyond traditional outsourcing destinations to identify emerging markets that can provide skilled professionals, competitive operating costs, and reliable infrastructure.

This shift presents a significant opportunity for Caribbean economies.

Unlike traditional industries that require extensive natural resources or large-scale manufacturing infrastructure, digital services are powered primarily by knowledge, connectivity, and talent. Countries that can develop these assets have the potential to participate in global value chains regardless of geographic size.

For Trinidad and Tobago, this represents an opportunity to diversify the economy while creating high-value employment opportunities for a new generation of workers.

BUILDING INVESTMENT-READY HUMAN CAPITAL

Central to this effort is the work being undertaken through the Ministry of Digital Transformation and its associated national digital agenda.

Recent initiatives have focused on expanding digital literacy, improving access to technology, modernizing public services,

strengthening digital infrastructure, and promoting technology-focused education and workforce development.

The objective extends beyond digitizing government services. It is about creating a workforce capable of participating in an increasingly technology-driven global economy.

Employers evaluating investment destinations today are asking different questions than they did a decade ago. They want to know whether a country can supply software developers, customer experience specialists, cybersecurity professionals, data analysts, and AI-enabled workers capable of supporting modern business operations.

The countries able to answer “yes” are increasingly attracting investment.

Trinidad and Tobago's strategy is designed to ensure that local talent remains competitive within this evolving landscape.

THE BPO EVOLUTION

The business process outsourcing sector provides a clear example of this transformation.

Historically, many outsourcing operations focused primarily on voice-based customer service activities. While these services remain important, the global BPO industry is rapidly evolving toward higher-value offerings that require greater technical expertise and specialized knowledge.

Today's outsourcing operations increasingly encompass:

- Technical support services
- Digital customer experience management
- Financial and accounting services
- Human resource administration
- Data processing and analytics
- Cybersecurity monitoring
- AI-assisted business services
- Knowledge process outsourcing (KPO)

As artificial intelligence automates routine tasks, demand is shifting toward workers who can manage technology platforms, interpret data, solve complex problems, and deliver specialized expertise.

This evolution plays directly to Trinidad and Tobago's strengths.

With relatively high educational attainment levels, strong English-language proficiency, and a workforce accustomed to operating in international business environments, the country possesses many of the characteristics sought by global outsourcing firms.

BEYOND CALL CENTERS

One of the most significant misconceptions about the digital economy is that outsourcing and software development are separate industries.

In reality, they are increasingly interconnected.

As BPO providers move up the value chain, many are expanding into software support, digital product management, automation services, and AI-enabled business solutions. Similarly, software companies often require customer success teams, technical support professionals, and back-office operations specialists.

The result is the emergence of integrated digital services ecosystems where software development, business services, and technology support functions reinforce one another.

For Trinidad and Tobago, this creates opportunities to attract a broader range of investors seeking access to both technical and operational talent.

THE CARIBBEAN'S EMERGING TECH CORRIDOR

The wider Caribbean is increasingly gaining recognition as a viable location for technology investment.

Countries throughout the region are competing to attract software developers, fintech companies, digital service providers, and technology-enabled exporters. Remote work and cloud-based collaboration tools have further reduced the importance of physical distance, allowing Caribbean professionals to participate in projects serving clients across North America, Europe, and Latin America.

Within this environment, Trinidad and Tobago possesses several competitive advantages.

Its comparatively advanced telecommunications infrastructure, established business environment, financial sector sophistication, and large pool of university graduates provide a strong foundation for digital-sector growth.

The country's location within the same time zones as major North American markets also supports real-time collaboration—an increasingly important consideration for technology companies.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS AN OPPORTUNITY

Much of the global discussion surrounding AI focuses on concerns about job displacement.

While these concerns are valid, AI also creates substantial opportunities for countries capable of adapting their workforce.

Artificial intelligence requires large ecosystems of human expertise. AI systems must be trained, monitored, audited, maintained, integrated, and improved. Businesses adopting AI technologies require professionals who understand both technology and business operations.

This creates demand for new categories of work including:

- AI implementation specialists
- Data annotation and quality assurance professionals
- Prompt engineers

- Machine-learning support personnel
- Digital transformation consultants
- AI governance and compliance specialists

Countries that invest early in digital skills development will be best positioned to capture these opportunities.

Trinidad and Tobago's efforts to strengthen digital competencies across education, workforce development, and public-sector modernization are laying the groundwork for participation in this emerging market.

ATTRACTING THE NEXT WAVE OF INVESTMENT

The significance of these developments extends beyond employment.

Global investors increasingly evaluate countries based on talent availability rather than simply tax incentives or infrastructure. Access to skilled human capital has become one of the most important determinants of investment decisions in technology-intensive industries.

A country that can consistently produce qualified software developers, cybersecurity specialists, data professionals, and digitally skilled workers becomes more attractive to multinational corporations seeking expansion opportunities.

This is particularly relevant as Trinidad and Tobago pursues economic diversification and seeks to increase non-energy exports.

Digital services offer a pathway to generate foreign exchange earnings without the logistical constraints associated with traditional goods exports.

Knowledge, after all, can be exported instantly.

THE FUTURE IS HUMAN CAPITAL

The most valuable commodity in the global economy is no longer oil, natural gas, or manufactured goods. It is talent.

For Trinidad and Tobago, the digital transformation agenda represents an investment in precisely that resource.

By strengthening digital literacy, expanding technology education, modernizing public services, and encouraging private-sector innovation, the country is building the foundations of a knowledge-based economy capable of competing in a rapidly changing world.

The growth of business process outsourcing, software development, and AI-enabled services demonstrates that this transformation is already underway.

The question is no longer whether Trinidad and Tobago can participate in the digital economy. The question is how large a role it will play.

If current trends continue, the country's most valuable export in the years ahead may not be a physical product at all. It may be the skills, expertise, and innovation of a digitally empowered workforce ready to compete on a global stage.

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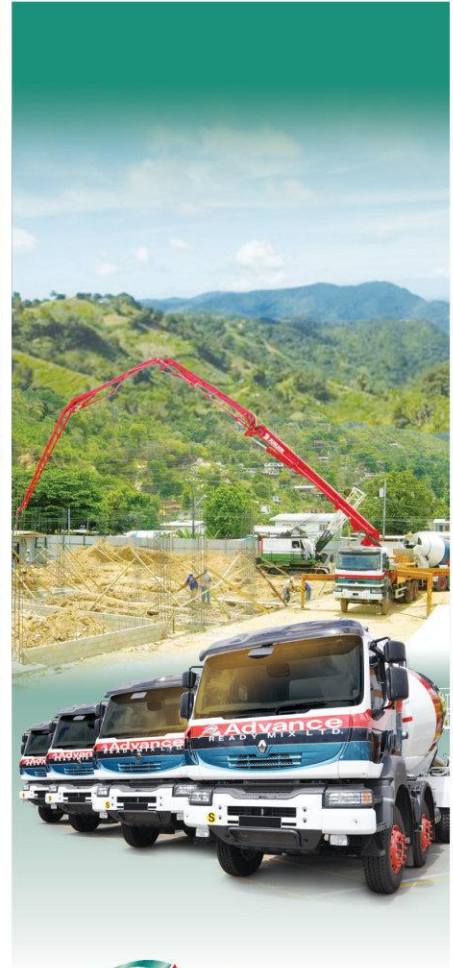


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THE GREEN PIVOT: Investing in the Brechin Castle Solar Legacy How Trinidad & Tobago's Largest Renewable Energy Project Could Spark a New Wave of Green Manufacturing and Foreign Investment

BY GEORGE ELIAS

For decades, Trinidad and Tobago's industrial success has been built on energy.

Natural gas fueled the rise of petrochemicals, manufacturing, and export industries that helped establish the country as one of the Caribbean's most important industrial economies.

Today, a new chapter is beginning.

As large-scale renewable energy projects such as the Brechin Castle Solar Park move toward full integration into the national electricity grid, Trinidad and Tobago finds itself at the threshold of a different kind of energy opportunity—one that extends far beyond solar generation itself.

The real story is not the solar panels. It is what comes next.

Around the world, major renewable energy investments have acted as catalysts for entirely new industries, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) into battery storage, electric mobility, clean technology manufacturing, sustainable construction, and carbon management solutions.

The question facing Trinidad and Tobago is no longer whether renewable energy will become part of the country's energy mix.

The question is whether the country can leverage that transition to create the Caribbean's next green investment hub.

FROM POWER GENERATION TO INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION

Large renewable energy projects often produce a ripple effect that extends well beyond electricity production. Investors view them as signals. They indicate government commitment, regulatory certainty, and a long-term vision for sustainable economic development.

Brechin Castle sends exactly that signal.

For multinational investors evaluating future locations for green manufacturing, access to cleaner electricity is becoming an increasingly important factor in site selection decisions.

Global corporations are under pressure from shareholders, regulators, and customers to reduce emissions throughout their supply chains.

Many are actively seeking production locations that can support their environmental, social, and governance (ESG) objectives.

As renewable generation expands, Trinidad and Tobago gains an opportunity to position itself as more than an energy producer. It can position itself as a destination for low-carbon manufacturing.

THE BATTERY STORAGE OPPORTUNITY

Perhaps the most immediate opportunity lies in battery energy storage systems. As renewable energy penetration increases, battery storage becomes increasingly important for balancing supply and demand on the electricity grid.

Globally, demand for battery technology is accelerating at unprecedented rates.

While Trinidad and Tobago is unlikely to become a major battery-cell producer competing with Asia, there are significant opportunities in assembly, integration, testing, maintenance, and regional distribution.

The Caribbean's transition toward renewable energy will require thousands of battery storage installations over the coming decade.

A local manufacturing and assembly ecosystem could supply regional markets while creating high-value technical employment.

The country's existing industrial infrastructure, engineering expertise, logistics capabilities, and export experience provide a strong foundation upon which such an industry could develop.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND MOBILITY SOLUTIONS

Another emerging opportunity is electric mobility.

Across the Caribbean, governments are exploring pathways toward EV adoption as fuel costs, environmental concerns, and technological improvements reshape transportation markets.

While the regional market may not justify full-scale automobile manufacturing, it may support assembly operations focused on specialized vehicles, fleet solutions, commercial transport, and last-mile delivery platforms. The opportunity extends beyond vehicles themselves.

Charging infrastructure, electrical systems, fleet management technologies, maintenance services, and component assembly all represent potential investment areas.

As global automakers increasingly seek regional partners and assembly locations, Trinidad and Tobago's manufacturing capabilities and strategic geographic location could become valuable assets.

The same industrial skills that support traditional manufacturing can often be adapted to support emerging green industries.

SUSTAINABLE MANUFACTURING IS BECOMING A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The shift toward cleaner energy is not only about attracting new investors. It is also about helping existing manufacturers remain competitive.

Many export markets are introducing stricter environmental standards. International buyers are increasingly evaluating the carbon footprint of products and supply chains.

In some sectors, sustainability credentials are becoming as important as price and quality. Manufacturers that can demonstrate reduced emissions, improved energy efficiency, and responsible production practices may enjoy a growing competitive advantage.

This is particularly important as markets in North America, Europe, and parts of Latin America continue moving toward more stringent environmental reporting requirements.

For exporters, renewable energy is no longer simply an environmental issue. It is becoming a market access issue.

THE RISE OF GREEN FDI

Historically, foreign investment decisions were driven primarily by factors such as labor costs, taxation, logistics, and market access. Those factors remain important.

However, investors increasingly evaluate an additional question: Can this location support our sustainability objectives?

This trend has given rise to what many analysts describe as “Green FDI”—investment specifically linked to low-carbon industries, clean technologies, and sustainable production systems.

Countries that successfully position themselves within this investment landscape stand to benefit from more than capital inflows.

They gain access to technology transfer, innovation ecosystems, skilled employment opportunities, and higher-value economic activity.

For Trinidad and Tobago, the transition creates an opportunity to diversify beyond traditional energy exports while leveraging many of the same industrial strengths that fueled previous waves of growth.

CARBON NEUTRALITY AS A BUSINESS STRATEGY

One of the most significant developments shaping corporate investment decisions is the growing emphasis on carbon neutrality. Businesses across multiple sectors are establishing targets to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, and adopt cleaner technologies.

In Trinidad and Tobago, fiscal incentives supporting energy efficiency, renewable energy adoption, and environmental upgrades can help companies accelerate these efforts.

For manufacturers, the benefits extend beyond potential tax savings.

Lower energy consumption often translates directly into lower operating costs. Improved efficiency enhances competitiveness.

Sustainability certifications can strengthen export opportunities, and companies that proactively manage environmental performance, are often better positioned to attract international partners and investors.

What was once viewed as a corporate responsibility initiative is increasingly becoming a core business strategy.

BUILDING THE GREEN INDUSTRIAL ECOSYSTEM

No major industrial transformation occurs because of a single project. Brechin Castle alone will not create a green economy. What it can do is serve as a catalyst.

The next phase will depend on supporting policies, targeted incentives, workforce development programmes, investment promotion initiatives, and collaboration between government and the private sector.

Educational institutions will need to prepare technicians and engineers for emerging industries. Manufacturers will need to invest in new technologies. Investors will need confidence that renewable energy expansion will continue. And policymakers will need to maintain a stable framework that encourages long-term capital investment.

When these pieces come together, industrial ecosystems emerge.

The countries that recognize these opportunities early are often the ones that capture the greatest value.

BEYOND SOLAR

The significance of Brechin Castle extends beyond the megawatts it will deliver to the grid.

Its true legacy may be the industries it helps inspire.

- Battery storage.
- Electric mobility.
- Energy management technologies.
- Sustainable manufacturing.
- Green logistics.
- Carbon-reduction services.

These are the sectors increasingly attracting investment around the world.

As global capital searches for the next generation of sustainable industrial opportunities, Trinidad and Tobago has a chance to position itself at the intersection of energy, manufacturing, and innovation.

For a nation whose prosperity has long been linked to energy, that may be the most important opportunity of all.

Not simply producing cleaner electricity.

But building an economy that grows because of it.

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AGRO-PROCESSING: Solving the Food Security Puzzle how Manufacturers and Farmers are Building a More Resilient, Export-Ready Food Economy

BY GEORGE ELIAS

For decades, food security was largely viewed as an agricultural issue. The solution seemed straightforward: grow more food.

Today, however, global events have revealed a more complex reality.

Supply chain disruptions, shipping delays, climate-related challenges, geopolitical tensions, and fluctuating commodity prices have exposed vulnerabilities in food systems around the world. Nations are increasingly recognizing that food security is not simply about agricultural production—it is about what happens after the harvest.

Can crops be processed efficiently? Can food be stored safely? Can products reach consumers consistently? Can local industries create value-added goods that reduce import dependence while generating export earnings?

For Trinidad and Tobago, the answers increasingly lie in the growing partnership between agriculture and manufacturing.

Across the country, farmers, processors, exporters, and entrepreneurs are working together to transform indigenous crops such as cassava, hot peppers, cocoa, fruits, and root vegetables into shelf-stable, export-ready products capable of competing in regional and international markets.

In doing so, they are addressing one of the country's most important economic challenges while creating new opportunities for growth.

FOOD SECURITY BEGINS WITH VALUE ADDITION

A healthy agricultural sector is essential, but production alone does not guarantee food security.

Fresh produce is vulnerable. It spoils quickly. Harvests can fluctuate. Market prices can swing dramatically. Farmers often face challenges when there is more supply than immediate demand.

Agro-processing helps solve these problems.

By converting raw agricultural products into sauces, seasonings, flours, beverages, snacks, preserves, chocolates, and other shelf-stable goods, manufacturers extend product life, reduce waste, and create new revenue streams.

The result is a more resilient food system.

Instead of depending solely on fresh market sales, farmers gain access to industrial buyers capable of purchasing crops in larger and more predictable quantities.

Manufacturers, meanwhile, secure a reliable supply of local raw materials. The relationship benefits both sides.

THE CASSAVA OPPORTUNITY

Few crops better illustrate the potential of agro-processing than cassava.

Long cultivated throughout the Caribbean, cassava is increasingly being recognized as a strategic food security crop due to its adaptability, drought tolerance, and versatility.

For manufacturers, cassava represents far more than a traditional staple. It can be transformed into flour, baking mixes, snack products, frozen foods, starches, and specialty ingredients.

Globally, demand for gluten-free and alternative flour products continues to grow, creating opportunities for value-added exports.

What makes cassava particularly attractive is its ability to support multiple industries simultaneously. A robust cassava value chain can create opportunities for farmers, food processors, packaging companies, distributors, retailers, and exporters.

In other words, it is not simply an agricultural product—it is a manufacturing opportunity.

TURNING HEAT INTO EXPORT REVENUE

The same can be said for hot peppers.

Trinidad and Tobago's reputation for producing some of the world's most flavorful and distinctive pepper varieties provides a natural competitive advantage. Yet the greatest value often lies not in exporting raw peppers, but in processing them.

Hot sauces, pepper concentrates, seasonings, marinades, and specialty condiments can command significantly higher margins than raw agricultural products. They are also easier to transport, store, and distribute. More importantly, branded pepper products allow manufacturers to export a uniquely Trinidad and Tobago experience.

As global consumers continue to embrace bold flavors and ethnic cuisine, opportunities for Caribbean-made specialty products continue to expand.

For local manufacturers, every bottle exported represents value added, jobs created, and foreign exchange earned.

COCOA'S PREMIUM POTENTIAL

Few products demonstrate the power of value-added manufacturing more clearly than cocoa.

Trinidad and Tobago is internationally recognized for producing high-quality fine-flavor cocoa, a distinction that places it among a relatively small group of premium cocoa-producing nations.

Historically, much of the value generated by cocoa has been captured overseas through processing, branding, and retail distribution.

That dynamic is changing.

A growing number of local manufacturers are moving beyond raw bean exports to produce chocolate bars, cocoa powders, specialty confectionery products, and artisanal offerings aimed at premium markets.

This approach captures more value within the country while strengthening the connection between agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, and exports. Every step added to the value chain increases economic impact.

MANUFACTURING IS THE MISSING LINK

One of the most important lessons from recent global supply chain disruptions is that agricultural production alone cannot guarantee resilience.

Countries that possess strong food manufacturing capabilities are often better positioned to withstand external shocks.

Processing facilities create inventory. Shelf-stable products create reserves. Packaging creates distribution flexibility. Storage extends availability. Manufacturing turns seasonal harvests into year-round economic activity.

This is why agro-processing has emerged as a central pillar of food security strategies worldwide.

For Trinidad and Tobago, strengthening manufacturing capacity may be just as important as increasing agricultural output.

The two sectors are increasingly inseparable.

BUILDING STRONGER FARMER-MANUFACTURER PARTNERSHIPS

Successful agro-processing begins long before products reach the factory floor. It starts with collaboration.

Manufacturers need consistency in quality, quantity, and delivery schedules. Farmers need reliable buyers and predictable demand. When these interests align, stronger agricultural value chains emerge.

Contract farming arrangements, production planning partnerships, technical support programmes, and cooperative supply models are helping bridge the gap between producers and processors.

These partnerships reduce uncertainty for both sides.

Farmers gain confidence to invest in expanding production. Manufacturers gain confidence to invest in equipment, packaging, and market development.

The result is a more stable ecosystem capable of supporting long-term growth.

FROM IMPORT SUBSTITUTION TO EXPORT EXPANSION

Food security and export development are often discussed as separate objectives. In reality, they are closely connected. The same processing capabilities that reduce dependence on imported food products can also generate export opportunities.

A factory producing cassava flour for local consumption can also supply regional markets. A processor manufacturing pepper sauces for domestic retailers can expand into supermarkets throughout the Caribbean.

A chocolate producer serving tourists can build a premium export brand.

This dual benefit makes agro-processing particularly attractive from a national development perspective. Every successful agro-processing enterprise contributes simultaneously to food resilience, job creation, manufacturing growth, and export diversification.

Few sectors offer such broad economic impact.

A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

Food security is one of the defining challenges of the twenty-first century.

For Trinidad and Tobago, solving that challenge will require more than increased agricultural production. It will require stronger value chains, greater investment in manufacturing, improved logistics, modern packaging, and closer collaboration between farmers and processors.

Fortunately, many of the building blocks already exist.

The country possesses fertile agricultural regions, entrepreneurial manufacturers, recognized food brands, export expertise, and a growing appreciation for locally produced goods.

The next step is scaling these strengths.

The future of food security may not be found solely in the field. It may be found in the factory.

Because when local crops are transformed into high-quality, shelf-stable, export-ready products, agriculture becomes more profitable, manufacturing becomes more competitive, and the nation becomes more resilient.

That is the real promise of agro-processing. Not simply feeding a population. But building an economy.

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BEYOND FOOD & BEVERAGE: The Rise of High-Value Chemicals How Trinidad and Tobago's Manufacturing Sector is Moving Up the Value Chain

BY GEORGE ELIAS

When people think of Trinidad and Tobago's manufacturing sector, food and beverage brands often come to mind first.

From internationally recognized beverages and condiments to snack foods and confectionery products, the sector has built an impressive reputation for producing consumer goods that reach markets across the Caribbean and beyond.

Yet another manufacturing story is quietly unfolding. One that may prove equally important to the country's industrial future.

Across the globe, chemical manufacturing is undergoing a transformation. Companies are increasingly moving away from reliance on bulk commodity production and toward specialized, higher-margin products designed for specific industries and applications.

The same shift is beginning to create opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago.

With decades of industrial expertise, access to energy resources, a strong engineering base, and established export infrastructure, the country is well positioned to expand into a new generation of value-added chemical manufacturing.

The opportunity is not simply to produce more chemicals. It is to produce smarter chemicals.

FROM COMMODITIES TO SPECIALTIES

For much of its industrial history, Trinidad and Tobago's chemical sector has been associated with large-scale commodity production.

Ammonia, methanol, and other petrochemical products have generated substantial export earnings and helped establish the country as one of the region's most significant industrial economies.

Commodity industries, however, face an ongoing challenge. Their profitability is heavily influenced by global market conditions.

Prices fluctuate. Margins tighten. Competition intensifies. Specialty chemicals operate differently. Instead of competing primarily on volume, manufacturers compete on performance, formulation, technical expertise, reliability, and innovation.

A customized industrial lubricant, for example, may generate significantly greater margins than a commodity chemical feedstock.

A construction additive that improves concrete durability may create more value than the raw materials from which it is

derived. The transition from commodities to specialties is ultimately a transition from selling molecules to selling solutions. And solutions tend to command higher value.

THE DETERGENT OPPORTUNITY

One of the most accessible opportunities lies in household and industrial cleaning products. Demand for detergents, disinfectants, sanitizers, and cleaning solutions continues to grow throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. These products are consumed daily across residential, commercial, hospitality, healthcare, and industrial sectors.

Unlike many imported products, detergents and cleaning formulations can often be manufactured regionally with the right combination of raw materials, blending capabilities, packaging infrastructure, and quality control systems. For local manufacturers, the opportunity extends beyond simple production.

Private-label manufacturing, specialized industrial cleaning solutions, environmentally friendly formulations, and hospitality-focused products all represent growing market segments.

As tourism expands across the Caribbean, demand for high-quality commercial cleaning products is expected to increase as well.

The result is a sector with strong regional demand and significant potential for export growth.

LUBRICANTS: A REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL NECESSITY

Another promising area is lubricant manufacturing. Virtually every industrial sector depends on lubricants.

Transportation fleets require engine oils and hydraulic fluids. Manufacturing plants rely on specialized industrial lubricants. Marine operators need products designed for harsh operating environments. Construction equipment requires high-performance formulations.

The Caribbean's maritime, manufacturing, transportation, and energy sectors collectively create a substantial market for lubricant products.

Trinidad and Tobago already possesses many of the technical capabilities required to support blending, packaging, testing, and distribution operations.

The next stage involves moving beyond standard products toward higher-performance formulations tailored to specific industries. This is where technical expertise becomes a competitive advantage.

Companies that can deliver specialized solutions often secure stronger customer relationships and higher margins than those competing solely on price.

BUILDING MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION CHEMICALS

The construction sector presents another significant opportunity.

Across the Caribbean, governments and private developers continue investing in housing, infrastructure, tourism projects, and commercial development.

These projects increasingly rely on specialized construction chemicals.

- Concrete admixtures.
- Waterproofing systems.
- Protective coatings.
- Sealants.
- Adhesives.
- Surface treatments.
- Performance-enhancing additives.

These products improve durability, efficiency, and long-term building performance. More importantly, they represent a rapidly growing segment of global chemical manufacturing.

As regional construction activity continues to expand, local production of construction chemicals could help reduce import dependence while creating new export opportunities.

For manufacturers, this is not simply a construction story. It is a manufacturing diversification story.

WHY VALUE ADDITION MATTERS

The economic case for specialty chemicals is straightforward. Higher-value products create more economic activity per unit of production. They require greater technical expertise.

They support research and development. They encourage workforce development. They generate stronger intellectual property opportunities. And they are generally less vulnerable to commodity price fluctuations.

This matters because economic diversification is not simply about producing different products. It is about producing products that generate greater value.

A container of specialty coatings can often create more economic return than a significantly larger shipment of lower-value commodity materials.

For Trinidad and Tobago, moving up the chemical value chain represents an opportunity to maximize the benefits of existing industrial capabilities while expanding into new markets.

INNOVATION BECOMES THE DIFFERENTIATOR

Success in specialty chemicals depends increasingly on innovation. Customers expect products that perform better, last longer, improve efficiency, and address specific challenges. This creates opportunities for research and development, collaboration with universities, product testing, and technical partnerships.

Manufacturers that invest in formulation science, quality assurance, and product development are often able to create distinct competitive advantages. This is particularly important in export markets where differentiation can be the key to success.

Companies that solve customer problems effectively become far more difficult to replace. In specialty chemicals, innovation is often the product.

SUSTAINABILITY IS RESHAPING THE INDUSTRY

Environmental considerations are also creating new opportunities. Across the world, industries are seeking products that reduce environmental impact while maintaining performance.

Demand is growing for biodegradable cleaners, environmentally friendly coatings, water-saving chemical solutions, and products that support sustainability goals. Manufacturers capable of developing these solutions may find themselves well positioned for future growth.

This trend aligns with broader efforts to attract investment into greener industrial activities while enhancing manufacturing competitiveness.

In many ways, sustainability is becoming a business opportunity as much as an environmental objective.

THE NEXT INDUSTRIAL CHAPTER

Trinidad and Tobago's industrial history was built on energy.

Its future may increasingly be built on what the country chooses to do with that advantage. The infrastructure, engineering talent, logistics networks, manufacturing expertise, and export experience already exist. The challenge is transforming these strengths into higher-value industrial activity.

Specialty chemicals offer a compelling pathway forward. They leverage existing capabilities while creating opportunities for innovation, export growth, workforce development, and economic diversification. Most importantly, they allow manufacturers to capture more value from every stage of production.

Food and beverage manufacturing will remain a cornerstone of the economy.

But as Trinidad and Tobago looks toward the next phase of industrial development, another opportunity is emerging. One measured not in volume alone, but in expertise, innovation, and value creation.

The future of manufacturing may not be about producing more. It may be about producing smarter. And in the world of high-value chemicals, that future has already begun.

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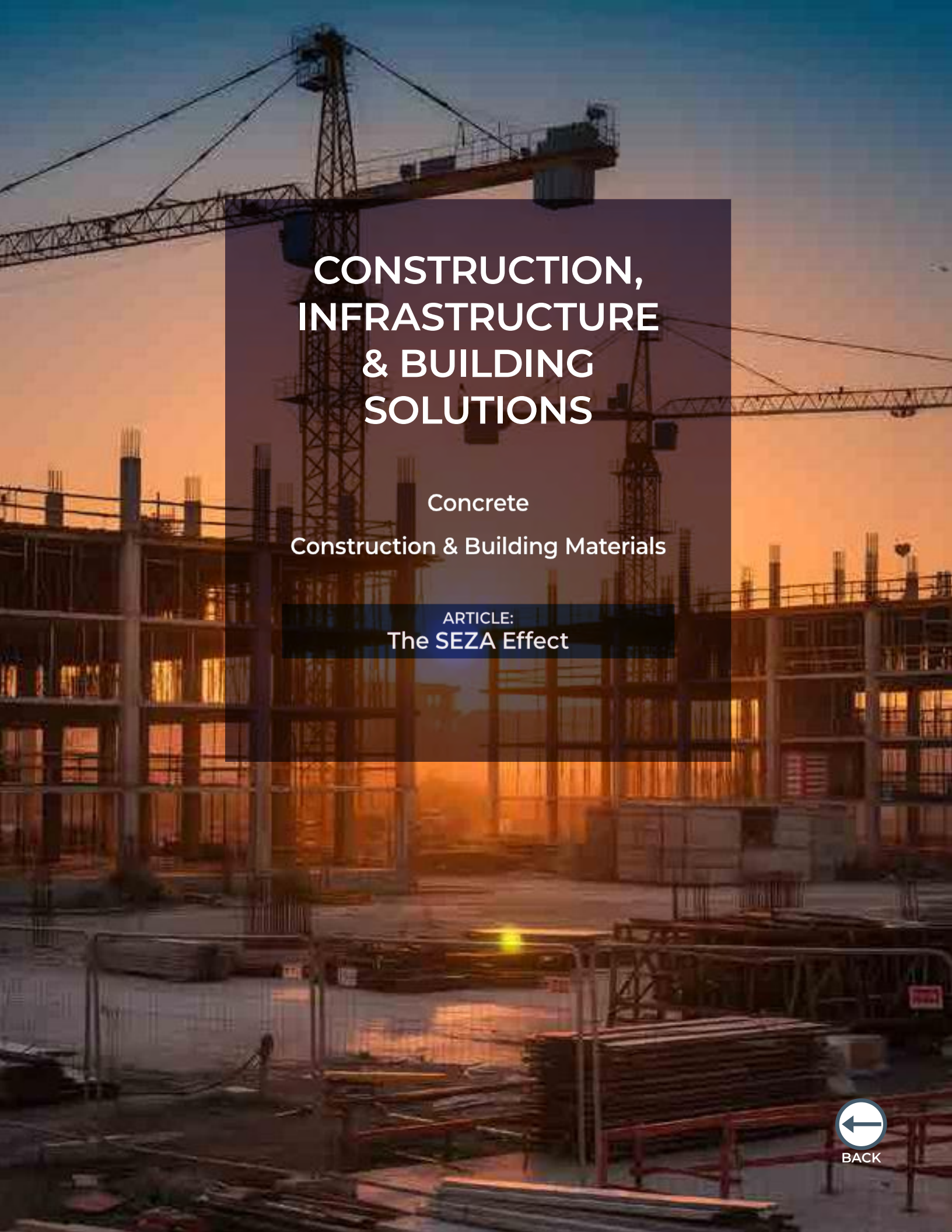
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A large construction site at sunset. In the background, several tall tower cranes are silhouetted against a bright orange and yellow sky. In the foreground and middle ground, the skeletal frames of multiple-story buildings are visible, with some windows glowing with interior light. Stacks of construction materials, including rebar and pipes, are scattered on the ground in the lower part of the image.

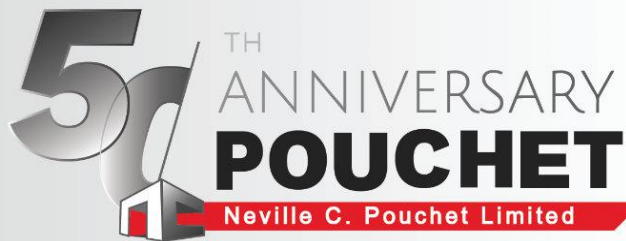
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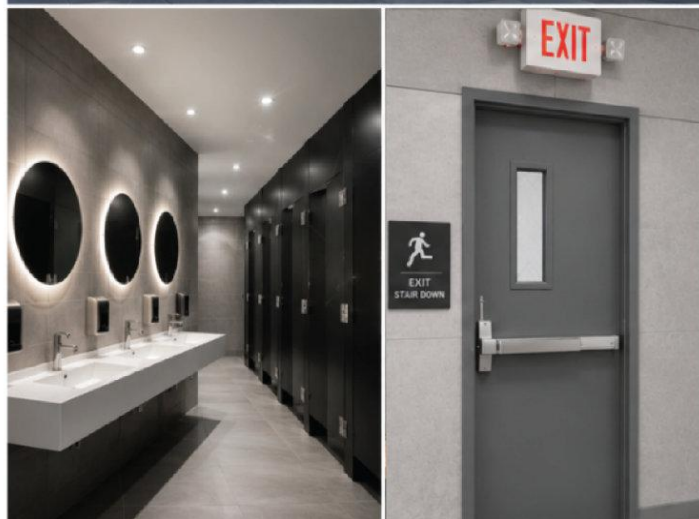
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THE SEZA EFFECT: A New Era for Foreign Direct Investment

BY GEORGE ELIAS

When Trinidad and Tobago fully proclaimed the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act in July 2024, it marked more than a legislative change. It signaled the beginning of a new investment framework designed to reposition the country as a competitive destination for foreign direct investment (FDI) in a rapidly evolving global economy.

Now, after the first full year of operations under the Trinidad and Tobago Special Economic Zones Authority (SEZA), early indicators suggest that the transition from the decades-old Free Zones regime to the modern SEZ framework is beginning to reshape the investment landscape.

FROM FREE ZONES TO SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES

For many years, the Free Zones system provided tax incentives to export-oriented businesses operating in designated locations. While successful in attracting certain investments, the regime increasingly faced challenges as international tax and trade standards evolved.

The SEZ framework was introduced to address these concerns while maintaining Trinidad and Tobago's attractiveness to investors. The new regime places greater emphasis on transparency, economic substance, regulatory oversight, and measurable economic impact. It aligns the country more closely with international best practices promoted by organizations such as the OECD and the European Union.

Unlike the previous model, the new framework is administered by SEZA, which is responsible for licensing, regulation, compliance monitoring, and the ongoing assessment of economic performance. The authority reviews applications for Operators, SEZ Enterprises, and Single Zone Enterprises, creating a structured governance model intended to provide certainty for investors while ensuring national economic benefits.

A MORE FLEXIBLE INVESTMENT MODEL

One of the most significant innovations of the new regime is the introduction of the Single Zone Enterprise (SZE) licence.

Under the Free Zones model, businesses generally operated within designated free zone locations. The SZE structure provides greater flexibility by allowing a qualifying company to establish and manage its own dedicated special economic zone while operating as the sole enterprise within that zone. This approach is particularly attractive to large investors seeking customized facilities, specialized infrastructure, or operational autonomy.

The recent designation of Nearshore Teleservices TT Ltd as a Single Zone Enterprise highlights how the framework can

support modern service industries, particularly in high-growth sectors such as business process outsourcing (BPO) and information and communications technology (ICT).

The significance of such approvals extends beyond a single company. They demonstrate the government's willingness to facilitate investment in knowledge-based industries that generate foreign exchange, create skilled employment, and contribute to economic diversification.

TARGETING DIVERSIFICATION

A key objective of the SEZ programme is to reduce Trinidad and Tobago's dependence on the energy sector by encouraging investment in a broader range of industries.

The legislation specifically accommodates sectors including manufacturing, logistics and distribution, ICT, business process outsourcing, agriculture and agro-processing, renewable energy, maritime services, aviation services, financial services, creative industries, medical tourism, and fish processing.

This wider scope reflects a strategic shift in national economic policy. Rather than focusing exclusively on traditional export manufacturing, the SEZ framework seeks to attract investment into industries capable of generating long-term, sustainable growth and foreign exchange earnings.

For international investors evaluating Caribbean opportunities, the breadth of eligible sectors enhances Trinidad and Tobago's competitiveness relative to jurisdictions that offer incentives only to a narrow range of activities.

THE 2026 INCENTIVE PACKAGE

At the heart of the SEZ value proposition is a carefully structured package of fiscal and non-fiscal incentives.

For 2026, approved SEZ entities may benefit from:

- A reduced corporation tax rate of 15 percent.
- Exemptions from property tax.
- Exemptions or waivers on approved customs duties.
- Zero-rated VAT treatment on approved capital goods and other qualifying articles.
- Streamlined regulatory approvals and administrative processes designed to improve ease of doing business.

These incentives are significant when viewed against the broader regional investment environment. They lower operating costs, improve project economics, and provide investors with greater certainty during the critical early years of a project.

Importantly, the incentives are tied to eligibility requirements and economic substance criteria, ensuring that benefits are linked to genuine investment activity rather than simply providing tax advantages.

For sectors such as BPO, ICT, and advanced manufacturing, the combination of tax incentives and Trinidad and Tobago's educated workforce creates a compelling proposition for companies seeking nearshore operations serving North American and regional markets.

MEASURING THE FIRST-YEAR IMPACT

While the new regime remains in its early stages, several positive trends have emerged.

First, the establishment of a dedicated regulatory authority has created a clearer institutional framework for investors. Businesses now have a single point of contact for licensing and approvals, reducing uncertainty and improving transparency.

Second, the introduction of Single Zone Enterprise licensing has expanded the range of investment structures available, allowing larger investors to tailor operations to their specific requirements.

Third, the SEZ programme directly supports the government's broader diversification agenda by targeting sectors capable of generating export earnings outside the traditional energy economy.

Perhaps most importantly, the new framework sends a signal to international markets that Trinidad and Tobago is actively modernizing its investment environment and aligning itself with global standards.

LOOKING AHEAD

The ultimate success of the SEZ programme will be measured not by the number of licences issued, but by the quality of investments attracted, the jobs created, and the foreign exchange generated.

The first year of SEZA's operations has established the foundations for this transformation. The transition from Free Zones to Special Economic Zones represents a significant evolution in investment policy—one that emphasizes competitiveness, compliance, and economic diversification.

As more companies pursue SEZ Enterprise and Single Zone Enterprise status, and as success stories such as Nearshore Tele-services TT Ltd begin to emerge, Trinidad and Tobago may find itself entering a new chapter in its effort to attract global capital.

For a country seeking to double non-energy exports and build a more resilient economy, the SEZA effect could prove to be one of the most consequential economic reforms of the decade.



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THE “NEARSHORE” SHIFT:

T&T as the New Supply Chain Hub

BY GEORGE ELIAS

For more than three decades, global manufacturing followed a relatively simple formula: produce goods where labor was cheapest, ship them across oceans, and rely on increasingly efficient global logistics networks to deliver products to market.

That model is changing.

From pandemic-era disruptions and geopolitical tensions to rising transportation costs and supply chain bottlenecks, manufacturers worldwide are reassessing where they produce goods and how they reach customers. Increasingly, companies serving North American markets are pursuing a strategy known as nearshoring—moving production closer to end consumers to reduce risk, improve responsiveness, and strengthen supply chain resilience.

As this shift accelerates, Trinidad and Tobago is emerging as an unlikely but compelling contender for investment.

Located at the crossroads of the Caribbean and South America, supported by a sophisticated manufacturing base and a modernizing investment framework, the country is positioning itself as a strategic supply chain hub for companies seeking alternatives to traditional manufacturing centers in Asia.

THE END OF “JUST-IN-TIME” GLOBALIZATION

For years, manufacturers prioritized efficiency above all else. Long supply chains stretching across continents were accepted as the cost of doing business in a globalized economy.

Recent events have challenged that assumption.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in international logistics networks. Shipping delays became commonplace. Container shortages disrupted production schedules. Geopolitical tensions created uncertainty across major trade routes. More recently, disruptions affecting key maritime corridors have highlighted the risks associated with relying heavily on distant suppliers.

As a result, many companies are adopting a “just-in-case” approach rather than a purely “just-in-time” strategy.

The focus has shifted toward resilience, reliability, and geographic diversification.

This trend has created opportunities for jurisdictions capable of offering proximity to major markets, strong logistics infrastructure, and a stable business environment.

A STRATEGIC LOCATION AT THE GATEWAY OF THE AMERICAS

Few countries possess Trinidad and Tobago’s geographic advantages. Situated at the southernmost end of the Caribbean, just off the coast of South America, the country occupies a strategic posi-

tion along major maritime routes linking North America, Latin America, Europe, and the wider Caribbean Basin.

From Trinidad and Tobago, manufacturers can efficiently serve markets throughout the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), northern South America, Central America, and the eastern seaboard of North America.

For investors, geography translates directly into competitive advantage.

Shorter shipping distances reduce transportation costs, improve delivery times, and provide greater flexibility in responding to market demand. In an era where speed-to-market is increasingly important, proximity has become a valuable asset.

For North American companies seeking to diversify supply chains away from Asia without sacrificing market access, Trinidad and Tobago offers a location much closer to their customers.

A MANUFACTURING BASE ALREADY IN PLACE

Unlike many emerging investment destinations, Trinidad and Tobago is not starting from scratch.

The country has spent decades building a diversified manufacturing sector that exports products throughout the Caribbean and beyond. Local companies produce food and beverages, construction materials, chemicals, plastics, packaging, consumer goods, industrial products, and a wide range of value-added manufactured items.

This existing industrial ecosystem provides advantages that many competitors cannot easily replicate.

Manufacturers considering investment opportunities benefit from access to established suppliers, experienced technical personnel, logistics providers, engineering services, and supporting industries.

Rather than building entirely new industrial capabilities, investors can integrate into an ecosystem that already possesses significant manufacturing expertise.

This reduces startup costs and accelerates project implementation.

LOGISTICS AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Supply chains are only as strong as the infrastructure supporting them.

Recognizing this reality, Trinidad and Tobago has continued to strengthen its logistics capabilities through its ports, transportation networks, warehousing facilities, and trade facilitation systems.

The country's port infrastructure serves as an important gateway for regional trade, connecting manufacturers to international shipping routes and export markets.

For companies operating regional distribution networks, Trinidad and Tobago offers the ability to consolidate inventory, coordinate shipments, and serve multiple markets from a single location.

As supply chains become increasingly regionalized, such capabilities become more valuable.

The ability to manufacture, store, and distribute products efficiently from a strategically located hub can significantly improve competitiveness.

THE RISE OF THE DIGITAL INVESTOR EXPERIENCE

Physical infrastructure alone is no longer enough to attract investment.

Today's investors also expect efficient regulatory processes, transparency, and ease of doing business.

This is where Trinidad and Tobago's digital modernization efforts are playing an increasingly important role.

The country's "Single Window" approach to trade and investment facilitation is designed to streamline interactions between businesses and government agencies. Through digital platforms and integrated systems, investors can access information, submit applications, and manage regulatory requirements more efficiently than through traditional paper-based processes.

For international investors evaluating multiple jurisdictions, administrative efficiency matters.

Lengthy approval processes and regulatory uncertainty can significantly affect investment decisions. Digital platforms that simplify procedures and improve transparency help reduce these barriers while creating a more investor-friendly environment.

The evolution of Trinidad and Tobago's trade and investment facilitation systems reflects a broader recognition that competitiveness today depends as much on administrative efficiency as it does on physical infrastructure.

THE NEARSHORE MANUFACTURING OPPORTUNITY

The industries most likely to benefit from nearshoring trends share several characteristics.

They typically require reliable logistics, access to regional markets, skilled labor, and the ability to respond quickly to changing customer demands. Food manufacturing, packaging, consumer goods, industrial products, pharmaceuticals, specialty chemicals, and light manufacturing all fall within this category.

Trinidad and Tobago is well-positioned to compete in many of these sectors.

Its established industrial base, export experience, and access to regional trade agreements provide manufacturers with a plat-

form for growth. At the same time, ongoing efforts to improve investment facilitation and strengthen logistics infrastructure enhance the country's attractiveness as a production location.

The objective is not necessarily to replace large-scale Asian manufacturing centers. Rather, it is to capture a portion of the growing demand for regional production closer to North American and Caribbean markets.

Even a modest share of this expanding market could generate significant economic benefits.

BEYOND MANUFACTURING

The nearshoring opportunity extends beyond factory floors.

Modern supply chains require logistics providers, warehouse operators, customs brokers, transportation companies, technology firms, maintenance services, financial institutions, and professional service providers.

As manufacturing activity grows, these supporting industries grow alongside it.

The result is the creation of integrated economic ecosystems that generate employment, stimulate investment, and increase export earnings across multiple sectors.

This multiplier effect is one of the reasons nearshoring has become such an important economic development strategy globally.

It creates opportunities not only for manufacturers but for entire business communities.

A NEW ROLE IN GLOBAL TRADE

For much of the twentieth century, Trinidad and Tobago's economic fortunes were closely tied to natural resources. While energy will remain important, the future increasingly depends on diversification and the ability to compete in emerging sectors.

Nearshoring presents one such opportunity.

The convergence of supply chain realignment, digital transformation, regional trade integration, and growing demand for resilient manufacturing networks has created a favorable environment for investment.

With its strategic location, established industrial capabilities, modernizing investment systems, and access to regional markets, Trinidad and Tobago is positioning itself as more than a manufacturing destination.

It is positioning itself as a supply chain hub for the Americas.

As companies continue to rethink where they manufacture and how they serve their customers, the question is no longer whether nearshoring will reshape global trade.

The question is which countries are best positioned to benefit.

Increasingly, Trinidad and Tobago is making a strong case that it should be among them.

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WHY TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S MANUFACTURING FUTURE DEPENDS ON BUILDING A NEW GENERATION OF SKILLED TALENT

BY GEORGE ELIAS

Walk into a modern manufacturing facility today and you are just as likely to find programmable logic controllers, automated packaging lines, robotics, digital sensors, and data dashboards as you are welders, machinists, and production operators.

The factory floor is changing.

Across Trinidad and Tobago, manufacturers are investing in automation, digitization, and advanced production technologies to remain competitive in increasingly demanding global markets. The shift is transforming everything from food processing and packaging to chemicals, plastics, construction materials, and industrial manufacturing.

Yet as factories become smarter, a critical challenge is emerging.

The skills required to operate a twenty-first-century manufacturing facility are evolving faster than the workforce itself.

For many manufacturers, the greatest obstacle to growth is no longer access to capital, technology, or export markets. It is access to talent.

The result is a growing skills gap that threatens to slow productivity, limit expansion, and constrain the country's broader economic diversification ambitions.

At the same time, it is creating an opportunity to fundamentally rethink how Trinidad and Tobago prepares young people for careers in modern industry.

THE NEW FACTORY FLOOR

For decades, manufacturing jobs were largely associated with manual labour and repetitive tasks.

Today's reality is very different.

Modern production facilities increasingly rely on automated systems that require workers who can troubleshoot equipment, interpret data, understand digital interfaces, and work alongside sophisticated machinery.

The contemporary factory worker must often combine traditional technical competencies with skills in automation, electronics, information technology, quality management, and process optimization.

Manufacturers are looking for technicians rather than simply operators.

They need problem-solvers rather than task performers.

They require employees who can adapt to changing technologies and continuously upgrade their skills throughout their careers.

As Industry 4.0 technologies become more widespread, the demand for these capabilities will only increase.

THE EDUCATION CHALLENGE

While Trinidad and Tobago has long maintained a strong tradition of technical and vocational education, many employers believe a gap remains between training curricula and workplace realities.

Traditional vocational programmes have historically focused on preparing workers for specific trades. While these skills remain essential, employers increasingly require broader competencies that combine technical expertise with digital literacy, critical thinking, teamwork, and adaptability.

The challenge is not that existing training systems are failing.

Rather, manufacturing itself is changing so rapidly that training institutions must continuously evolve to keep pace.

This reality is not unique to Trinidad and Tobago. Around the world, manufacturers are grappling with the same question: how do you prepare workers for jobs that may look very different just five years from now?

The answer increasingly lies in flexible, industry-driven training models that emphasize lifelong learning and practical workplace experience.

BUILDING SKILLS FOR A NEW ECONOMY

Recognizing the need to strengthen workforce readiness, Trinidad and Tobago has introduced a range of initiatives aimed at equipping young people with marketable skills aligned to emerging economic opportunities.

One of the most significant recent developments is the Construction Sector Skills Training initiative, introduced as part of the Government's youth empowerment strategy. The programme includes industry-focused training and certification opportunities designed to equip young people with practical, employment-ready skills. Components include skills certification for young entrepreneurs, plumbing and pipeline training, and electrical installation programmes that lead to recognized industry credentials.

Although focused on construction, the broader significance extends well beyond that sector.

The programme reflects an important shift toward competency-based training that prioritizes industry certification, practical experience, and workforce readiness—principles that are equally relevant to manufacturing.

It is part of a wider recognition that future economic competitiveness depends on developing skilled, adaptable workers who can thrive in increasingly technical environments.

THE RISE OF INDUSTRY-LED TRAINING

Increasingly, employers themselves are becoming active participants in workforce development.

Organizations such as the National Energy Skills Center (NESC) have demonstrated how industry-responsive training can help close skills gaps by providing specialized technical education designed around employer needs. NESC's programmes span areas including plant operations, maintenance, welding, construction, and industrial technologies, helping to build a pipeline of skilled technical talent.

Similarly, institutions such as the MIC Institute of Technology continue to provide vocational and apprenticeship pathways that expose trainees to real-world workplace environments while developing technical and employability skills. Through programmes such as MuST and HYPE, thousands of young people have received training in priority economic sectors.

This collaborative approach is becoming increasingly important.

Manufacturers understand better than anyone which skills are in demand. Training institutions possess the expertise to deliver structured learning. Governments provide the policy framework and investment support necessary to scale programmes nationally.

When all three work together, workforce development becomes more effective and more responsive to economic needs.

YOUTH AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

One of Trinidad and Tobago's greatest strengths is its young population.

However, unlocking that potential requires creating pathways that connect education directly to employment opportunities.

Programmes such as the On-the-Job Training (OJT) Programme continue to play an important role by providing young people with workplace exposure and practical experience that bridges the gap between classroom learning and professional employment. The programme specifically targets individuals between the ages of 16 and 35 and focuses on developing occupational skills and work experience.

For manufacturers facing labour shortages, these initiatives represent more than social programmes.

They are investments in future productivity.

Every young person who acquires technical skills, industry certifications, or workplace experience expands the country's human capital base and strengthens the long-term competitiveness of the manufacturing sector.

PREPARING FOR INDUSTRY 4.0

The future of manufacturing will be increasingly defined by automation, artificial intelligence, predictive maintenance, robotics, advanced analytics, and interconnected production systems.

Importantly, these technologies are unlikely to eliminate the need for workers.

Instead, they will change the nature of work.

Factories will continue to require people—but those people will need different skills.

Workers capable of managing automated systems, interpreting operational data, maintaining advanced equipment, and solving complex production challenges will become increasingly valuable.

This places continuous learning at the center of workforce development.

The most successful manufacturers will be those that view employee training not as a one-time activity but as an ongoing strategic investment.

CLOSING THE GAP

The conversation about Trinidad and Tobago's manufacturing future often focuses on exports, investment, diversification, and technology.

All are important.

But none will succeed without people.

The factories of the future will require a workforce that is skilled, adaptable, technologically capable, and ready to embrace change. Building that workforce will require stronger partnerships between industry, educators, and policymakers, along with sustained investment in technical and vocational training.

The good news is that the foundations are already being laid.

From skills certification programmes and apprenticeships to youth training initiatives and industry-led education partnerships, Trinidad and Tobago is taking important steps toward developing the talent needed for a modern industrial economy.

The challenge now is scale.

Because in the race to build a globally competitive manufacturing sector, the most important investment may not be in machines at all.

It may be in the people who operate them.

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BREAKING INTO LATIN AMERICA: The PSA Advantage How Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers are Expanding Beyond CARICOM

BY GEORGE ELIAS

For decades, Trinidad and Tobago's manufacturers have looked first to the Caribbean when pursuing export growth.

The region provided a natural starting point. Shared history, cultural familiarity, established trade relationships, and preferential market access through CARICOM made neighboring islands the logical destination for locally produced goods.

But as manufacturers pursue ambitious growth targets and the nation advances its economic diversification agenda, many companies are looking beyond the traditional boundaries of the Caribbean.

Their sights are increasingly set on Latin America.

From Panama's strategic logistics hub to Colombia's rapidly growing consumer market and Chile's highly developed economy, Trinidad and Tobago manufacturers are discovering that the next frontier for export expansion may lie to the west and south rather than solely within the Caribbean Basin.

At the center of this strategy is a powerful but often underappreciated trade policy tool: the Partial Scope Agreement, commonly known as a PSA arrangement.

These agreements are helping local companies gain preferential access to some of Latin America's most dynamic markets while positioning Trinidad and Tobago as a bridge between CARICOM and the wider Americas.

LOOKING BEYOND TRADITIONAL MARKETS

CARICOM remains a critical market for Trinidad and Tobago manufacturers.

The region continues to absorb significant volumes of food products, beverages, construction materials, chemicals, packaging solutions, and consumer goods produced locally.

Yet success within CARICOM has also highlighted a challenge.

The Caribbean market, while valuable, is relatively small. Population constraints limit the scale of future growth, particularly for manufacturers seeking to expand production, achieve economies of scale, and increase export revenues.

Latin America presents a different opportunity.

The combined markets of Panama, Colombia, and Chile represent tens of millions of consumers, growing industrial sectors, and increasing demand for imported manufactured goods. For Trinidad and Tobago businesses, these markets offer the prospect of significantly larger customer bases than those available within the Caribbean alone.

The challenge, of course, is gaining access. That is where trade agreements become strategically important.

THE POWER OF PREFERENTIAL ACCESS

Partial Scope Agreements are designed to reduce barriers to trade between participating countries through negotiated tariff preferences and market access concessions.

Unlike comprehensive free trade agreements, Partial Scope Agreements focus on specific products and sectors, allowing countries to create targeted opportunities for exporters while protecting sensitive industries.

For manufacturers, the practical impact can be substantial.

Reduced tariffs improve competitiveness. Lower import duties make products more attractive to buyers. Streamlined trading arrangements reduce costs and create opportunities to enter markets that might otherwise be difficult to penetrate.

In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, these agreements are becoming an increasingly important component of export growth strategies.

PANAMA: A GATEWAY TO THE AMERICAS

Perhaps the most significant example is the Partial Scope Trade Agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and Panama.

The agreement provides preferential market access for hundreds of products and was specifically designed to strengthen bilateral trade and investment relations. More than 200 Trinidad and Tobago products were granted preferential access to the Panamanian market, covering a wide range of manufactured and agro-processed goods.

For local manufacturers, Panama represents more than a market of consumers. It is one of the world's most important logistics and distribution centers.

Home to the Panama Canal and a sophisticated logistics ecosystem, the country serves as a gateway connecting North America, South America, the Caribbean, and global shipping networks.

A successful presence in Panama can therefore create opportunities far beyond the country's domestic market. Companies that establish distribution relationships there gain access to broader regional supply chains and commercial networks throughout the hemisphere.

For export-oriented manufacturers, this makes Panama both a destination and a strategic launchpad.

COLOMBIA: ACCESS TO ONE OF SOUTH AMERICA'S LARGEST MARKETS

The Colombia-CARICOM Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement offers another avenue for expansion.

Originally signed in 1994, the agreement provides preferential treatment for a range of products traded between Colombia and CARICOM's more developed economies, including Trinidad and Tobago. The arrangement was specifically designed to strengthen trade, investment, and economic cooperation between the parties.

For Trinidad and Tobago manufacturers, Colombia presents compelling opportunities.

With a population exceeding 50 million people and a diversified economy, the country represents one of the largest consumer markets accessible through existing trade arrangements.

Demand for processed foods, industrial products, packaging materials, chemicals, construction inputs, and specialty manufactured goods continues to grow alongside economic development and urbanization.

Equally important is geography.

Colombia is closer to Trinidad and Tobago than many of the country's traditional export destinations, creating logistical advantages that can translate into faster delivery times and lower transportation costs.

In an era where supply chain efficiency increasingly influences purchasing decisions, proximity matters.

CHILE: OPENING A NEW PACIFIC CORRIDOR

The newest opportunity may also be the most transformative.

In 2025, Trinidad and Tobago and Chile signed a Partial Scope Agreement, the first trade agreement of its kind between Chile and a CARICOM member state. The agreement creates a new framework for expanding commercial ties and reducing trade barriers between the two countries.

Chile is widely recognized as one of Latin America's most open and internationally connected economies.

It maintains extensive global trade relationships and serves as an important gateway to Pacific markets.

For Trinidad and Tobago manufacturers, improved access to Chile opens possibilities that extend beyond bilateral trade. It creates connections to new supply chains, new distribution channels, and new partnerships in one of the region's most business-friendly environments.

The agreement also signals a broader shift in Trinidad and Tobago's trade strategy: pursuing direct commercial relationships with key Latin American partners rather than relying solely on traditional regional frameworks.

BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN REGIONS

Historically, Trinidad and Tobago has occupied a unique geographic position. Located at the southern edge of the Caribbean and just miles from the South American mainland, the country sits naturally between two economic regions.

For years, that location was viewed primarily through the lens of energy exports and maritime trade.

Today, it is increasingly being viewed as a strategic commercial advantage.

As manufacturers expand into Latin America while maintaining strong Caribbean relationships, Trinidad and Tobago is becoming a bridge between CARICOM and the wider hemisphere.

This positioning creates opportunities not only for exporters but also for logistics providers, distributors, warehousing operators, professional services firms, and investors seeking access to multiple regional markets from a single location.

THE NEXT PHASE OF EXPORT GROWTH

The future of Trinidad and Tobago's manufacturing sector will depend largely on its ability to access larger markets and compete internationally.

Trade agreements alone do not guarantee success. Companies must still invest in market intelligence, product adaptation, distribution partnerships, branding, and customer relationships.

However, preferential trade arrangements provide a critical advantage.

They reduce barriers, improve competitiveness, and create pathways into markets that might otherwise remain difficult to access.

As global trade patterns continue to evolve, manufacturers that leverage these agreements effectively will be better positioned to expand exports, diversify revenue streams, and achieve sustainable growth.

For many Trinidad and Tobago companies, the next chapter of export success may not be written solely within CARICOM.

It may be written in Panama City, Bogotá, Santiago—and throughout a Latin American marketplace that is becoming increasingly accessible through the strategic use of Partial Scope Agreements.

In that sense, the PSA advantage is about more than tariffs.

It is about expanding horizons, unlocking new opportunities, and redefining what is possible for Trinidad and Tobago manufacturing in the twenty-first century.

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THE DIGITAL SANDBOX:

T&T's Bid for Fintech Leadership

BY GEORGE ELIAS

For years, Trinidad and Tobago's financial sector has been viewed as stable, well-regulated, and highly respected within the Caribbean. Yet stability alone is no longer enough in an era where digital payments, blockchain technologies, and virtual assets are transforming how businesses and consumers move money.

Today, the country is positioning itself for a new role: becoming a regional hub for fintech innovation.

The twin engines driving this transformation are the Central Bank's Regulatory Sandbox and the newly implemented Virtual Assets and Virtual Asset Service Providers (VA/VASP) regulatory framework, both of which are designed to encourage innovation while maintaining strong safeguards against financial crime and systemic risk.

Together, they represent one of the most significant developments in Trinidad and Tobago's financial services sector in decades.

BUILDING INNOVATION WITHOUT SACRIFICING STABILITY

The challenge facing regulators worldwide is straightforward: how can innovation be encouraged without exposing consumers and the financial system to unacceptable risks?

Trinidad and Tobago's answer has been the creation of a Regulatory Sandbox, a controlled environment that allows fintech companies to test innovative products, services, business models, and delivery mechanisms under the close supervision of regulators before they are released to the wider public. The initiative is administered jointly by financial regulators and provides provisional authorization for qualifying participants.

Rather than forcing startups to navigate a regulatory framework designed for traditional financial institutions, the sandbox allows innovators to demonstrate the viability of new technologies while regulators gain firsthand insight into emerging business models.

This approach has become increasingly popular among leading financial centres worldwide, including Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates. Trinidad and Tobago is now adapting the concept to suit the realities of a Caribbean economy while preserving the integrity of its financial system.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE VASP ERA

The country's fintech ambitions received a major boost with the passage of the Virtual Assets and Virtual Asset Service Providers Act, 2025, which came into effect following Presidential assent in late December 2025 and entered full imple-

mentation in early 2026. The legislation establishes the first comprehensive regulatory framework governing virtual asset activities conducted in or from Trinidad and Tobago.

The law covers activities such as:

- Exchanges between virtual assets and traditional currencies.
- Exchanges between different virtual assets.
- Transfers of virtual assets.
- Administration of virtual assets.
- Financial services connected to the issuance or sale of virtual assets.

Importantly, the legislation was designed not simply to regulate cryptocurrencies but to create a framework capable of accommodating future innovations in digital finance.

For investors and technology entrepreneurs, regulatory certainty is often as valuable as tax incentives. By clearly defining what activities are permitted, supervised, and licensed, Trinidad and Tobago is reducing one of the largest barriers to fintech investment in emerging markets.

A SAFE HARBOR FOR RESPONSIBLE INNOVATION

One of the most interesting features of the new framework is its transitional approach.

Rather than immediately opening the market to unrestricted virtual asset activity, regulators have established a supervised pathway through the sandbox system. During the transition period, virtual asset service providers must operate under regulatory oversight, creating an environment where innovation can occur while consumer protection and anti-money laundering standards remain paramount.

This balance between innovation and oversight could become Trinidad and Tobago's competitive advantage.

Many jurisdictions fall into one of two camps: either regulation is so restrictive that innovation struggles to emerge, or oversight is so weak that investor confidence suffers. Trinidad and Tobago is attempting to occupy the middle ground—a jurisdiction where legitimate fintech businesses can innovate with confidence while operating within a clear legal framework.

For international investors seeking a Caribbean base for digital payment solutions, remittance technologies, blockchain applications, or virtual asset services, that balance is increasingly attractive.

EARLY SIGNS OF MOMENTUM

The ecosystem is already beginning to take shape.

In May 2026, the Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission (TTSEC) publicly recognized several companies operating within the VASP regulatory sandbox. These firms represent a cross-section of local technology entrepreneurs seeking to develop solutions in digital finance under the supervision of regulators.

The emergence of a supervised cohort of fintech innovators is important because successful ecosystems rarely develop through legislation alone. They require entrepreneurs, investors, regulators, financial institutions, and technology providers working together within a common framework.

The dialogue now taking place among regulators, law enforcement agencies, financial institutions, and fintech operators suggests that the foundations of such an ecosystem are beginning to emerge.

A REGIONAL OPPORTUNITY

The Caribbean remains one of the world's most fragmented payments markets.



Cross-border transactions can be expensive, remittances often carry significant fees, and many businesses still encounter challenges when moving funds between jurisdictions.

This creates a substantial opportunity for fintech innovation.

Digital payment platforms, blockchain-enabled settlement systems, and regulated virtual asset solutions could help reduce transaction costs, improve efficiency, and increase financial inclusion across the region.

Trinidad and Tobago is uniquely positioned to capitalize on this opportunity. It possesses a relatively sophisticated financial sector, strong telecommunications infrastructure, a highly educated workforce, and established expertise in regulatory supervision.

When combined with the new sandbox and VASP frameworks, these advantages create the conditions necessary to attract fintech investment that might otherwise flow to larger international centres.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

The journey toward fintech leadership is not without obstacles.

Access to venture capital remains limited throughout much of the Caribbean. Digital talent is in high demand globally, creating competition for skilled professionals. Cybersecurity risks continue to evolve rapidly, and regulators must constantly adapt to emerging technologies.

There is also the challenge of perception. While virtual assets and blockchain technologies offer significant opportunities, they are often associated with speculation, fraud, and money laundering.

The success of Trinidad and Tobago's framework will therefore depend on maintaining rigorous standards while avoiding unnecessary barriers to innovation.

The emphasis on compliance, transparency, and anti-money laundering safeguards embedded within the new legislation suggests policymakers understand this reality.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The true measure of success will not be the number of regulations enacted or sandbox participants approved. It will be the creation of sustainable businesses, high-value jobs, exportable financial services, and new sources of economic growth.

What is clear, however, is that Trinidad and Tobago has taken a decisive step toward participating in the future of finance rather than simply observing it.

The Regulatory Sandbox and VASP framework are more than regulatory initiatives. They are signals to innovators, investors, and entrepreneurs that the country intends to be an active player in the digital economy.

If executed effectively, the digital sandbox may become far more than a testing ground for new ideas. It could become the foundation upon which Trinidad and Tobago builds its reputation as the Caribbean's most trusted destination for fintech innovation.

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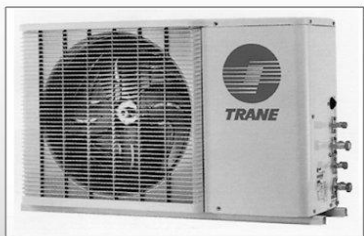
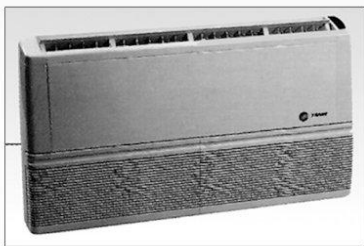
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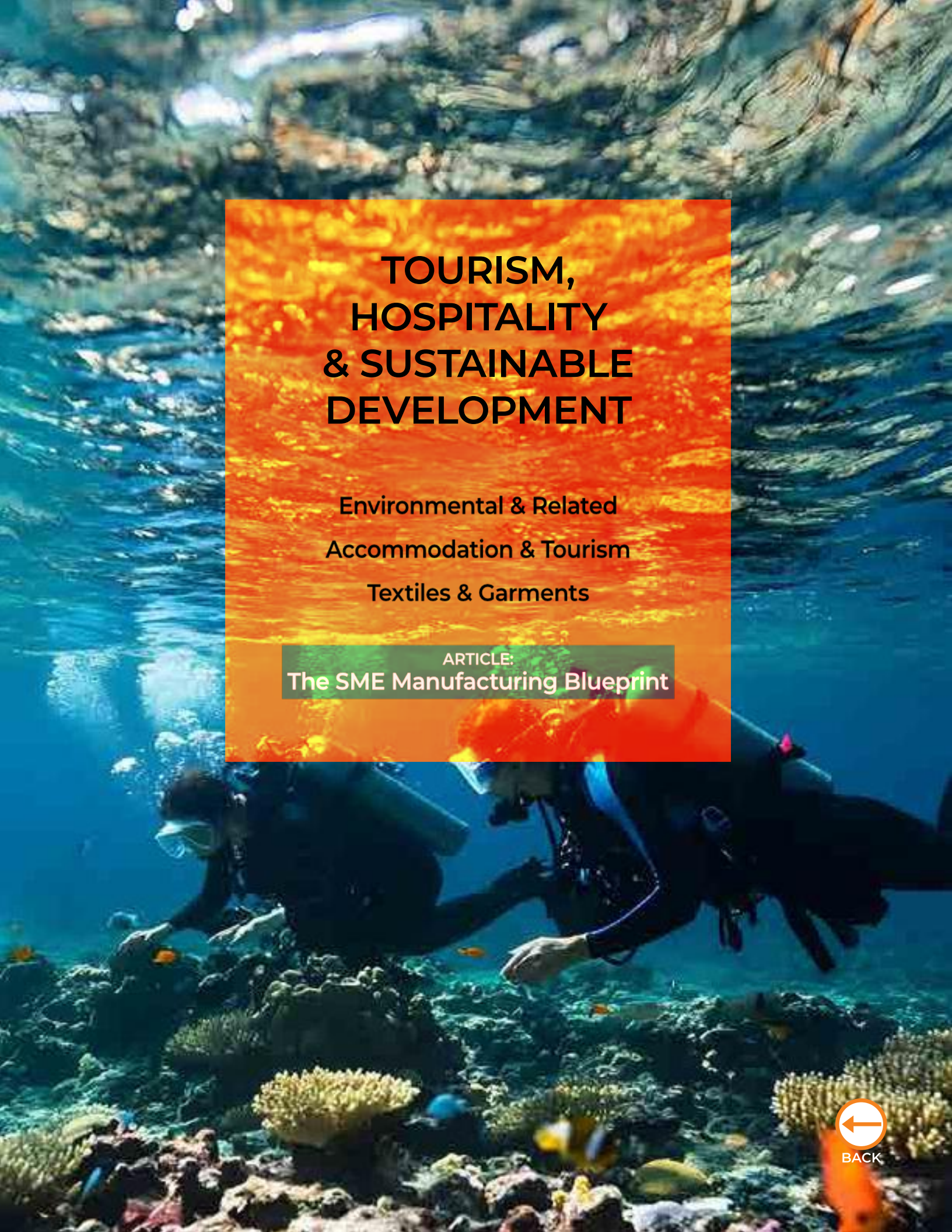


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An underwater photograph of a coral reef with two divers. The scene is vibrant with various colors of coral and fish. A large orange rectangular overlay is positioned in the upper center of the image, containing white text. In the bottom right corner, there is a circular icon with a left-pointing arrow and the word 'BACK' below it.

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THE SME MANUFACTURING BLUEPRINT:

From Kitchen to Factory

How Trinidad and Tobago's Small Businesses are Scaling Up, Packaging Better, and Reaching Export Markets

BY GEORGE ELIAS

Every successful manufacturer starts somewhere.

For some, it begins with a family recipe passed down through generations. For others, it starts with a handmade product sold at a community market, a social media page, or a small workshop operating from a garage or spare room.

Yet behind many of Trinidad and Tobago's most promising manufacturing success stories lies a common challenge: how do you transform a great product into a scalable business?

How do you move from producing dozens of units to thousands? From local customers to regional markets? From kitchen production to factory operations?

The answer increasingly lies in a combination of entrepreneurship, strategic planning, and the support mechanisms available through institutions such as the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO) and the Export Centres Company Limited (exportTT).

For ambitious SMEs, the journey from artisan producer to export-ready manufacturer has never been more achievable.

STAGE ONE: START WITH A PRODUCT PEOPLE WANT

The first step is often the simplest—and the hardest.

Before financing, machinery, or export opportunities come into the picture, businesses need a product with genuine market demand.

Across Trinidad and Tobago, entrepreneurs have successfully launched businesses built around locally inspired sauces, seasonings, baked goods, confectionery, personal care products, health foods, beverages, and craft items.

Most begin by testing products on a small scale. Friends become customers. Customers become repeat buyers. Repeat buyers become brand advocates. At this stage, the focus should be on consistency, quality, and customer feedback rather than rapid expansion.

Many businesses fail not because they grow too slowly, but because they grow before their product is ready.

STAGE TWO: FORMALIZE THE BUSINESS

Once demand begins to emerge, formalization becomes critical. This means registering the business, implementing basic financial systems, opening dedicated business banking facilities, and establishing record-keeping procedures.

Formalization is often the gateway to growth financing. It is also the point at which entrepreneurs begin to gain access to business support programmes, training opportunities, and development funding.

Many SMEs underestimate how important this step is.

Investors, lenders, distributors, retailers, and export buyers all want confidence that a business is operating professionally. The sooner those systems are established, the easier future growth becomes.

STAGE THREE: USE NEDCO TO BUILD CAPACITY

One of the most important resources available to emerging entrepreneurs is NEDCO.

For decades, the organization has supported thousands of small businesses through financing, entrepreneurial development programmes, business advisory services, and training initiatives. For many manufacturers, NEDCO support represents the first major investment in growth.

Funding may be used to purchase equipment, improve production capacity, secure workspace, acquire inventory, or strengthen business operations.

Many entrepreneurs possess strong technical or creative skills but have limited experience in financial management, inventory control, pricing, marketing, or strategic planning.

Business development support helps close those gaps. The result is often a stronger enterprise that is better prepared for sustainable growth.

STAGE FOUR: UPGRADE PACKAGING AND BRANDING

One of the biggest transitions in the SME journey occurs when a product moves beyond local markets.

What works at a community market may not work on a supermarket shelf.

Packaging suddenly becomes a business issue rather than simply a design issue. Consumers judge products within seconds. Retailers evaluate shelf appeal. Export buyers assess whether products meet international expectations.

This is where many successful SMEs make a strategic shift.

They invest in professional branding, modern packaging, product labeling, barcoding, and compliance standards.

The difference can be transformative. A product that once looked homemade begins to look retail-ready. A local brand begins to compete alongside established regional and international products.

For many entrepreneurs, this stage marks the moment when their business starts being taken seriously by larger distributors and retailers.

STAGE FIVE: SCALE PRODUCTION

Growth creates a new challenge.

When demand increases, manual production methods quickly become a constraint.

A business producing fifty units per week may struggle when orders increase to five hundred. This is where investment in machinery and production systems becomes essential.

Whether it involves automated filling equipment, sealing machines, commercial mixers, labeling systems, or packaging technology, the objective is the same: produce more while maintaining consistency.

Scaling production is not simply about volume. It is about reliability.

Retailers and distributors need confidence that orders will be fulfilled on time and at consistent quality standards.

Businesses that successfully make this transition often discover that operational efficiency becomes one of their strongest competitive advantages.

STAGE SIX: BECOME EXPORT READY

For many SMEs, the domestic market is only the beginning.

The Caribbean represents a natural next step.

Shared cultural preferences, established trade relationships, and regional logistics networks create opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago manufacturers to expand beyond local borders.

This is where exportTT plays a crucial role.

The organization supports export development through training, market intelligence, export readiness programmes, trade missions, international exhibitions, and grant opportunities designed to help businesses access new markets.

Many entrepreneurs assume exporting is reserved for large corporations. The reality is very different. Today's regional export landscape includes numerous small and medium-sized businesses that began as cottage industries before evolving into successful manufacturing enterprises.

The key is preparation.

Businesses must understand regulatory requirements, packaging standards, shipping logistics, pricing structures, and market entry strategies. With the right support, these challenges become manageable.

THE NEW FACE OF MANUFACTURING

The traditional image of manufacturing often involves large factories and significant capital investment.

That image is changing.

Modern manufacturing increasingly begins with entrepreneurs. Some start with pepper sauces. Others start with chocolates, natural skincare products, specialty foods, artisan beverages, health products, or innovative consumer goods.

What matters is not where the business starts. What matters is whether the founder develops the systems, capabilities, and partnerships required to scale.

The most successful manufacturers understand that growth happens in stages.

- They formalize operations.
- They invest in branding.
- They improve production processes.
- They leverage available financing.
- They pursue export opportunities and they continuously reinvest in quality and innovation.
- A Blueprint for Growth
- The journey from kitchen to factory is rarely overnight.

It requires persistence, planning, and a willingness to evolve.

Yet across Trinidad and Tobago, entrepreneurs are proving every day that the transition is possible.

With support from institutions such as NEDCO and exportTT, small businesses now have access to resources that previous generations of entrepreneurs could only imagine.

The opportunity is no longer simply to start a business. The opportunity is to build a brand, create jobs, expand exports, and contribute to the country's economic diversification agenda.

For the next generation of manufacturers, the blueprint already exists. It starts with a great product. It continues with strategic investment.

And, for those willing to think bigger, it can end with something far more significant than a successful small business.

It can end with a factory floor producing Trinidad and Tobago-made products for customers across the Caribbean and beyond.

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