



Ministry of Agriculture
& Fisheries



SECTORAL

PRESENTATION

2022

MAY 17 | HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

FOOD SECURITY

GROW SMART, EAT SMART

Transforming Agriculture & Fisheries

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Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries

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INTRODUCTION



Transforming Agriculture and Fisheries.

Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure and distinct privilege to address this honourable house in my substantive post as the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries (MoAF) for such an important year – Jamaica's 60th year of independence, as I update the country on the performance of this Ministry, and outline a crucial plan for food security to safeguard Jamaica from the perilous conditions that threaten us globally.

Madam Speaker, I am tasked with one of the greatest responsibilities in government at this time; and I am humbled to serve the people of Jamaica as we navigate these trying times. The past two years have shown us that with God in the midst, Jamaicans can overcome any obstacles that come their way.

Madam Speaker, we are confronting one of the greatest challenges in this century since the Great Depression and one of the worst pandemics to be recorded in history. Jamaican farmers and fishers stood firm against all odds as the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries worked assiduously to ensure the sector boosted food production to advance food security and prepare for any potential fallout.

Madam Speaker, I first acknowledge the Almighty for the strength, immense blessings, wisdom and guidance that he has given me to successfully navigate this journey. I am also grateful for the leadership of our Prime Minister, The Most Honourable Andrew Holness, who continues to steer us through these trying times. Thank you for the confidence and trust placed in me to lead such an important portfolio in the government as we serve the people of Jamaica.

Madam Speaker, I owe a debt of gratitude to my wife, children, parents, siblings, extended family and friends for their steadfast support and understanding as I seek to balance the several important and challenging areas in my life. I could not do this without your sacrifices for me.





Madam Speaker, without a doubt I have one of the hardest working, most dedicated teams. Thank you to my executive team at the Ministry and my constituency team who give their all to make our collective efforts meaningful and impactful.

I also wish to acknowledge my fellow Ministers, their staff and agencies particularly those that work alongside the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to achieve its national mandate. In whatever way we collaborate, we are working towards one agenda for the prosperity and best interests of our people.

Madam Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the hard work, tireless efforts and support from our Minister of State, the Hon. Franklin Witter, MP who takes the lead on several initiatives under the Fisheries sector, as well as driving the implementation of Special Projects to include the Essex Valley and Southern Plains Agricultural Development Project (SPAD), which are critical projects under the ministry.

I also wish to recognize the presence of our visitors from Grand Cayman, the Hon. Jay Ebanks, Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure, Dr. William McKeever Bush, Speaker of the House of Assembly, Mr. Dwayne Seymour, Parliamentary Secretary, Mrs. Leyda Nicholson Makasare, Deputy Chief Officer of Agriculture and Mr. Demoy Nash, Senior Policy Analyst.

From the Dominican Republic, Ms. Rosa Lazala, Director of Plant Health at the Ministry of Agriculture and Ms. Annette Insanally, Director of the University of the West Indies' Latin American Caribbean Centre (LACC).

Madam Speaker, despite the challenges of the last year, the sector made historic strides and this could not be done without the hard work of Permanent Secretary Mr. Dermon Spence and the hard working team at the Ministry as well as the leadership and staff of all the divisions and agencies of the Ministry. Thank you for your dedication and commitment.

I also recognize our hard working farmers, fishers, stakeholders, investors and every single person who is committed to Jamaica's food security agenda; your hard work and vision are a constant source of motivation for me.

I especially thank my chairpersons and board members for their vision and leadership as they offer innovative and creative solutions to address concerns in an effort to grow the sector.



Madam Speaker, I must specially commend our partners and stakeholders for their contributions without whom we would be unable to execute and fund many of our projects. Among those, I wish to recognize -the Food and Agricultural Organization of the Americas (FAO), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the World Bank, and others. I also express my sincere gratitude to my team in Clarendon and Kingston for their dedication and invaluable contribution.

Madam Speaker, in South East Clarendon more than Three Hundred (300) students have been assisted with tuition fees, grants and book vouchers. In excess of Seven Hundred (700) students have received tablets.

Madam Speaker I am proud to say that though we have a long way to go, more than Two Hundred (200) persons have received housing support across the constituency and another One hundred and Eighteen (118) persons have been listed to receive assistance in short order.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that we continue with infrastructure development in Southeast Clarendon, and having completed the water system in Salt River we are seeing an influx of investors exploring opportunities to develop business in the area. Additionally we will be advancing a massive youth development programme with training, scholarships, workshops and other activities to engage and empower our youngsters.

This Labour day, we will host a large community fair at the Rocky Point Community Center with a raft of social services being offered, and I have already identified areas to introduce a range of dynamic activities.

Despite the challenges we have been able to rehabilitate Eight (8) roads across the constituency, to install street lights in Hayes, to complete water systems in Rocky Point division, distributed over 5000 care packages along with masks and sanitizers across the constituency and have restarted our small business and sports programmes that will see our largest community engagement happening this Labour Day at the Rocky Point Community Centre.

In that regard Madam Speaker, I must thank my constituents who placed their trust and confidence in me twice over in six months. I endeavour to continue serving you with dedication, respect, and love.

Lastly, I wish to thank you, Madam Speaker, the Clerk and all staff of the Parliament for the organization and structure with which you manage our affairs.

BACKGROUND

Madam Speaker, Jamaica is at a crucial point in history. There are two modes of operating, fight or flight. We are choosing to fight as we push agriculture and fisheries with a multifaceted programme and food security strategy to fuel production and growth and establish Jamaica as the food mecca of the Caribbean, with the right structure and strategy.

It is the goal of this Ministry to continue to optimize the use of all its resources and partnerships as it pursues its mandate to **increase the agricultural and fisheries sector's contribution to national growth and development.**

We will turn challenges into an opportunity to grow the sector, ensure an adequate supply of food, stable prices and access to healthy, nutritious alternatives for every Jamaican.



Food Security: Transforming Agriculture and Fisheries

Madam Speaker, the challenges presented by the global pandemic are foremost on the minds of all Jamaicans. We are seeing and feeling the effects of the ongoing pandemic and the political unrest between Russia and Ukraine impacting the sector with negative impacts on critical commodities, specifically wheat/ flour, and price increases for commodities like meat and fish caused by rising input prices including fertilizers and feed, and high energy costs with the increase of gas prices.

Further, adverse weather conditions which include flood in some regions and drought in others have also affected local production over the last year.

The Ministry continues to tackle these issues head on and I assure the people of Jamaica that we have been working assiduously to address these concerns.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries accounts for 18 percent of jobs in this country. Even more important, is the critical role the sector plays in providing Jamaicans with access to fresh and nutritious food via the crops, livestock and fisheries subsectors.

It is not my intention to undo the work of my predecessors or uproot the framework established under "The New FACE of Food", but rather to build on existing structures and policies, expand those that need further development and implement systems in areas which are lacking. If the picture of success is clear and success is based on execution, then how we start is extremely important.

Today, I will outline the plan for the sector to continue to build on the growth we have achieved, to bolster the Agriculture and Fisheries sector's output and to ensure that

Jamaicans have access to affordable, nutritious, safe and fresh locally produced foods while providing jobs, building livelihoods and contributing to the country's GDP.

As such, I am announcing a national strategy aimed at food security called '**Grow Smart, Eat Smart**', which builds on existing policies and programmes of the Ministry with a major thrust to drive us to eat more wholesome and nutritious foods and **Grow strategically, optimizing our operations** by using an empirical approach introducing innovation and technology and advancing research and development towards better operations to develop and ultimately achieve better results.

Madam Speaker, we can utilize every inch of our landscape not just to plant, but to plant with a purpose and to ensure that we unlock our full potential through improved efficiency and reduced waste.

Madam Speaker, the Food Security and Agribusiness Council (FSAC) is a joint public-private sector working body focused on maximizing the potential of the country's agricultural sector.

The purpose of the Council is to monitor, assess and address the issues that arise from the sector in a comprehensive way, to protect the interests of the Jamaican people.

Globally, Madam Speaker, operating an Agribusiness is a very risky enterprise and in Jamaica this is no exception; with our challenges with praedial larceny and our geographical location in the hurricane belt.



Presently, Jamaica needs a critical mass of medium- and larger- scale profitable, agricultural-based enterprises to form the foundation of a diverse New Rural Economy, supplying healthy and nutritious food to the country and feedstock to its integrated agro-processing businesses and supplementing the agricultural contributions of small subsistence farmers.

The FSAC' s focus will be on Commercial Scale Agricultural Enterprises, and the downstream economic activity that they sustain.

The Council will develop initiatives to enable the re-imagining of the current structure and operation of the Agribusiness sector, by developing a strategic agenda towards improving agricultural climate resilience through modernisation, production efficiency, scale, and consistency.

Further energies will be concentrated on financial planning including resource allocation in the areas of technology, strengthened infrastructure, innovation, improved governance, and effective policy making.

Madam Speaker consideration will also be given to incentives, advocacy and applied research which will serve to catalyse the establishment of profitable, commercial Agribusinesses, this council was formulated but never advanced.

Let me reiterate Madam Speaker, that we will be deploying all resources at our disposal and mobilizing this dormant resource to contribute to the bolstering of the sector is an undervalued gem in our arsenal in the fight to secure Food Security.

This strategy includes a comprehensive plan outlining the areas of focus for the next year and including priority initiatives to address the vulnerabilities within our agri-food systems and production chains to ensure a robust and resilient food security mechanism.

So far, we have been able to manage the challenges faced due to the good work of the Ministry and its critical partnerships and relationships with farmers, stakeholders and partners, and I must mention that this sector has been on a growth path unforeseen over the last 10 years. This gives me hope that we can provide Jamaicans with access to safe, affordable, nutritious, and fresh locally produced foods while providing jobs, building livelihoods and communities and contributing to the country's GDP.

Madam Speaker, The national food security strategy *Grow Smart, Eat Smart* will be focused on the following areas of priority.

- Crop production, Climate Smart Practices and Technologies, Access to Finance, Protection and Insurance for Farmers with a focus on Praedial Larceny, development of a National Farming Trust and expansion of Fisher folk and Farmers insurance.

The campaign will examine the Cultures in Agriculture:

- Financing, technical training and support for farmers especially youth to join farming as a viable business option.
- Providing more leases for idle agriculture lands.
- Linkages and Partnerships.

- Ministries, Departments and Agencies

Tourism- more local produce in the hotels and capitalizing on other markets in the tourism industry.

- Health- updating the Food & Nutrition Security Policy to boost consumption of local foods.

- Education - Revamping of the School Gardens, providing inputs into the school feeding programme and launch of a Hydroponics Pilot in High schools across the island.

- Security- Launching of the Praedial Larceny Working Group.

- Market-driven opportunities for farmers and fisher folks.

- Access to Agriculture inputs (tools, fertilizer, training)

- Expansion

- Inclusivity: Youth, Women, persons with disabilities.

- Agro-Processing





Grow Smart, Eat Smart will comprise the following major initiatives for 2022/2023:

1 The full enforcement of the Animals (Diseases and Importation) (Marking of Bovine Animals) Regulations 2015. This will require all cattle to be identified with ear tags and corresponding passports. We therefore urge all cattle farmers to have their cattle tagged.



2 *Grow Smart, Eat Smart* campaign to be launched jointly with the Ministry of Health and Wellness. This campaign targets expanded production and consumption of locally grown crops and value-added production. Our aim is not only to grow targeted crops that bring the best yields and results for farmers but will target lowering the island's import bill, supporting farmers and chartering a continued growth path while providing Jamaicans and the regional bloc with fresh and nutritious food and alternatives.



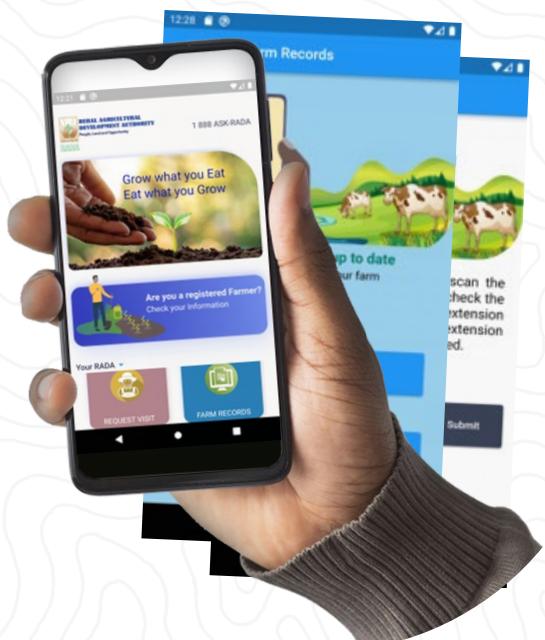
3 Boosting our agriculture in primary and secondary schools programme at a cost of some \$15 million through the supply of vegetable gardening packages.

**4**

Creating more agro parks across Jamaica to produce mango, ackee, breadfruit and avocados as well as other crops for export and create investment opportunities for the sector

**5**

Launch of the RADA mobile app Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS), to bridge the gap between farmers and technical support, generating digital information from farmers to shape support and programmes, access farm records and RADA Guides for new and young farmers.

**7**

Phase 2 of the Rehabilitation and Development of MOAF's Research Stations will be undertaken at an estimated cost of \$5.4 billion to see rehab of selected facilities across all five research stations

**8**

Establishing a Research and Development station for Aquaculture which has scope for private partnership and Launch of Pelagic Fish Initiative.

6

Bodies Phase 1 completion with a budget of \$105 million are:

- Construction of a small ruminant building to house 150 animals,
- Renovation of the milk testing laboratory,
- Procurement and installation of herd management systems for livestock.

**9**

Launch of Wheat Flour substitution programme with support from the Government of Cuba to target breadfruit and cassava to create gluten free flour as a healthy alternative to wheat.

10

Backyard Garden Kits

Backyard Garden Kits

We will further expand our very successful backyard gardening programme this year as we continue to encourage the growing of vegetables and small-stock, especially in urban spaces. This is a means for the average householder to supplement and complement both their family diets and income in these difficult times.

Madam Speaker, we are very proud as a ministry to watch on social media our very own Prime Minister and many others display their successes in their greenhouses and open gardening activities in their own backyards. We intend to distribute some \$15 million worth of backyard farm kits through RADA on a first come benefit basis to support this initiative



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Animal Feed

Animal feed, Madam Speaker, accounts for approximately 70% of the cost in animal production, and recently, our industry has been challenged by its rising cost due to the increasing cost of input ingredients.

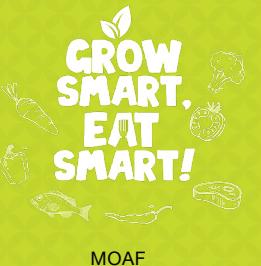
a. As part of our efforts to reduce inputs cost, our Bodles Research station has established 42 acres of Mombasa grass. This grass will be used to make hay and silage and sell to small farmers at cost. This is part of our food security programme to support increased production while also serving as training for small farmers.

b. Additionally, Guyana has confirmed its interest in intensifying bilateral cooperation with Jamaica, within the framework of the CARICOM Agri-Food Systems Agenda. Jamaica will pursue trade and investment opportunities with Guyana and local companies in the area of growing corn (in Guyana) for the Jamaican livestock industry. In 2020, Jamaica imported approximately US\$137 million worth of corn, primarily from extra-regional sources so this cost is expected to significantly go down once this project gets underway.

c. Another area of concern is the wastage of feed which will be addressed in a project by Jamaica Dairy Development Board (JDB) to enhance the formulation of local animal feeds in both silage and pelletised forms.



New Initiatives



Madam Speaker, the *Grow Smart, Eat Smart* key projects that are geared to achieve food security are as follows:

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES DAY

PLANTING WITH A PURPOSE

NATIONAL FARM IN SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

BUDDING FARMERS GROW CLUB PROGRAMME

Madam Speaker, as we celebrate our 60th Anniversary this year, I think it is integral that a National Agriculture and Fisheries Day is declared and celebrated annually. It is important to highlight the importance of the Agriculture Sector given the fact that despite many challenges the sector had a 7.9% growth over the last year and recorded the highest levels of production for domestic crops yields, surpassing 700,000 tonnes for the first time in Jamaica's history. For the similar period, the Fisheries sector achieved a 20% increase in fisheries production with marine capture fisheries increasing.

Madam Speaker, on Labour Day we will be launching our Planting with a Purpose (PWP) drive. We have reached an agreement with Noranda Bauxite as our first partner under this programme where areas of bauxite lands that will not be mined are going to grow orchard crops as part of our food security initiative. These acreages when planted will at the same time contribute to the National three (3) million trees planting programme. We are encouraging all Jamaicans to plant at least one fruit tree this Labour Day. Our Parish RADA offices provide fruit trees and seedlings to support this initiative. Please note that this will be done on a first come first serve basis.

Madam Speaker, we have a Garden in school programme that is currently run by the Jamaica 4-H Club. However, under our National theme, "*Grow Smart, Eat Smart*" the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is proposing a *Farm in Schools* Programme as a joint initiative with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). This initiative will complement the efforts of the School Feeding Programme (SFP). Additionally, it will see the government adopting a National Farm in School Policy aimed at teaching students the dynamics of agriculture and fisheries and promoting nutritious eating from an early age. The MoAF will then seek sponsorship from both public and private sector stakeholders, through the "Adopt a School Farm" initiative.

Madam Speaker, what is the future of farming without future farmers? Budding Farmers Ja (who is being represented here today by the founders Mrs. Grace Henry, Mikayla-Ann and Matthew-Aaiden Henry) through their Budding Farmers Grow Club programme will aim to solve this critical component of food security by introducing children in the early childhood and primary school levels; to the fundamentals, business and technology of farming. This represents a deepening of their existing educational programme which uses agriculture to reinforce literacy and mathematical concepts to participants of the programme. There will be a pilot phase for a year. The pilot will then be reviewed and its feasibility assessed. Based on the viability of the pilot we will be seeking support from the public and private sector.

AGRO PROCESSING

The Agro Parks Programme of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is intended to facilitate the expansion of the productive capacity of the agricultural sector by building out the infrastructure to support SME investments in the production of selected crops and livestock directed towards import substitution and replacement, as well as, the provision of raw material for agro-processing and non-traditional exports.

Our starches and high fibre foods such as yam, sweet potato, cassava, and bananas, breadfruit and plantains are to be grown and processed to be used as substitutes for imported rice and wheat flour.

FERTILIZER

Addressing the increased cost of fertilizers and availability issues due to the global supply shortage due to the ongoing issues with Russia and Ukraine will also be a part of the **GROW SMART EAT SMART** strategy.

We have started implementing a multi-faceted approach which includes:

1. Sourcing fertilizer from other sources aside from Russia. Recently, Madam Speaker, Jamaica received 24,000 bags of fertilizers from the Kingdom of Morocco valued at \$122 million. This was the third such donation and is part of a bilateral cooperation between the two countries and is a welcomed gift for our farmers, especially at this time of high fertilizer prices.

2. We have started discussions and met recently with stakeholders to exercise the option of sourcing fertilizer from Nigeria.

3. We are putting mechanisms in place for increased commercial production of organic fertilizer from composting from household materials. This is an existing project we will be ramping up on a national scale.

4. We are working with the main fertilizer manufacturer to guide research for the development of new blends that will see a more efficient use of fertilizers that will cut cost to farmers while increasing productivity.

5. Additionally, the Ministry, through RADA, will be undertaking a new programme to train farmers on how to use local and farm materials to compost and reduce their reliance on chemical fertilizers. Using local materials has proven to promote higher yields of agriculture crops and healthier soil structure.

FOOD LOSS AND WASTE PREVENTION

Madam Speaker the FAO has assisted the sector greatly with technical training, funding of programmes and initiatives, and will continue to provide support with key focus areas for the upcoming year in line with the organization's thrust to support food security in the region.

The areas of focus of projects this year are:

- Value Chain Development for strengthening food systems,
- Food and Nutrition Security and
- Building Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that through the hard work of this Ministry in partnership with the FAO we will be undertaking the following projects in Jamaica for the 2022-2023 financial year:

a. Improving phytosanitary, food safety and market access opportunities along the hot pepper value chain with funding of some \$152 million (US\$995,693).

b. Improvement of rural livelihoods through resilient agri-food systems - \$152 million (US\$1million).

c. Rocky Point Fishing Beach Improvement Project to include landing equipment, a fish cleaning facility, storage facilities, mangrove protection, as well as training for users. This project is valued at approximately \$45 million (US\$300, 000) and

d. Identification of two technical projects valued at \$37 million (US\$245, 000) for implementation across the sector.

e. Madam Speaker, another of our strategic food security actions, is partnering with the FAO to implement the Food Loss and Waste (FLW) Reduction programme, which focuses on the strengthening of value chain operations that speaks to:

- A strategy for reducing food losses along value chains.
- Supporting farmers to reduce post-harvest losses and
- Extending produce shelf-life to ensure enhanced farm and household cash inflows.

Madam Speaker, this project will be funded by the FAO to the tune of J\$38M (US\$250,000).

Jamaica is also pleased to be included in a project under the South-South Cooperation Programme, which is a partnership with FAO, China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

This project is valued at approximately US\$2 million and is aimed at:

a. Strengthening post COVID-19 recovery policies and programmes that facilitate better decision making.

b. Promoting digitalization and ecommerce strategies among farmers and Small and Medium Enterprises.

c. Providing inputs into pilot situations for digitalization of rural areas and for participation in its 1,000 Village Global Initiative as a post COVID-19 measure.

Historical Growth



Madam Speaker, the work we intend to do over the next year is building on strong policies and programmes, partnerships, linkages and hard work of everyone in the sector.

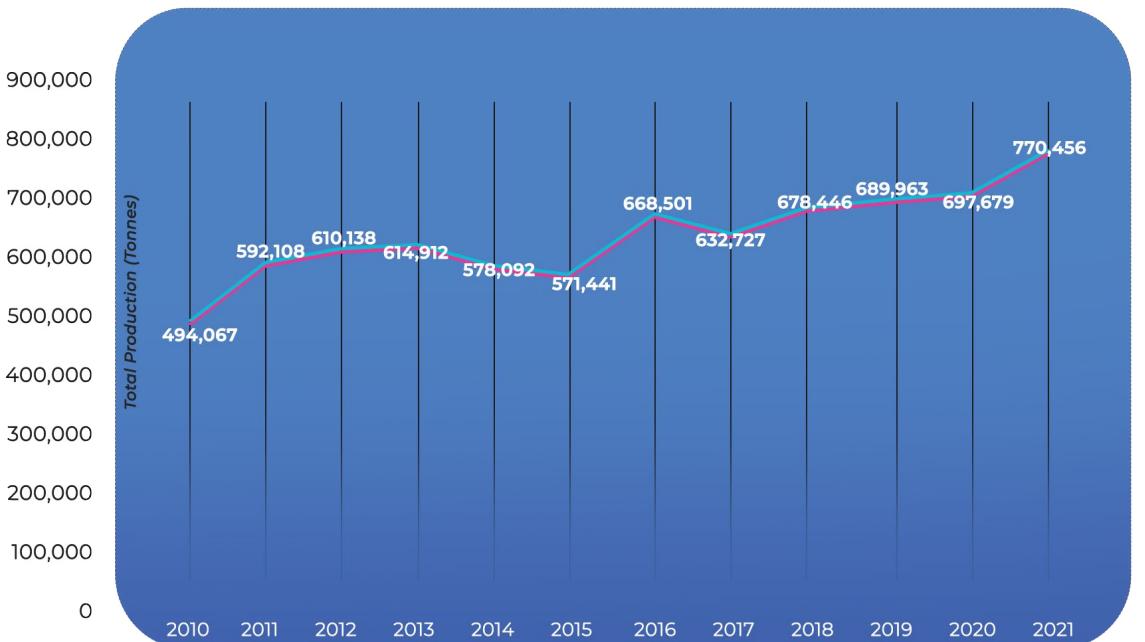
I must acknowledge achievements of the sector and its agencies over the last year as it applied the lessons learnt from its 2020 COVID-19 recovery project and Buy Back Programme.

I am proud to report that despite the diverse challenges of 2021, the Ministry achieved **7.9% growth** in the sector. This has provided stability in a market still suffering from the residual effects of lockdowns and closures in the hotel and restaurant industries. The sector has been able to maintain steady production levels, and for 2020/2021, we have recorded **the highest level of production for domestic crops yields, surpassing 700,000 tonnes for the first time in Jamaica's history!**

Madam Speaker, production of domestic crops increased significantly from 697,679 tonnes in 2020 to 770,456 tonnes in 2021, reflecting a growth of 10.4% over that period.

I must commend and thank our farmers for their tremendous efforts and resilience in achieving these record levels of production and persevering even in these adverse and unprecedented conditions.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION OF DOMESTIC CROPS (TONNES) 2010 - 2021



Review of the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector (Graph shows the production trajectory for domestic crops from 2010-2021)

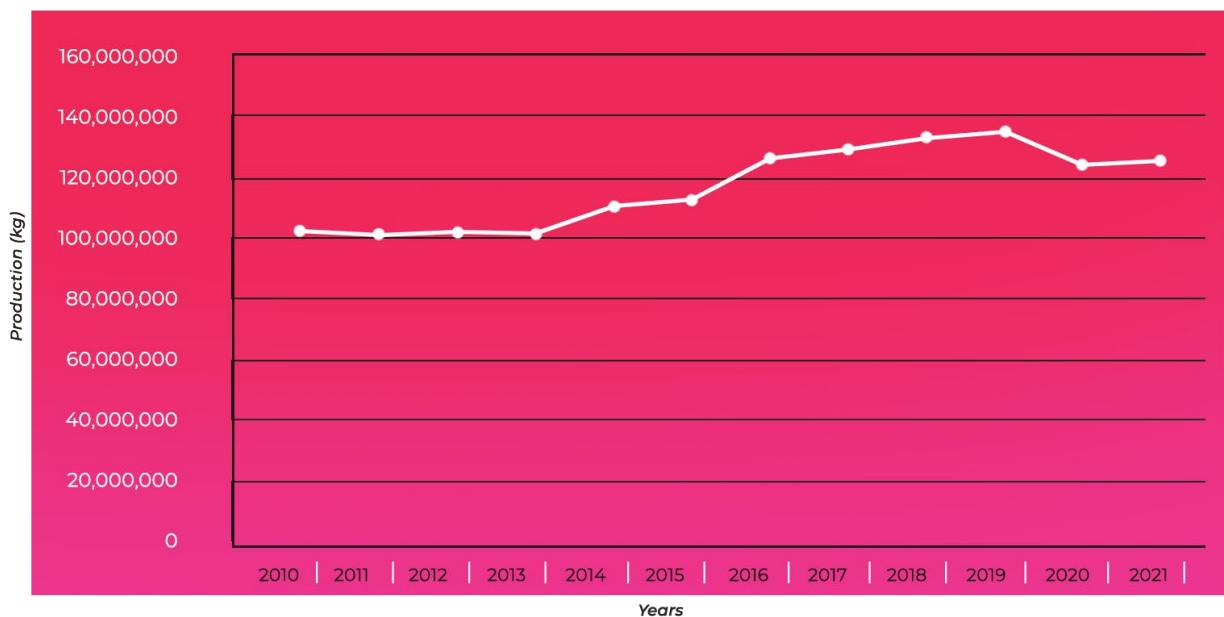
Madam Speaker, the livestock sector has been one of the hardest hit over the last year with concerns of shortage and increased prices, but I am pleased to report that chicken meat production is on the rise. Chicken meat production rebounded from a decline of 7.9% in 2020 and in 2021, production moved from 123,636,116 kilograms to 124,904,229 kilograms, representing a 1% increase in recovery.



Viewing of baby chicks at CB Hatchery in Linstead, St. Catherine, along with CEO Matthew Lyn (right).

Livestock

POULTRY MEAT PRODUCTION 2010 - 2021

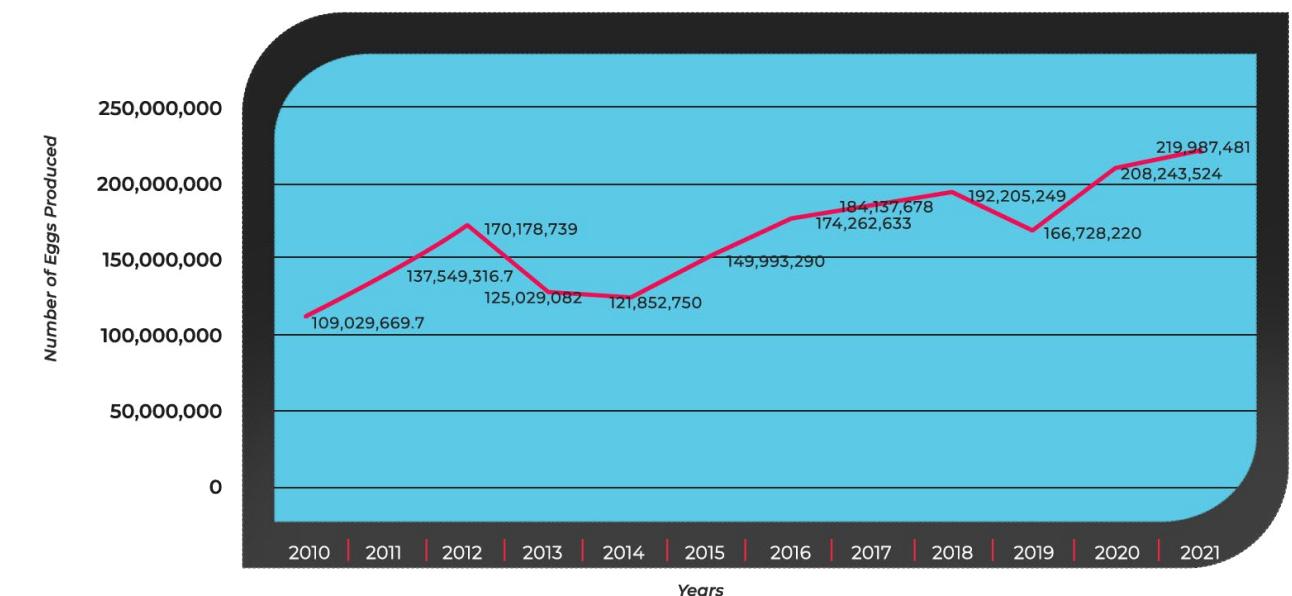




Egg production has also been on an upward trajectory, which is good news, as eggs are an alternative and affordable source of protein. Since 2019, production levels have been moving steadily from 166,728,220 million to 219,987,481 million in 2021, an increase of 31.9%.

EGG PRODUCTION

2010 - 2021



Production levels have been further augmented by initiatives taken by the Ministry in collaboration with industry stakeholders, under the Buy Back Programme – which has further increased the local demand for eggs.

The country is therefore guaranteed a consistent supply of eggs as production remains at historically high levels.

Madam Speaker, food availability is necessary but insufficient for food security. Sources of supply beyond one's control represent real points of weakness in any supply chain.

In seeking to protect the vulnerable in our population we continue to import low cost protein in the form of chicken neck and back to meet a critical price point in protein supply.

Yes Madam Speaker, I said we continue to import. But providing local products in the low cost price range will not only maintain a level of social protection while keeping economic and employment benefits at home but will increase the reliability of the supply chain. Improved food security is within our grasp.

After many discussions with the producers and after much research and production trials, the poultry sector will be adding two new value pack products to the marketplace, while reducing their margins, yes Madam Speaker, which will be hitting the market at reduced price margins.

A win-win for all concerned as we facilitate the consumer up the value chain with increasing employment and disposable income to a more nutritious product for a healthier lifestyle.

These two new products are being launched into the wholesale trade imminently and will be in the freezers and on the shelves within 2 weeks.



Traditional Crops



Sugar

Madam Speaker, the sugar cane industry continues to play a critical role in the rural economies it serves. The Government, while continuing its support to private sector investors in a bid to reconcile the sugar industry, is continuing with the restructuring of the Sugar Industry Authority (SIA) to increase modernization and administrative efficiencies of the industry. We expect this exercise to be completed in short order.

However one critical achievement to date, is the reintegration of extension services and core lab services for technical support into SIA.

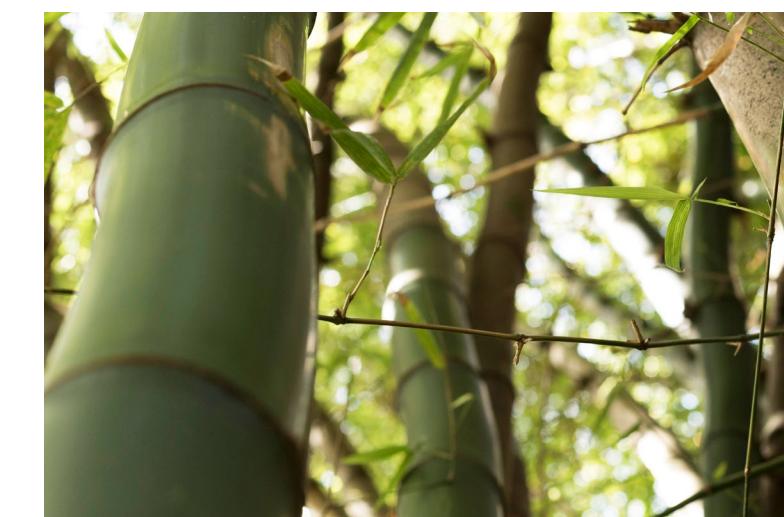
The review and repositioning of the sector continues with us facilitating the channeling of any expression of interest in the factories to the owners of these factories.

Our massive strategic push to engage private investors in the transformation of former sugar-cane lands into alternative uses has been very successful through the Sugar Industry Authority (SIA), copping several billion dollars of current direct investments.

These investments are centered around agricultural production (crops and livestock), agro-processing, energy generation, alternative crops such as bamboo, castor oil and cannabis as well as housing. Despite a decline in production from 519,069 tonnes in 2020 to the current 499,043 tonnes for 2021 period, sugar remains a crucial part of the sector and local economies of the parishes of



St. Catherine, and Westmoreland, which house the two remaining factories as well as parts of Clarendon, Trelawny and Hanover.



In this thrust, this Ministry will be injecting just over \$70 million in the Clarendon/Monymusk belt, targeting former sugar-cane workers in the surrounding areas through land acquisition and alternative crop production. This will greatly assist these workers' livelihood as they transition from sugar to agriculture while contributing to the sector's national mandates.



Land Management

Madam Speaker, in support of the Government's medium-term strategic priorities aimed at promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth and job creation, the Sugar Company of Jamaica Holdings (SCJH) continues to provide former sugar cane lands to farmers and investors for agricultural production.

The SCJH is presently assessing the performance of all lands leased by SCJ Holdings under the 'Use It or Lose It' approach. Over the past year, 1,686 hectares (4,166.25 acres) of land were leased in the parishes of Clarendon, St. Catherine, Trelawny, Westmoreland and St. Thomas for the cultivation of cash crops, orchards, hemp and cannabis, castor beans, as well as animal rearing, quarrying, solar power generation, commercial activities, and establishment of the new Mango Agro-Park at Toll Gate in Clarendon.

Notably, the SCJ leased 252.5 hectares (624 acres) of land in the Plantain Garden River area of St. Thomas for a commercial agriculture/agro-processing operation in 2021/ 2022. This new agricultural lease in St. Thomas is intended to complement the endeavors of our small and medium-sized farmers by integrating them into supply and value chains for both domestic and export markets as well as granting them access to abattoirs, technology and expertise.

For the upcoming year, an additional 283.3 hectares (700 acres) of land will be put into agricultural production through the Agro Investment Corporation (AIC), using production zones and private properties as well as starting the process of land utilization and production on the Holland Estate property.

Coffee

For many years, Jamaica's coffee industry has been a major contributor to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and socio-economic activities through the earning of foreign exchange as well as providing employment at various levels along the coffee value chain.

Madam Speaker, data has revealed that 236,302 boxes of coffee were produced in the 2020/2021 period, comprising 224,071 boxes of Blue Mountain coffee and 12,231 boxes of High Mountain coffee with exports valued at US\$17 million. This represents an 11.8% decrease in production over the similar period in 2019-2020.

The industry has, however, been challenged by climatic, phytosanitary and social issues which have been affecting production and, by extension, the earning power of the industry.

In an attempt to address these challenges, the Ministry through its agencies, Jamaica Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority (JACRA) and the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), has taken various approaches with the aim of re-projecting the coffee industry, not only for its income-earning capabilities, but also ensuring that our famous and much-sought-after Blue Mountain coffee can be enjoyed by more and more consumers worldwide.

In that regard, JACRA has developed the coffee industry business model, which seeks to identify and address product diversification and markets; investment opportunities; and new technologies and practices with the aim of increasing coffee production for the mutual benefit of all stakeholders. A rapid expansion in both Blue and High Mountain coffee is targeted and supported by nurseries and input resources.

Among the initiatives outlined by JACRA for the 2022-2023 financial year is the facilitation of the protection of Jamaica's coffee origin in the establishment of a new traceability and accountability system.



This is based on the completion of a Farm Registration and Tracking System called 'FRATS', which is an online platform that allows for the standardization of transactional relationship with registered farmers and licensed dealers throughout the value chain. The farm verification process should be completed during this year along with the established database. Madam Speaker, this system will also play a major role in our efforts against the theft of and sale of ill-gotten coffee in the sector.

Additionally, JACRA will be strengthening international recognition and protection of Jamaica's coffee origins by ensuring the registration of the JAMAICA BLUE MOUNTAIN® and JAMAICA HIGH MOUNTAIN® trademarks in the respective designations. Further, the Ministry will be collaborating with local and external legal support to monitor and seek redress for the illegal use of the trademarks by unscrupulous persons.

Madam Speaker, these along with our robust marketing and promotions campaign in collaboration with our industry partners and stakeholders to include the Tourism Ministry, led by the Hon Edmund Bartlett, and the Industry and Commerce Ministry, led by the Hon Aubyn Hill, and, if I must say, the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, led by our Most Hon Prime Minister, have resulted in renewed interest and investments in the sector as our established markets in Japan and Europe as well as growing markets in the USA and China have seen expanded demand for our coffee.

Cocoa

Jamaica, Madam Speaker, is world renowned for its 'fine or flavour' cocoa. As a member of the International Cocoa Organisation (ICCO), we are one of the 17 countries recognized as producers of 'fine or flavour' cocoa, and one of the eight who enjoy the enviable title and status of exclusive producers of 'fine or flavour' cocoa.

The Government through JACRA will be facilitating the maintenance of Jamaica's 'fine or flavour' cocoa status by addressing the necessary administrative and financial obligations attendant to the industry. In the 2020/2021 period, 83,848 kilogrammes of cocoa was produced, a 23.3% decrease in production over the similar period in 2019-2020. Additionally, approximately 2,550.6 boxes valued at \$20,517,839 were sold to local processors and export of cocoa beans was valued at US\$97,832.

Currently, we are in the rebuilding stage of this industry and JACRA has been collaborating with our Orange River and other nurseries to produce cocoa seedlings that are resistant to the frosty pod rot disease for distribution to farmers.

Madam Speaker, I wish to commend the Ministry's Plant Quarantine Branch for executing the arduous task of leading the agronomic and phytosanitary management control systems across the country, which has resulted in breaking the back of this dreaded industry-destroying diseases with resources input of over a billion dollars since 2016.

With the disease now under control, farmers and technical experts trained, the new phase of long-term management and control of the frosty pod rot disease will begin in the new fiscal year. This will see the transitioning of the management and technical support systems to RADA, which is more equipped to support the services needed for this phase of the strategy.

Cabinet by way of decision, gave approval for the coconut industry board to acquire the assets of the cocoa industry. Accordingly a committee has been established to coordinate these arrangements and guided by a terms of reference they have had at least two meetings of negotiations towards an early conclusion.

Priority Initiatives for the Agriculture Sector



Technology, training and extension services

Madam Speaker, human development and skills training is very important if we are to build a strong sector based on best practices and modern technology. As such, the Rural Agricultural Development Agency (RADA), continues to provide training for farmers, technical assistance, extension services and production inputs. Over the last Fyear, more than 20,500 farmers benefited from the extension programme while almost 13,000 farmers received training in best practices.

As we speak, RADA is implementing several new initiatives to boost support to farmers. These include:

- A farmer identification express service starting this month where farmers will receive their new identification card within five days, while renewals will be delivered within three days.
- A new pre-registration system for farmers will also be launched in this month to capture more farmers in the industry so they can benefit from services offered by RADA.
- We are launching a mobile app to be used by farmers and the general public which will provide valuable digital information services on the farmers, farm records and RADA Guides. Through the app, farmers can request a farm visit, send recorded information regarding issues on their farm and access contact information and directions for the RADA offices.

Agricultural Business Information System (ABIS)

Alongside those initiatives, we also continue to push the Agricultural Business Information System (ABIS), a web-based information system and national farmers' registry which assists us with data on agricultural production and practices. This information helps us to be responsive to current and future strategic needs to guide in the implementation of projects and initiatives within the Ministry. In that regard, Madam Speaker, we are currently engaged in the redevelopment and re-engineering of the ABIS web portal.

Additional technologies at use in the field includes: the Agri Business Information System (ABIS) Offline Mobile App. This was developed to provide the Agricultural Extension Officers with access to the Farmers' data and update the information offline while in the field. The data is synchronized once there is internet connectivity. This App allows for increasing efficiencies in the number of farmer updates and has geo-referencing capabilities.



Boosting of Production



Production Incentive Programme

The Production Incentive Programme (PIP) is a major initiative of the Ministry that is aimed at food security, income generation for farmers and earning foreign exchange.

The programme utilizes adaptable climate-smart and resilient approaches to improve crop and livestock production, infrastructure development and promote rural development through the sustainable expansion of agricultural production.

During the financial year, Madam Speaker, some \$1.2 billion was expended under this programme. Approximately \$598 million was spent impacting over 25,000 crop and livestock farmers. These interventions generated over \$3.5 billion in revenue and created employment for over 85,000 persons in rural Jamaica. In addition over \$40 million is being spent on clearing and distribution of fertilizer currently underway, \$30 million was disbursed for agricultural education and training for youth and over \$40 million dollars was expended for Fisheries, \$60 in support of export commodities such as pimento and cocoa and \$101,927,656.12 for vehicle and equipment to support extension delivery.

This programme is focused on:

1. The rehabilitation and expansion of 12 selected crops, the development of the small ruminants' industry and the implementation of climate-smart adaptation strategies within the production cycle of the agriculture and fisheries sector.

The main objective of this component is to increase production of specially selected crops of significant economic importance such as hot pepper, Irish potato, onion, yams, dasheen and ginger. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform you that our farmers continue to consistently step up to the plate and have performed creditably, especially as it relates to the production of onions, Irish potatoes, sweet potato, dasheen, cassava and hot peppers.

We have seen phenomenal success due to the participation of large investors and the in feed monitoring intervention implemented by Research and Development and RADA, in the production of onions for the 2021/2022 period, achieving a 90% increase in onion production for the 2022 period with over 4,000 tonnes compared with 2106 for the 2021 period. Madam Speaker, this achievement is primarily due to the field monitoring intervention implemented by RADA, which resulted in a decrease in incidents of the beet armyworm and purple blotch disease in onion farms in Yallahs, St. Thomas, and Salt River, Clarendon.

Madam Speaker, we have heard much talk about potatoes lately but today I want to assure Jamaicans that potatoes remain a priority crop for Jamaica and as a result of the investments by the Ministry. We are currently farming 1000 hectares of land by 3,483 farmers which is expected to produce over 90% of local demand representing a 30% increase over the corresponding period last year. Reaping and planting continues until June 2022.

With more investments and production, Irish potatoes not only provide jobs and income for thousands of farmers, it also pushes us closer to being completely self-sufficient in Irish potato production and achieving our goal of exporting to our CARICOM neighbours. An additional 100 hectares of land were put into production by existing and new investors. I particularly want to acknowledge Potato and Onions Producers Association (POPA) whose members have been consistently expanding and increasing their investment on local production.

Additionally, I must mention that at our Bodles Research Station, we have identified several promising varieties of table potatoes (which we currently import) but production is affected as we lack the value-added investments. Today, I challenge investors to join this sector as there is an untapped U\$ 11-12 million annual demand in the chips market based on our import numbers.



2. Madam Speaker, land preparation is a very critical stage of the production process. More frequently than we would like, our farmers, both new and established, find the cost of land preparation prohibitive compounded with the added pressure of not being able to find the farm machinery to support their ventures. To alleviate some of these deterrents, we continue to lend support to bolster the sector.

In support of our land clearing and preparation processes, the Ministry, through RADA, provided incentive support in 2021-2022 as follows:

- Some \$14.5 million was expended on six four-disc ploughs, four harrows, two rototillers, two ridge bedders, and one mulch layer bed maker. Currently, they are in operation and serving the needs of our farmers.
- Approximately \$4.5 million was expended on the repair of four rubber wheel tractors in Clarendon, St. Elizabeth, Manchester and St. Catherine and are currently being utilized by the farming communities. These are expected to provide tillage support to over 250 hectares for some 5,000 farmers within the targeted parishes' thus increasing agriculture production by 5%
- Approximately \$12M was expended for the procurement of software for two drones, which will enhance the spectral imaging data capture of the drones.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry will continue this thrust in the current financial year with the:

- Purchase of additional drones to help strengthen the technical capability of the use of drones in agriculture.
- We are expecting a delivery of 6 tractors in July 2022 valued at some \$90 million, which will be placed in the high-producing parishes of St. Elizabeth, Manchester, Clarendon, St. Ann, St. Catherine and St. Thomas. These units are slated to be delivered during the month of May 2022.

In addition to these initiatives, Madam Speaker, I wish to announce that over the current 2022-2023 period, we will be funding the costs to prepare up to one acre of land free of cost for 5,000 farmers targeting especially youth and women. This will cost approximately \$63 million.

This initiative will be coordinated through RADA in collaboration with the Produce Marketing Organizations (PMO), the Jamaica Agricultural Society (JAS) and the Jamaica 4-H Clubs. It is expected that this will be a welcomed boost to production in existing areas and expansion of production in new unutilized areas.





Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

Madam Speaker, in our bid to mitigate the ongoing issue of drought, the main drought-stricken areas were targeted for the supply of irrigation water.

- Over the 2021-2022 period, approximately 7.2 million gallons of water was supplied to over 1,500 hectares of production affected by drought benefiting 4,600 farmers within the parishes of St. Elizabeth and Manchester.
- Rehabilitation of water storage tanks in St. Ann benefiting over 30 farmers.
- Currently, bids are being finalized for the construction and rehabilitation of six water harvesting ponds within the parishes of St. Ann, Clarendon, St. Mary and Manchester with approximately \$47 million earmarked for this activity.

Madam Speaker, the agricultural sector was subjected to the vagaries of the impact of flood rains and to this end in aiding our recovery and resilience the Ministry redirected \$150 million under the PIP to provide immediate relief and support in the recovery of the crops and livestock sectors as follows:

- \$51.8 million to provide seeds and other planting materials, pesticides and other inputs to get farmers back into production following widespread damage and loss of crops.
- \$20 million to support the poultry and other livestock including the provision of weaner pigs and feed, calves, and baby chicks and feed.
- \$50 million, through The Banana Board, towards fertilizers and pesticides to aid in the quick recovery of the plantain and banana sub-sectors.
- Procurement of input materials valued at \$28.2 million through the Members of Parliament (MP) benefiting 600 farmers. Here I wish to make a special appeal to all members of parliament, to arrange projects for

their constituencies to utilize the sums of monies that we are holding for them under the RADA production incentive and constituency development fund.

Madam Speaker, for the upcoming financial year, this government continues its commitment to providing the agricultural sector with over \$1 billion annually to incentivize and drive production and this year is no different, with a provision of \$1.07 billion for PIP and \$670 million for the Farm Road programme.

The following activities will be supported for this year:

- \$258 million for production of our 12 priority crops, targeting 3,917 hectares and 9,476 farmers with a focus on roots and as viable substitute for imported wheat and rice
- \$122 million for livestock to include small ruminants, poultry, apiculture, fisheries, pork and rabbit.

Madam Speaker, for the upcoming financial year, \$884.5 million has been allocated under the PIP as follows:

- \$100 million for fertilizer support
- \$35 million for equipment
- \$250 million for climate change adaptation mitigation
- Purchase of tractors, implements and six drones valued at \$90 million.
- Rehabilitation of 80 (75,000 sq. ft) greenhouses, valued at \$10 million and other support programmes in the amount of \$230 million to include other grant assistance to farmers, youth in agriculture and agricultural promotions



Irrigation

National Farm Road Rehabilitation Programme

One of the major challenges to produce marketing is access to a proper road network to get produce to market. For the 2021/22 farm road programme, Six Hundred & Fifty Million Dollars (\$650,000,000.00) was allocated to rehabilitate 68 farm roads. For the same period, under the Farm Road Maintenance Programme, approximately \$26 million was expended for a total of 7855m² of road surface asphalted to fix potholes and 1,290m of road bushing, trimming of banks and road edge clearing completed.

I intend as Minister, to engage in a process of collaboration with the Minister of Finance to push for more funds to be allocated to the farm road programme. Further, I will be engaging the Municipal Corporations and the National Works Agency (NWA) in order to have a redefinition of the remit of farm roads to include those roads leading to and in the fishing villages and aquaculture areas.

Madam Speaker, in the same way that farmers have a challenge getting their produce to market, the fishers are also experiencing the same issue. We intend to continue to undertake the further rehabilitation of our roads to alleviate this problem.



Funded by the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Partnership Fund in the amount of £35.5 million, work is ongoing on the implementation of the Essex Valley and Southern Plains agricultural development projects targeting the communities in St. Elizabeth, Parnassus in Clarendon and Amity Hall and Bridge Pen in St Catherine.

To date, all three wells have been completed in Parnassus, Clarendon, and rehabilitation of the Hartland's Canal in the Amity Hall/Bridge Pen area is scheduled for completion in June. Pipe laying and road work are to commence by July in the communities in St. Elizabeth.

The Ministry is embarking on another major irrigation scheme to lift water from the Black River to the Pedro plains of southern St. Elizabeth. This project, under the National Irrigation Commission Ltd. (NIC), will progress through the environmental impact assessment phase with some \$304 million budgeted for expenditure in the 2022-2023 financial year to conduct surveys and cadastral mapping for the project area.

Madam Speaker, on completion, this project will boost the availability of water to over 4,000 farmers in the Pedro Plains.

In regards to additional irrigation projects being implemented, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that funding has also been approved for the following:

- Yallahs West Agricultural Development Project valued at \$39 million and the
- Lucky Hill Pen Agricultural Development Project for \$51 million with implementation slated to start in the 2022-2023 financial year.

To bolster the expansion of our irrigation infrastructure plans, funding has also been approved by the Government of Jamaica (GoJ) and Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) for an investment of some \$198 million to be pumped into the Mango agro- park, Ebony Park agro- park and the Plantain Garden River agro-park, covering approximately 155 hectares (384 acres) of land.



Research and Development

Madam Speaker, in keeping with our strategic focus on research and development as a key driver of the agriculture and fisheries sector, work is ongoing on the transformation of the Research and Development Division.

To date, some \$926 million has been spent on Phase 1 of the infrastructure renovation and development work, and we are preparing for Phase 2 of the infrastructural works to support its transformation.



Work is also apace on the rehabilitation and construction of new facilities at Bodles Research Station, transforming it into a modern, world-class facility.

Under Phase 1 of the project, some \$926 million has been expended in the 2018-2022 period.

Madam Speaker our achievements in the 2021-2022 financial year of transitioning Bodles Research station includes:

- Re-establishment of a standardized milking parlour to supply milk.
- Improved feeding and housing systems for the Jamaica Hope dairy cattle with the construction of a large dairy barn through a zero-grazing facility approach.
- Improved greenhouse spaces towards compliance with citrus certification programmes.
- Improved tissue culture hardening greenhouse facilities, including the provision of irrigation equipment, which have facilitated the production of over 1,400 certified generation one ginger seedlings, using the single bud technology and improved production of Scotch bonnet seedlings for farmers.
- Improved irrigation system for pasture and crops.
- Improved Domestic water supply system for the station and
- Improved drainage system for flood mitigation.

1. Construction of a small ruminant housing for 144 does and 5 bucks at Bodles.
2. Renovation of the milk testing laboratory.
3. Procurement and installation of a 100,000 gallon water storage tank and
4. Procurement and installation of herd management systems for livestock.

Phase 2 of the Rehabilitation and Development of MOAF's Research Centres, estimated at \$5.4 billion, will be initiated in the latter part of this financial year. This will see the rehabilitation of selected facilities across all five research stations with an emphasis on livestock in support of our food security thrust.

Madam Speaker, on completion, we are expecting:

- Strengthening of the applicationMadam Speaker, these works have strengthened the Research and Development Division's ability to improve its delivery of research and technical services to our farmers.

Other projects to be completed at Bodles under Phase 1 with a budget of \$105 million are: of technology, innovation, and research and development in agricultural production:

- Increased use of adaptive varieties for select crops in response to climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- Modernization of the animal feeding systems for alternative and substitute feeds for livestock; and
- Development of the country's germplasm and seed banks Madam Speaker, research and development provides short-medium- and long-term solutions in these areas. Through our findings we will be able to improve Jamaica's local capacity to produce.

Successful implementation of the results garnered from Research and Development is the critical link to food security for Jamaica.





Climate-Smart Agriculture and Technology



Conservation and maintenance of biodiversity

The Ministry continued its focus on conservation and maintenance of biodiversity through the Public Gardens Division. This includes replanting of the Holland Bamboo Scenic Avenue, which is now 85% complete.

This is under the Legacy 60th anniversary projects, funded by the Tourism Products Development Company (TPDCO) and the Ministry in collaboration with the HEART/NSTA Trust.

Her Excellency the Most Hon.s Lady Allen (centre) in dialogue with Member of Parliament for St Andrew Eastern and Minister of Education and Youth, Fayval Williams and Agriculture Minister Pearnel Charles Jr., at the ground breaking ceremony for the new entrance at Hope Gardens.

We have also identified two green spaces for development in each parish and the Public Gardens Division has facilitated research on medicinal plants within two of the botanical gardens. In addition, soil analysis has been undertaken throughout the gardens and scenic avenues.

The Ministry will continue to undertake its objective of sustainable development of Jamaica's natural resources by maximizing the conservation of biodiversity for research, education and recreation.

For the 2022-2023 financial year, \$52.5 million has been allocated towards:

- Increasing access to local and endemic plants through maintenance of the four public gardens and two scenic avenues;
- Establishment of a rainwater harvesting and distribution system in Castleton and Cinchona Botanical Gardens;
- Development of an attraction at the Montpelier Research Station in St. James.

The Ministry and its Divisions will also collaborate with local educational institutions such as the University of the West Indies (UWI), and the College of Agriculture, Science and Education (CASE) to conduct research activities for the conservation of local biodiversity and HEART/NSTA for training and development programmes.



Her Excellency the Most Hon. Lady Allen (centre) in dialogue with Member of Parliament for St Andrew Eastern and Minister of Education and Youth, Fayval Williams and Agriculture Minister Pearnel Charles Jr., at the ground breaking ceremony for the new entrance at Hope Gardens.

Agri-Technology- Building Capacity

Our demand for food is expected to increase dramatically, from our growing population and climate change impacts, which are already affecting farming practices and productivity. Madam Speaker, to ensure that agricultural investments are sustainable and country led, the Ministry supports agricultural capacity development and is already employing several initiatives to build capacity and improve resilience in the sector.

This includes:

- The application of GIS Technology to enable investors to make more efficient and informed decisions.
- Training of RADA Extension Officers in precision farming and alternative farming techniques.
- Training of farmers in precision farming and alternative farming techniques.
- The expanded use of drone technology to provide real time data on crop and livestock production, fisheries and apiculture.

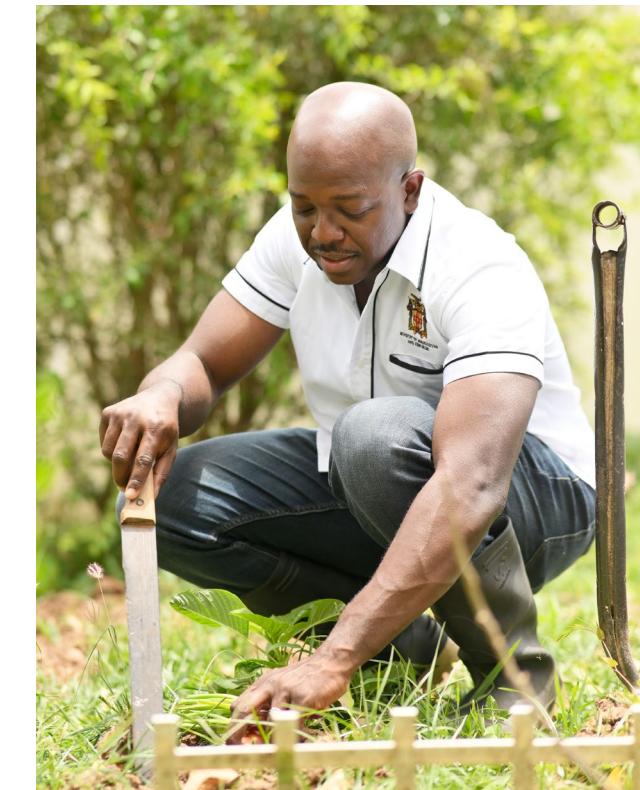
Organic Farming



Prime Minister Holness showing tomatoes reaped from his backyard garden.

Madam Speaker, one area in which we have seen immense potential for growth is organic farming. The Ministry is continuing work in the development of the framework to encourage certification that will facilitate the recognition and therefore the benefits to be derived from engaging in organic production. Accordingly we will be promoting the establishment of certified organic farms and products that can attract niche markets and high price points.

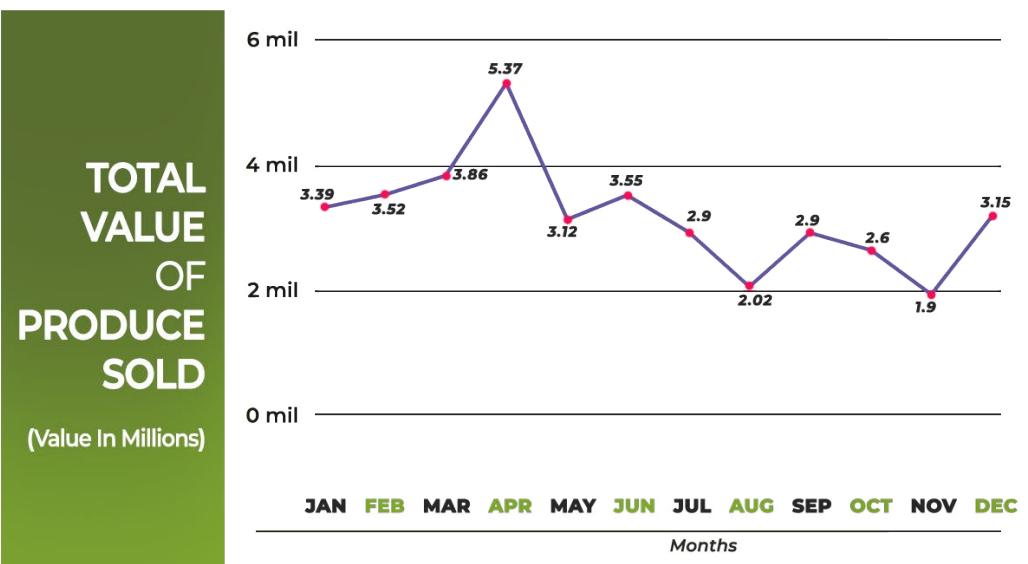
Madam Speaker, this is a real opportunity for Jamaicans to bolster the value of our products and also to adopt practices that relinquish the dependencies on synthetic fertilizers particularly at a time when prices are increasing exponentially.



Sectoral Presentation 2022

Expansion of linkages/partnerships

EXPANSION OF LINKAGES/ PARTNERSHIP 2010 - 2021



Analysis
\$JMD 38,280,000
worth of agriculture
produce was traded
on the ALEX
platform in 2021

Madam Speaker, through RADA, the Agri-Linkages Exchange (ALEX) online platform, a Tourism Enhancement Funded project, was launched in 2019 aimed at increasing and deepening the linkages between the agricultural sector and the hotel and tourism sectors.

Throughout 2021, we continued to facilitate the marketing of farmers' produce to the tourism sector with some \$38.28 million worth of agricultural produce traded on the ALEX platform. These included Irish and sweet potatoes, carrots, vegetables, condiments, legumes and fruits.

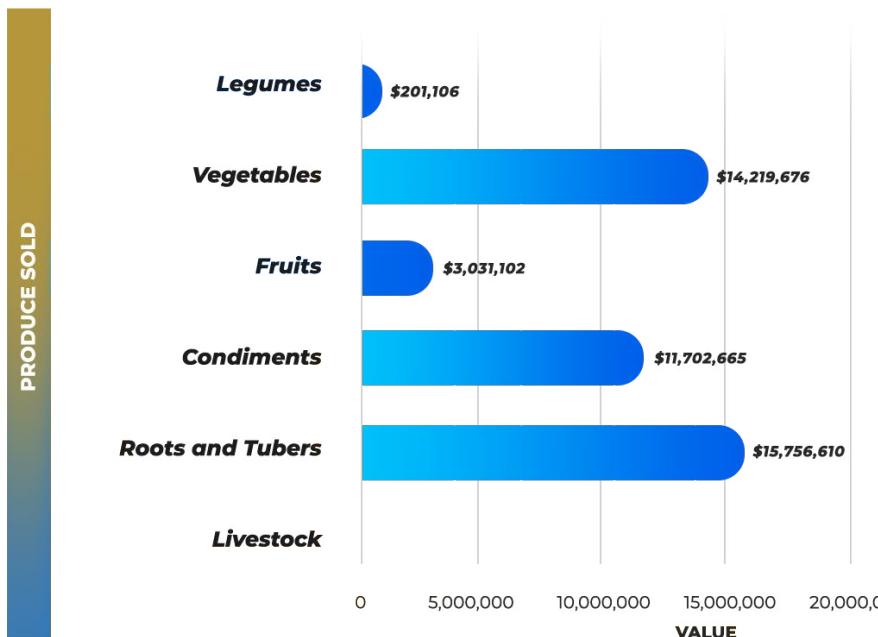
Madam Speaker, the tourism and hospitality sector consumed \$39.5 billion worth of agricultural produce in 2019 with a leakage through imports of \$6.5 billion.

Currently, our farmers meet about 40 percent of the needs of the hotel sector, and we will continue to work with the industry to capitalize on the untapped opportunity.

With the reopening of the tourism sector, we will be increasing awareness around the programme among our stakeholders as well as our digital marketing thrust across the various social media platforms.

Madam Speaker, we continue to boost relationships with traditional buyers such as GraceKennedy, Tijule and Progressive Supermarket while adding new buyers like Walkerswood, Spanish Grain, Perishables Jamaica Ltd., Rainforest Caribbean, JamAgro and Shavout. Also of note, Madam Speaker, is our partnership with over 300 vendors and over 25 purveyors who ensure that our farmers have a market for their produce.

Break-down of Produce Marketed (JANUARY - DECEMBER)



Analysis
Roots & Tubers such as potatoes, sweet potatoes and carrots were the highest marketed agricultural produce across the ALEX platform, and showed consistently strong tourism demand, while vegetables were the second highest marketed agricultural commodity

Internationally, Madam Speaker, the government and people of Jamaica have enjoyed a meaningful partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and have collaborated on several interventions in line with FAO's strategic objectives and with the objectives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Such programmes and projects are largely guided by the Country Programming Framework (CPF), an agreement on priority areas signed between the government and the FAO.

Under this year's CPF the priorities established are:

- Value Chain Development for strengthening food systems,
- Food and Nutrition Security and
- Building Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods.

Of note among the mix of FAO - supported projects in Jamaica in 2021-2022 are the:

- Home Grown School Feeding Programme at US\$250,000 (J\$38 million) national school feeding initiative that involved small farmers and local suppliers of food. This was completed in December 2021.



Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the FAO will be undertaking the following projects in Jamaica for the 2022-2023 financial year:

- Improving phytosanitary, food safety and market access opportunities along the hot pepper value chain with funding of \$152 million (US\$995,693)
- Improvement of rural livelihoods through resilient agri-food systems - \$152 million (US\$1 million)
- Rocky Point Fishing BEn Improvement Project to include landing equipment, a fish cleaning facility, storage facilities, mangrove protection, as well as training for users. This project is valued at \$45 million (US\$ 300,000) and
- Identification of two technical projects valued at \$37 million (US\$245,000) for implementation across the sector.

Jamaica is also pleased to be included in a project under the South - South Cooperation Programme, which is a partnership with FAO, China and the community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

This project is valued at US\$2 million and is aimed at:

- Strengthening post COVID-19 recovery policies and programmes that facilitate better decision making.
- Promoting digitalization and ecommerce strategies among farmers and SMEs and
- Providing inputs into pilot situations for digitalization of rural areas and for participation in its 1,000 Village Global Initiative as a post COVID-19 measure.

Soil Fertility and Health Development

Madam Speaker, the improper use of fertilizers has contributed to nutrient imbalance and soil pollution, which directly affects crop productivity, environmental sustainability and economic feasibility of agricultural projects.

The Ministry has therefore begun implementation of the Soil Fertility Mapping Project, which is aimed at achieving improved soil management and guiding appropriate soil conservation practices.

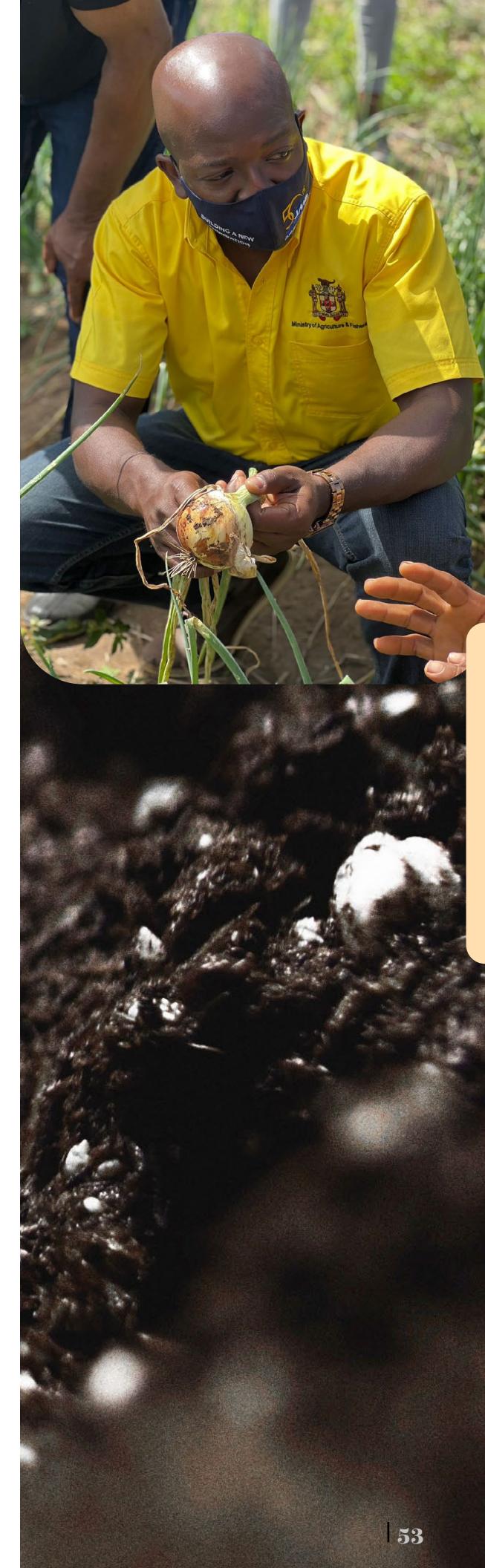
This, Madam Speaker, is being implemented with funding support from the government and people of the Kingdom of Morocco and includes technical assistance from the National Institute of Agricultural Research of Morocco.

Under this programme, a soil fertility database is being established for a pilot cultivated plot of 327.8 hectares (810 acres) in the Essex Valley Agricultural Development Project area in St Elizabeth.

This project seeks to establish a comprehensive soil database to provide up-to-date information regarding the availability of fertile soil island wide. The project is valued at US\$ 1.3 million which includes GoJ counterpart funding.

Fertiliser

Another area of concern, Madam Speaker, is the increased cost of fertilisers as well as its availability due to the ongoing issues with the pandemic and tensions with Russia and the Ukraine. The Ministry is addressing these challenges by implementing a multifaceted approach which includes:



National Animal Identification and Traceability System

1 We will continue to strengthen our bilateral relations with the Kingdom of Morocco from whom we are very happy to have received 24,000 bags of fertilisers from the Kingdom of Morocco, valued at \$122 million as a gift on behalf of our farmers especially at this time of high fertiliser prices. Through this relationship we intend to capitalize on all aspects embedded in this technical cooperation agreement.

2 Through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade we have sought to engage the Nigerian Government to explore options of sourcing fertilizer especially given the recent opening of one of the largest fertilizer manufacturing plants in the world.

3 Under our \$50 million support programme, we are strengthening our collaboration with local producers of organic fertilizer to enhance the supply of organically produced material especially for the growing of vegetables across the island.

4 The Ministry, through RADA, will be expanding their training programme on composting to encourage farmers to use local materials and farm waste to compost and reduce their reliance on chemical fertilisers.

5 We are working with local fertilizer suppliers to guide research for the development of blends that will see a more efficient use of fertilisers that will reduce the cost to farmers while increasing productivity. The blends to reduce the cost to farmers will be subsidized by the Ministry in the amount of \$100 million.

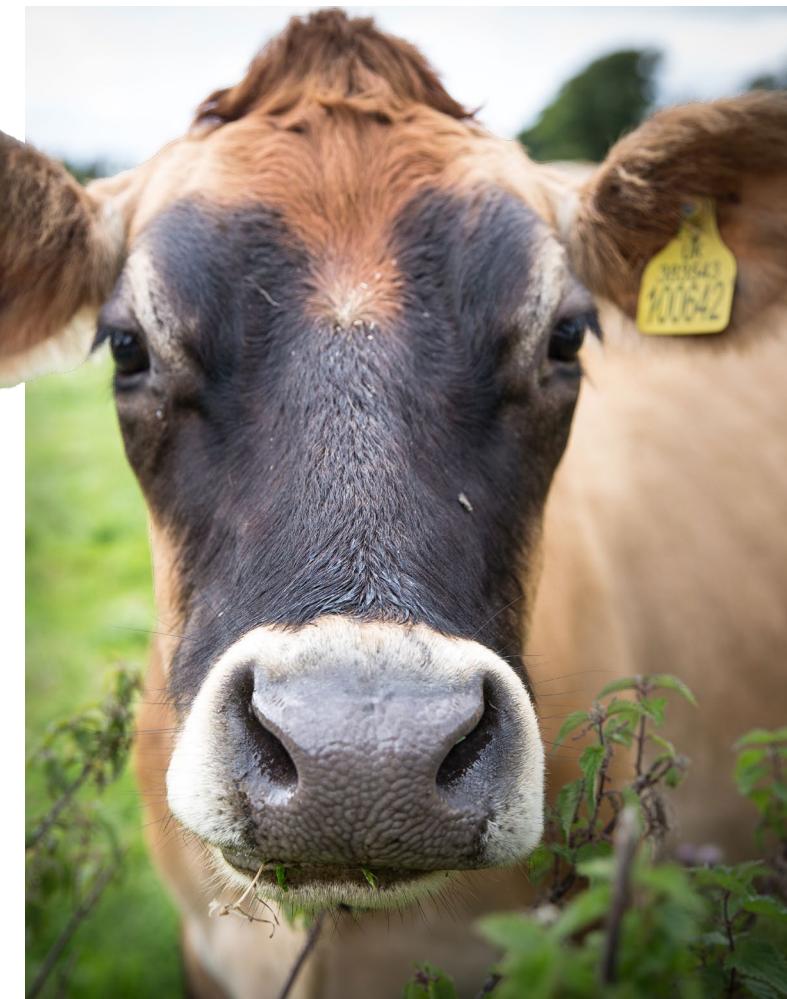
The NAITS is an identification and registration system that allows us to be able to enhance animal disease surveillance and the traceability of animals and products of animal origin. Additionally, it allows for the safeguarding of animal health and addresses food safety issues in support of the development of a modern livestock sector.

To date, 57,196 heads of cattle of an estimated 75,000 heads (based on 2007 Census) have been tagged.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform you that as of September 1, 2022, there will be full enforcement of the Animals (Diseases and Importation) (Marking of Bovine Animals) Regulations, 2015. This will require all cattle to be identified with ear tags and corresponding passports. We therefore urge all cattle farmers to have their cattle tagged.

For the 2022-2023 period, we intend to continue implementation of this programme with the tagging of at least 2,000 cattle per quarter. We also intend to expand the programme to include other species. Madam Speaker, the Ministry has already procured the genetic analyzer needed to conduct the relevant testing to make this programme viable. To facilitate implementation of testing, we will be undertaking a \$6-million upgrading work to the PCR laboratory over the next three months.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness/Public Health/Meat Inspectors must be brought on board to ensure that all bovine for human consumption are identified with a valid NAITS ear tag in each ear and a matching valid (original) cattle passport presented.



All stakeholders, including the Praedial Larceny Prevention Unit/JCF, Ministry of Health public health inspectors, and operators of slaughter facilities, will be re-engaged and made fully aware of the Ministry's thrust to ensure the law is fully enforced.

Praedial Larceny Prevention

Madam Speaker, one of the greatest deterrents to increased investments in agricultural production and the development of rural communities is praedial larceny.

It not only hampers the growth and expansion of legal production and productivity in the agriculture and fisheries sector but encourages increased imports to fill the gaps. Too often we hear of our farmers losing their crops and animals and, regrettably, in some cases their lives to persons who want to reap where they have not sown.

We remain undaunted in our effort to stamp out this scourge and I have recently appointed four members in establishing a strategic working group with diverse experience and backgrounds to advise the Minister on strategies to combat praedial larceny .

Simultaneously, the Ministry has engaged a process towards amending the Proceeds of Crime (POCA) Act which will assist to recover the proceeds of praedial larceny from offenders and other perpetrators.



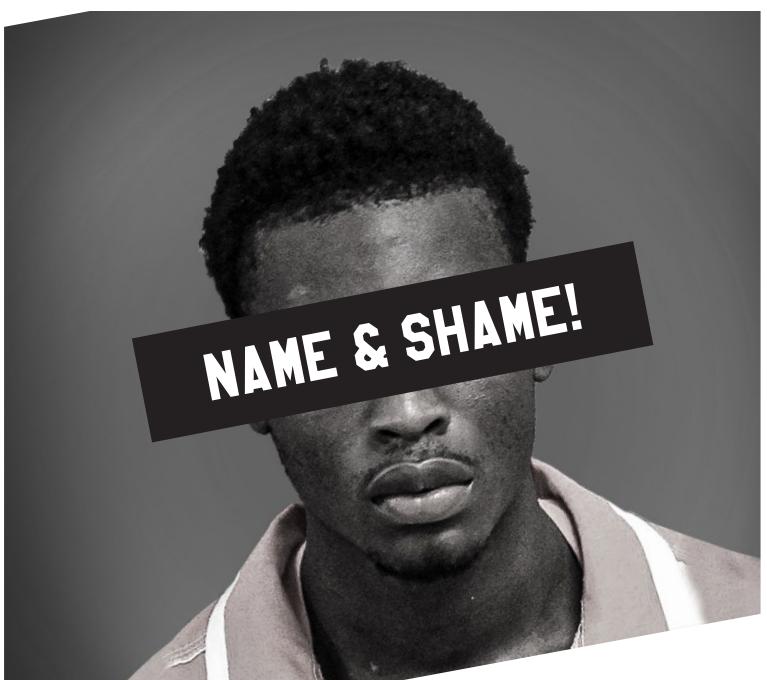
Minister Charles Jr. (right) and Minister of State, Franklin Witter flank winners of the praedial larceny essay and jingle competition Kriston Ferguson of Norman Gardens Primary and Junior High School and Dermanique Lee of Chetwood Memorial Primary School.

For the 2021-2022 period, we continued to create greater awareness and to strengthen the enforcement initiatives of the Jamaica Constabulary Force in praedial larceny investigation, prevention and risk reduction. Capacity building sessions were conducted with 101 police officers, who received training in how to effectively investigate praedial larceny cases and prepare case files.

This resulted in 102 arrests being made and over 70 animals recovered and/or returned to their owners.

Other initiatives to be put in place to fight this scourge in the 2022-2023 financial year include:

- Maintenance of a National Praedial Larceny database which is able to highlight and map praedial larceny hotspots, larceny types and frequency in collaboration with JCF's Geo Statistics Unit.



- Creation of a training curriculum for the proposed Agricultural Wardens Programme to assist the police in carrying out enforcement activities.
- Facilitation of drone technology training for members of established Praedial Larceny Units to patrol farming communities.
- Encouraging greater use of technology to assist with the securing of farms.
- Facilitating the establishment of Farm Watch/ Beach Watch groups to build farmer/fisher capacity to reduce vulnerability.
- Establishing a Name and Shame Campaign, with the names and photos of convicted praedial larcenists published in the print and electronic media.

Madam Speaker, we will also be engaging in greater use of technology through the NAITS with the use of genetic fingerprinting to reduce the larceny of cattle. This will be facilitated through the use of forensic technology for the identification of stolen cattle in the absence of eyewitnesses. Additionally, the Ministry is also exploring a possible option of creating a compensation fund to assist farmers who are victims of praedial larceny.



FARMERS

Play your part in the fight against
**Praedial Larceny, help the Police to
identify the legitimate farmers?**

THE TIME IS NOW!

Register with RADA or Update
your registration status by contacting
your Agricultural Extension Officer

Let's work together for a better future!



COMMUNICATION Unit
Rural Agricultural Development Authority
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275-7232



Agribusiness

Madam Speaker, to achieve the growth of a sustainable and resilient agriculture sector, we must focus on competitiveness, investments, and providing attractive conditions for investors which includes infrastructure expansion, training of farmers and providing land and capital support.

We have launched several strategies to make land available through agro parks and other initiatives which target investors including youth, women and persons with disabilities, to ensure access to lands for agricultural use.

To support our overall agenda, we are focusing on mechanizing and applying scientific methodologies to increasing the quantity and quality of our agricultural production.

Madam Speaker, the Agro-Investment Corporation has placed great emphasis on the development of the agro-parks and production zones, collaborating with funding agencies and developing market linkages to drive investment in the agricultural sector.

This has resulted in increased land utilisation in our agro-parks and production zones by 39%, moving from 1,364 hectares (3,370 acres) to 1,902 hectares (4,700 acres). With a 69% production level, as of February 2022, approximately 8.87 million kilogrammes of crops were harvested, compared to the corresponding period in 2021 where only three million kilogrammes were harvested, which represents an over 100 % increase.

Additionally, two production zones were established in Lennox, Portland; and New Pen in St. Mary, amounting in over 234 hectares (580 acres) being put into production for the cultivation of mixed crops. These zones have accommodated 136 investors/farmers with an expected employment of over 400 persons from neighbouring communities.

Over in the west, Madam Speaker, Holland Estate Ltd. (Spur Tree Spice) is investing over \$100 million to build an agro-processing plant on the Holland Property. This facility is expected to be completed soon.

Agro-Invest, Madam Speaker, will also be establishing an Agri-Market Store at 188 Spanish Town Road in Kingston that will give consumers access to fresh produce at competitive prices, tapping into the popularity that the ad hoc farmers market has had during the pandemic.

We are also moving to place the Minard Estate cattle farm in St. Ann the Reserach and Development Division and its redevelopment is to include pasture resuscitation, expansion of the herd establishment of fodder banks and exploring the possibility of developing an eco tourism attraction.

The AIC has also moved to strengthen public-private partnership by hosting an Agribusiness Investment Forum on April 21, 2022 in Kingston to garner investments in the agricultural sector. A series of fora are to follow across the island with consideration being given to a regional exposition at a later date.

Under the Productive Inputs Relief (PIR) system, agriculture is one of the sectors targeted to promote and stimulate growth in the economy. The PIR provides for duty-free importation of specific items for productive use, specifically:

- Duty-free importation of certain primary agriculture inputs.
- 20% duty reduction on specific vehicles for registered farmers.

Additionally, agro-processing companies can benefit from additional stamp duty waiver on select raw material being imported.



Financing

One of our major challenges to growth is access to financing. We are bridging the gap between farmers and access to financing. At the recent launch of the Sagicor Manufacturing and Agro-Processing Loan Facility, farmers and fisherfolks for the first time gained access to loans of up to \$50 million at an interest rate of 6.5% for the expansion of their agribusinesses.

I commend Sagicor Bank for this initiative.

Today, I am pleased to announce, Madam Speaker, a partnership between AIC and the Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ) with the signing of a memorandum of understanding on March 22, 2022 under the Rio Tinto Alcan Legacy Fund.

Through this Fund, which now stands at \$279 million, farmers in the traditional bauxite-mining parishes of Manchester, St. Catherine and St. Ann will have access to loans for agricultural activities such as crop and livestock production, water catchment construction for irrigation purposes, energy loans associated with farming projects, agro-processing, greenhouse farming and agribusiness equipment purchases through authorized financial institutions.

Farmers/investors will also benefit from an 80% loan security from the DBJ.

The DBJ will also assist farmers/investors through the 'Voucher for Technical Assistance Programme' where DBJ will subsidize the cost of developing business plans prepared under this programme.

Madam Speaker, the AIC has been partnering with EXIM Bank to provide technical evaluation and advisory services to support proposals and approvals of loans for agribusiness ventures. Under this arrangement, the AIC will conduct feasibility analyses and monitoring of performance for agricultural projects/ventures funded by the EXIM Bank. This will serve to boost the bank's capacity to attract clients, and approve and manage agricultural loans.

Madam Speaker, I want to assure farmers and stakeholders that the Ministry is playing its part to ensure farmers get the support they need. I am pleased to show this honourable house the compilation called Financing for Agribusiness the Guidebook, created by the AIC to support farmers in accessing financing.

Additionally, I want to point out that even with all of those measures, the agriculture sector needs greater funding. I am making a plea for the establishment of an Agriculture Development Fund proposed to be an annual contribution of 1% of revenues earned from taxes/duties on agricultural imports. The fund will operate like the Tourism Enhancement Fund and will be used to inject capital and reposition the sector.

Madam Speaker, we all agree that agriculture has the potential to be a major driver of economic growth. It currently employs over 250,000 persons or some 22-25% of the labour force while contributing some 8.68% of GDP and earns foreign exchange.

Agro-Parks and Agro-Zones Development

Madam Speaker, the Agro-Investment Corporation (AIC) is placing greater emphasis on the development of agro-parks and production zones, collaborating with funding agencies and developing market linkages to drive investment in the agricultural sector.

This has resulted in increased land utilisation in our agro-parks and production zones by 39%, moving from 1,364 hectares (3,370 acres) to 1,902 hectares (4,700 acres).

With a 69% production level, as of February 2022, approximately 8.87 million kilograms of crops were harvested, compared to the corresponding period in 2021 where only three million kilograms were harvested, which represents an over 100 % increase.

Additionally, two production zones were established in Lennox, Portland and New Pen in St. Mary, amounting to over 234 hectares (580 acres) being put into production for the cultivation of mixed crops. These zones have accommodated 136 investors/farmers with an expected employment of over 400 persons from neighbouring communities.

Last month, the Ministry handed over 40 leases, 20 of which went to young people investing in the Mango Agro-park in Toll Gate, Clarendon. This initiative is part of our mandate that 20 percent of government-owned lands be offered to youths between the ages of 18 to 35 for agribusiness-related projects and is expected to boost our mango export projection of 178,000 kilogrammes to the United States for 2022.

Madam Speaker, Holland Bamboo Ltd. (Spur Tree Spice) is also investing over \$100 million to build an agro-processing plant on the Holland Estate Property.

To further support farmers and networks, an Agri-Market Store at 188 Spanish Town Road in Kingston is to be established that will give consumers access to fresh produce at competitive prices.

We are also moving to redevelop the Minard Estate in St. Ann to include pasture development, expansion of the herd size, establishment of a fodder bank and exploring the possibility of developing an eco-tourism attraction. To support agri-businesses, the Productive Inputs Relief (PIR) system will offer incentives such as duty-free importation of specific inputs which constrict the growth of the sector.

These are:

- Duty-free importation of certain inputs needed for the agricultural process, and
- 20% duty reduction on specific vehicles for registered farmers.

Additionally, agro-processing companies can benefit from additional stamp duty waiver on select raw materials being imported.



Youth in Agriculture



Madam Speaker, the ministry continues to develop strategies to engage and motivate young people to invest in agriculture including our policy to make 20% of all productive lands available to youth.

In that vein, 105 hectares (260 acres) of land have been made available to vulnerable groups particularly youth and women. We have achieved 86% of our target, by adding 39 youths to the agro-parks and production zones for the financial year 2021/22.

The Jamaica 4-H Clubs in collaboration with the AIC, has placed 10 young people on lands at the Ebony Park Agro-Park. We are seeing strong interest by youth farmers for agricultural lands and the Jamaica 4-H Clubs is working with SCJ Holdings to identify additional lands for them.

Through the Rural Youth Economic Empowerment Programme, 291 agribusinesses were established and participants received:

- start-up grants of \$50,000;
- six months of business coaching;
- training in business development and management;
- agriculture best practices for targeted production and training in basic computing; and

Additionally, the Jamaica 4-H Clubs also provided youth with over 270,000 training opportunities, financial support to 363 needy students pursuing studies in agriculture and the establishment of 367 school gardens.



It has also provided support for the establishment of 1,063 family home gardens in 2022 up from 642 in 2021.

For the 2022-2023 period, Madam Speaker, we are targeting the establishment of 350 new enterprises, an additional 575 schools gardens, including increased technologies such as greenhouses, hydroponics, aquaponics and 550 family home gardens.



In addition to providing training opportunities, access to land and financial support to our young people, we believe that they should also be actively involved in the policymaking and decision-making processes. I am therefore pleased to inform you that the Advocate Council was launched in August 2021 comprising 11 outstanding youths from diverse agricultural backgrounds. I was privileged to meet with them recently and I look forward to their recommendations and contribution to the growth of the agriculture and fisheries sector.

The Blue Economy Fisheries



MOAF



Performance of Fisheries Industry



Marine

Madam Speaker, Jamaica's Blue economy has immense potential to contribute to food security and sustainability of livelihoods but there must be proper management systems to foster growth.

In this regard, the Ministry, through the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) will be driving several initiatives to support and capitalize on our valuable capture and aquaculture subsectors. These initiatives, directly and indirectly, support the livelihoods of over 200,000 persons while contributing approximately 6% to agricultural GDP and facilitated exports from the fisheries industry in 2020 were valued at some US\$14 million.

I am pleased to update this Honourable House that in spite of the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, fisheries production rebounded in 2021 with marine capture fisheries increasing to approximately 12,000 metric tonnes up from the 10,000 metric tonnes in 2020.

This sector however continues to experience challenges with the pricing and availability of quality and affordable fish feeds across the entire aquaculture production life cycle (i.e. from larvae to adult fish). Fish feed represents 50 – 75% of the cost of production and therefore is a major input cost for aquaculture production and is one of the deterrents for investments in this sector.

To assist fisherfolk and strengthen the sector, the government of Jamaica via the NFA applied for a suspension of the Common External Tariff (CET).

I am pleased to announce that a CET Suspension has been approved by the Secretary General of CARICOM for the importation of tilapia and shrimp feeds for use in the aquaculture sub-sector. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service are currently in the process of formalising the process to make it available to fish farmers.

Madam Speaker, last year we faced several challenges with the supply chain as it related to the importation of the raw material to prepare fish feed. To address this, the Ministry has been exploring several measures to ensure consistent supply of quality feed on the local market. One of the initiatives we are pursuing is through the 'Promoting Community-Based Climate Resilience in the Fisheries Sector Project' where we are investigating the use of by-products from the agro-industry and catering sectors to produce fish feeds.

The value chain for this already exists, agro-industrial by-products and catering waste are available, there exists. We have the capacity to process these residuals into feed components and there are stakeholders that are interested in utilizing these products to make fish feed.

The work of the NFA over the last year seeks to push diversification of the marine fisheries sub sector and training fisherfolks in underutilized fisheries areas such as pelagic fishing.



Occupational Safety and Health is high on the agenda for the National Fisheries Authority which has established a Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the Caribbean Maritime University (CMU) and the University of the West Indies (UWI) to:

1. Train fishers in basic seamanship covering safety at sea.
2. Train fishers in open water scuba diving and recognizing and preventing decompression sickness and dive illnesses at the Marine Laboratory in Discovery Bay, St. Ann.

This MOU will be in place for 5 years and will train 40 offshore fishers per year to ensure they possess skills aimed at minimizing the risk of losing lives at sea.

Madam Speaker, we wish to commend this excellent public-private partnership with the CMU and UWI.

Continuing the matter of safety at sea and security, the NFA will this year complete the establishment of an offshore radio communication system for our fishers and other navigators in the open sea.

Honourable members will be aware that cell phone communication does not work in our distant offshore waters and as such, our small vessel fishers have limited means of communication with other vessels or to shore.

When completed, the offshore radio communication system will allow communication to mainland Jamaica in cases of emergency or to fellow colleagues to improve business operations.

The radio system will also facilitate better monitoring of our offshore waters in terms of border security and illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing.

The other initiatives to support and strengthen the Fisheries sector are as follows:

Mariculture Development Project

Targeted at youth and new investments for the establishment of a sea moss demonstration and production farm facility in Bowden, St. Thomas at a cost of \$70 million.

Conch Hatchery Project

A collaboration with the UWI will also see the expansion of an experimental conch hatchery project to investigate the feasibility of rearing conch sustainably and efficiently in Jamaica. Its early stages are already under way at the Discovery Bay Marine Laboratory with very promising results.

Oyster Production

We are expanding while improving our oyster culture production systems to support emerging oyster farmers with the establishment of two groups of fishers in Westmoreland and Hanover.

Marine Stewardship Council Certification Programme

Our queen conch fishery is one of our most valuable commercial fisheries, providing direct employment to more than 2,000 persons and earning foreign exchange of approximately US\$6-8 million annually.

The Ministry, through the NFA, is supporting a project funded by the Compete Caribbean Blue Economy Project to obtain Marine Stewardship Council Blue Label certification for the conch fishery.

The Marine Stewardship Council is an international non-profit organisation that globally has the best recognised ecolabel and fishery certification programme to accredit a fishery that demonstrates sustainable fishing practices and has a proper fishery management programme.



MSC certification will allow Jamaican queen conch to attract higher prices on the international markets than our competitors, based on international consumer interest to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognising and rewarding sustainable fishing practices. This certification is essentially the highest organic standard and will provide us with a sustainable approach to harnessing fisheries resources. MSC certification is necessary and fitting for our branding and for the elevation of our Queen conch product.

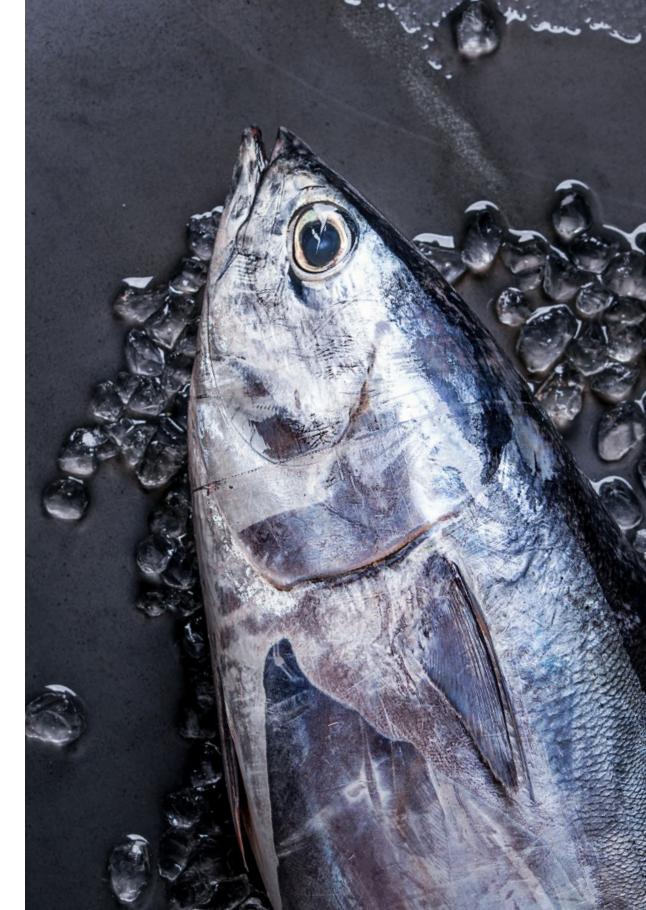
Grenada, like several other of our sister countries in the Eastern Caribbean, has well organized and developed fisheries for tuna involving their artisanal fishers.

This NFA technical team, again with support from the Ministry and the World Bank, will introduce a pilot programme in Jamaica to train our local fishers and facilitate the adoption of the necessary technologies to develop a sustainable tuna fishery targeting the export markets and the local tourism industry.

Regulation on (fin) fish

As this Honourable House may be aware, in an effort to improve the conservation of our fishery resources, the Government in February 2011 introduced legislation to increase the minimum mesh size of fish traps from one and one quarter inches (1¼") to one and one half inches (1½"). However, many of our not so well intended fishers in their determination for quick cash continue to use illegal mesh sizes for fishing resulting in poor fishing practices and contributing to the decline of our important reef fisheries resources, including parrotfish.

To redress these poor and unsustainable fishing practices the Ministry, on the recommendations of the NFA, will this year introduce to parliament regulations for the establishment of minimum sizes for our most important categories of reef fish species.



These minimum fish size regulations will provide more direct protection of our valuable reef fish species by making it illegal to catch and land "baby fish".

The penalties for landing undersized fish will be harsh (up to \$3 million in a Parish Court) and will be strictly enforced by the NFA in collaboration with the Constabulary Force, the Coast Guard and Fishery inspectors.

Fishing Beach Infrastructure

Madam Speaker, the infrastructure which supports marine fisheries activities is generally poor or absent. In addition, the impact of a series of natural disasters in the last few years has affected fishers terribly. To facilitate rehabilitation of the fisheries sub-sector it is necessary that the government and other major stakeholders ensure the provision of basic infrastructure that allows operations on fishing beaches to meet the necessary minimum standards for sanitation, gear storage and safety and post-harvest handling of fish. The NFA has will approach Public Infrastructure and Appraisal Branch for of 15 beaches over a five-year period.



Reopening of the Conch Fishery

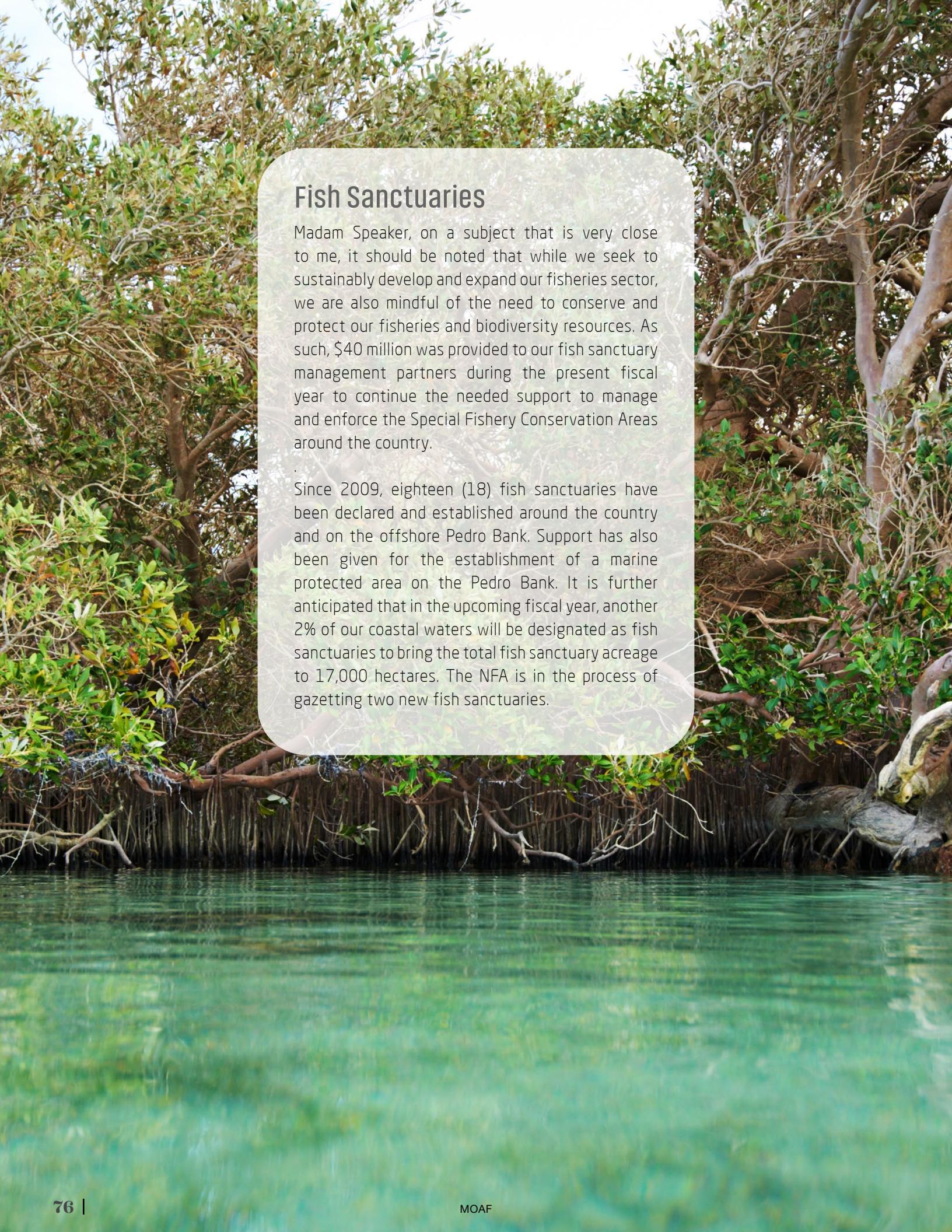
Speaking of conch, Madam Speaker, based on results of the latest survey conducted by the NFA in collaboration with the University of the West Indies and after discussions with the National Environment and Planning Agency, a National Total Allowable Catch for Conch has been set at 350 metric tonnes for the 2022 fishing season with 50 metric tonnes set aside exclusively for our small-scale artisanal fishers to sell on the local market while the remaining 300 metric tonnes will be allocated to the Industrial Queen Conch fishery for exports.

Madam Speaker, you will recall that this was a fishery that was closed for two years during 2019 and 2020. This recovery may therefore be attributed in large part to the robust management strategies that were implemented from the 2019 closure.

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Fish Sanctuaries

Madam Speaker, on a subject that is very close to me, it should be noted that while we seek to sustainably develop and expand our fisheries sector, we are also mindful of the need to conserve and protect our fisheries and biodiversity resources. As such, \$40 million was provided to our fish sanctuary management partners during the present fiscal year to continue the needed support to manage and enforce the Special Fishery Conservation Areas around the country.

Since 2009, eighteen (18) fish sanctuaries have been declared and established around the country and on the offshore Pedro Bank. Support has also been given for the establishment of a marine protected area on the Pedro Bank. It is further anticipated that in the upcoming fiscal year, another 2% of our coastal waters will be designated as fish sanctuaries to bring the total fish sanctuary acreage to 17,000 hectares. The NFA is in the process of gazetting two new fish sanctuaries.

Conclusion

Madam Speaker, the issues we face today will not disappear overnight but we are working to address them as they arise, while simultaneously building on the foundation we now have, to establish a strong, sustainable and resilient food secure country going forward.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to present to my parliamentary colleagues and address the nation on the critical issues affecting the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector. In the short time since I have taken up this post, I have met many people from diverse walks of life and backgrounds that all share a common goal, to see this sector grow and achieve its full potential so that Jamaica can take up its rightful place as the food mecca of the Caribbean.

It is my firm belief that we can achieve this objective as we have seen the results of deploying strong policies, garnering support, linkages, partnerships and investments over the last year.

I trust that the extensive update I have shared on the numerous initiatives we are pursuing paint a clear picture that the Ministry is active and we are working to mitigate against external shocks or volatile economic conditions that may impact Jamaicans.

I believe Madam Speaker, that we can grow this sector to full levels of self-sufficiency and I know it won't be easy, but with support and investors showing confidence in the sector, we can meet our goal of achieving food security as we Grow Smart so we can Eat Smart. I encourage all persons with an interest in agriculture to plant with a purpose. Eat local, Buy local, invest in agriculture!

May God Bless Us All and May God Bless Jamaica Land We Love.



**GROW
SMART,
EAT
SMART!**

