



Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries
Sectoral Presentation 2021-2022

The **NEW FACE** of **FOOD**

Food Security, Agribusiness Development, Climate-Smart Technologies, Export Expansion



The Honourable Floyd Green, MP
Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries

May 12, 2021



Introductory Remarks

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

Madam Speaker, I am honoured and humbled to stand before you at this time as Jamaica's youngest Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

I would like to express my gratitude to God for his continued endearing mercies, my appreciation to my parents June and Ronald Green for instilling in me the principles I live by. I cannot deny that my interest in farming was cultivated by my father who studied at the Jamaica School of Agriculture and went on to serve in agricultural extension services and veterinary services both here and in the Cayman Islands. Hem taking me on his many trips to farms have borne fruit. Thank you Daddy!

The Most Honourable Andrew Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica, who continues to lead with a steady hand and a level head. Grateful for your confidence PM, entrusting me a most challenging yet fulfilling opportunity to better the lives of the people of Jamaica through Agriculture and Fisheries.

I thank my colleagues in the Cabinet and parliamentarians whose collective energy and wisdom continue to propel me on this journey. Opposition Spokesperson on Agriculture, Lothan Cousins, for your constructive approach, appreciating that there can be no divide in relation to Agriculture and Fisheries.

My sincere appreciation to the entire team of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, its agencies and departments so ably led by Permanent Secretary Dermon Spence, with specific support from my office by Advisor Gabrielle Hylton, Communications Specialist Kenneisha Campbell, Executive Assistant Asharee Bennett and Close Protection Officer Roxroy Montague. Thanks to the Strike Force Team who continues to support the journey with the most amazing photographs and videos.

My Life Partner Kerida and my son Nathaniel Marcus, your love, patience and encouragement are what sustain me.

Madam Speaker, I must say thanks to the people of South West St Elizabeth to whom I am most indebted and grateful for the confidence and support as we work together to develop our lives, our livelihood and our communities. I am even more committed now, than when we started this journey, to ensure that South West St. Elizabeth is the best in the country through the "barba green way".

Madam Speaker, I stand here representing the face of food, the 230,000 farmers and 26,000 fishers; the food heroes, who have displayed unmatched resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing erratic weather conditions over the last year.





I represent from the smallest to the biggest, a responsibility that the team does not take for granted. It is for that reason we started this journey by listening to their voices. We held 26 meetings across all parishes interacting with farmers and fishers, using the technology to set up multiple locations across each parish so we could really connect with the people. We have also had over 20 meetings with various groups including suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, investors and various industry groups such as our industrial fishers, our cocoa players, our coffee farmers, our old farmers' association, our bamboo industry partners, among other stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, we are building from the ground up. Our valued stakeholders, farmers and fishers, will not only be participants in the projects, programmes and decisions emanating from the Ministry, but our food heroes will know that their input is fundamental in crafting the path to food security and modernization of the agricultural production systems.

Madam Speaker, most of us here are acutely familiar with the problems that plague agriculture and fisheries. In fact these challenges have faced our farmers and fishers for decades.

In my lifetime I have seen steps taken by the late Minister Roger Clarke to incorporate the small farmer; a focus on growing local production by Minister Tufton; a right-sizing of the sugar industry by Minister Karl Samuda, a focus on Production and Marketing Organisations by Minister Hutchinson and a dedicated push to utilize idle lands by Minister Shaw. My leg of the journey will therefore be focused on accelerating the pace of action. Now is the time to transform our Agriculture and Fisheries sector into modern, market-driven, research based industries that are sustainable and that focus on value addition.

In my presentation today, **Madam Speaker**, I will highlight the critical elements of the Ministry's plans focusing on **Food Security, Agri-Business Development, Climate-Smart Technologies, and Export Expansion (FACE)**. A plan to create an **Agriculture and Fisheries sector that is inclusive, innovative, sustainable and internationally competitive.**

Overall Performance of the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector

Domestic Crop Production

Despite the challenges of 2020, the agriculture sector continued on a positive trajectory, moving from a production of 689,080 tonnes in 2019 to 697,679 tonnes in 2020, reflecting a growth of 1.2% for the period. This production was notably the highest level of production on record, surpassing the previous highest level seen in 1996 when total output was 695,050 tonnes. Vegetable production was 237,948 tonnes, representing 34% of total domestic crop production.

Madam Speaker, in regards to the livestock sector, production in 2020 was affected by the pandemic and adverse weather conditions, which saw us encountering issues regarding storage and distribution. Additionally, loss of significant market share in the hotel sector led to excessive inventories of meats such as pork, fish, chicken and eggs. Many farmers had to cut back their production, some by as much as 50% due to declining sales.

However, as a result of the Ministry's interventions some livestock sub sectors saw significant rebound, some by as much as 80% in production, towards **the end of the year**. Overall, chicken meat production declined by 7.9% when compared to the previous year, which had been a record year for the broiler meat industry. Egg production, however, saw a significant increase of 24.9%, rising to the highest level of egg production in the nation's history.



Poultry Farmer Cheryl McLeod of Mason Hall, St. Mary.

■ Buy-Back Programme

Madam Speaker, despite being faced with an unprecedented crisis, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries was not daunted. We responded, and through two aggressive strategic initiatives, we have been able to stabilize the sector and return to growth:

1. \$240 million was put in our Buy-Back Programme to assist in the movement of the excess production in the fields from farmers to domestic consumers. This was critical as with the closure of our hotels, restaurants and schools our farmers needed direct assistance. Our international partners also responded by ramping up technical and financial support to our farmers. Special thanks to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for the additional provision of a \$35-million grant assistance.

Egg, poultry and pig farmers were also provided support valuing \$25 million.

2. New marketing channels were created through our farmers' markets, direct delivery, special food packages and drive-through markets. The programme served to create and drive entrepreneurship and innovation in food distribution systems while creating new value chains. In 2020, the Ministry through the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) facilitated over 114 farmers' markets and 55 drive-through delivery markets across the island.

To date the programme has impacted over 3,000 farmers directly and over 40,000 farm families indirectly moving in excess of 2.5 million kilogrammes of produce. The initiative achieved its goals of providing a secure and fair market for many of our farmers and brought affordable and fresh quality produce to Jamaicans through our Say Yes To Fresh Campaign. Parallel to sustaining income generation for our farming community, our farmers in collaboration with the Ministry supported quarantined communities and institutions through direct contributions of free produce valuing approximately \$16 million.



Prime Minister Andrew Holness(right) purchasing eggs at Cashless Farmers' Market in St. Andrew while the Hon Fayval Williams (2nd right) looks on.



Chief Technical Director, Courtney Cole(left), and Farmer Byron from Duff view tomatoes being purchased under the Buy-Back Programme.

We also partnered with our many supportive distributors of the private sector to move small farmers' fresh chicken meat and fish at reasonable prices to the consumers.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that we have earmarked an additional **\$200 million to continue our Buy-Back Programme.**

Madam Speaker, we are not out of the woods yet, as the pandemic continues to ravage supply chains, distort market demand and drive up the worldwide prices of critical ingredients in animal feed and fertilizers. We are still in a time of crisis, which is why I ask my parliamentary colleagues and Jamaica to join with me and the Ministry's team as we craft the new **FACE of food**, focusing on **Food Security, Agribusiness Development, Climate-Smart Technologies and Export Expansion.**

The Path towards strengthening our Nation's Food Security

Improving Research Capacity

The new FACE of food revolves around research. If Jamaica is to truly fulfil its green and blue economy potential, we must return to the days when Bodles was considered the premier agricultural research facility in the Western Hemisphere. It is for this reason that over the past three years, the Government has been executing a programme of massive development of our research stations under the Bodles Redevelopment Programme.

Madam Speaker, some \$635 million has been pumped into newly built and refurbished facilities including staff facilities, genetic preservation centre, high security perimeter fencing, high-tech dairy system, irrigation and road infrastructure, protected agriculture and nursery facilities, pasture and fodder banks, nutrition and chemical laboratories as well as new machinery, such as tractors, implements and total mixed ration (TMR) system. We have also engaged new staff under our restructuring exercise which is well under way.

For the current 2021-2022 fiscal year, an **additional \$150 million** has been committed, bringing the total injection into research and development year to date to over \$750 million. All this to guarantee the return of Bodles Research Station to its former glory in leading the research and application of new technology for adoption by our farmers across several sectors.

Madam Speaker, this is not a short-term drive to refocus our sector on research and development. It is a long-term determined strategy and so our Public Investment Management Secretariat (PIMSEC) has now approved a 10-year, \$5.4-billion project to continue the work to bring our other research and development facilities to the cutting-edge of technology.



Seed Improvement

Madam Speaker, if we are to be truly food secure, then we have to start at the source. Issues regarding our seed stock, importation of seed and the development and adoption of new varieties are critical to the path towards food security. It is for this reason that we are fast-tracking our implementation of the National Seed Policy laid in this House in 2019.

Our critical focus over the next 2 years will be to establish a certified out-grower scheme for commercial seed production. This will include registering and certifying seed producers, developing protocols, and identifying suitable tracks of land and facilities for commercial seed production.

We have also invested US\$230,000 in partnership with the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) for the Pilot Programme on Climate Resilience to expand and upgrade the seed storage facility at the Bodles Research Station. This facility will house the best quality seeds, including our own seed source from locally developed and indigenous land race types for vegetables, cover crops, field crops and legumes.

Madam Speaker, this will be a major focus for the new financial year, as the Crop Breeding Unit at Bodles ramps up its seed testing and evaluation capacity and protocols for the multiplication of specialty seeds such as organic seed for our growers.

Madam Speaker, we have heard the concerns expressed by our farmers about the quality of some imported seeds. It is clear that Jamaican farmers are reliant on the imports of these seeds with the majority of them being hybrid seeds, requiring higher inputs and greater care under our environment.

Through our Research and Extension team with support from the Agricultural Land Management Division (ALMD), we will be partnering with local seed suppliers to evaluate new commercial crop varieties at our research stations with follow up field demonstration plots on farmers' holdings to track the performance of these crop varieties. This will provide early information on seed performance and inform recommendations for the suitability of the varieties for growing areas and inform farmers' best practices.

Madam Speaker, this Government not only listens to the cries of the farmers, but takes actions to ensure that as a country we are firmly on the path to food security.





Cold Chain Facilities

Madam Speaker, for decades farmers have complained about a lack of adequate storage facilities. For years they have called upon the government to do more to stem the up to 30% post-harvest loss of perishable fruits and vegetables. COVID-19 again brought this need into sharp focus and underscored the need for the development of reliable and efficient cold chains that will not only reduce post-harvest crop losses, but also prevent forced sales at low prices.

The time has come, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to announce to this Honourable House today that we are embarking this year on a US\$1.05-million (approximately J\$157 million) Agri-Business Cold Chain project for Jamaica (ABC Jamaica). This project has been made possible with the help of the Government and people of Morocco through grant funding of US\$945,000.

This six highly productive farming areas will see the establishment of:

- 1) Mobile pre-cooling and packing facilities;
 - a) Modular, solar-powered, walk-in cold rooms that provide unbroken, off-grid storage and preservation of perishable foods in close proximity to farming clusters; and
 - b) Small refrigerated trucks for transport of produce to markets and;
- 2) A network of temperature data loggers in both cold rooms and trucks that farmers can monitor remotely using their cellular phones.

This, **Madam Speaker**, is an example of the new FACE of food.

Special thanks to the Government and people of Morocco for their support, not only in this regard, but with fertilizers and technical support in soil research and analysis.



■ Soil Health

Madam Speaker, soil is an essential resource and a vital part of the natural environment within which 95% of food is produced. Healthy soils are the basis of the food production system. However, the Food and Agriculture Organization reports that approximately 33% of global soils are degraded. It is critical that as a country that is striving towards food security we pay more attention to soil health. In this regard, we have reactivated a **soil health committee** at the Ministry composed of technical officers from our ALMD, RADA, the International Centre for Environment and Nuclear Science as well as other stakeholders.

The committee will pay keen attention to improving soil health and management practices and will explore development of a **soil health tool** that farmers and technical teams can use to provide a quick, basic evaluation of the health of the soils that are being utilised.

Madam Speaker, our **Public Infrastructure Management Committee** has approved the Soil Fertility Mapping Project for Sustainable Agriculture in Jamaica, a joint project between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Moroccan National Institute for Agricultural Research. The project which will span 4 years and cost US\$1.3 million will, among other things:

- Design and develop an information system and soil databases decision makers;
- Develop fertilizer recommendations for crops and establish fertilizer programmes;
- Elaborate a Geo-referenced soil fertility information system for the country; and
- Enhance the human and technical capacity of farmers, extension officers and researchers in soil information, and fertility monitoring and management.

In the new Face of food, soil health is paramount.

Production Incentive Programme

Madam Speaker, as a developing state, we are acutely aware that we have to pick winners. The Ministry, through our Agricultural Marketing Division, has done a detailed assessment of our potential to grow our market demand and earn foreign exchange and, accordingly, has identified crops and livestock for priority support. Twelve crops, namely Irish potato, onion, strawberry, yam, dasheen, coco, hot pepper, cassava, ginger, pineapple, lime, vegetables and small ruminants (goat and sheep) are targeted this year.

Madam Speaker, we remain committed to increasing our production of selected crops and livestock as we work towards reducing our food import bill and increasing our earnings from exports of primary and value-added products.

During the 2020-2021 financial year, we directly impacted 7,428 crop farmers and 1,434 livestock farmers under the PIP. Approximately \$1.8 billion was expended under the programme to provide incentives to our farmers and investors as follows:

- \$596.1 million for the production of crops such as Irish potato, onion, hot peppers, vegetables, yams, cassava, pineapples, strawberry and rearing of livestock to include sheep and goats.
- \$541 million for provision of equipment such as tractors, backhoes, drones, construction of catchment areas and ponds and purchase of excess produce under the Buy-Back Programme.
- \$651.6 million for planting material, pesticides, and fertilizer for crops; infrastructural repairs to greenhouses, shade houses and catchment areas and rehabilitation of farm roads.



Minister Green (2nd left) reaps Irish potatoes at Samuel Lynch's (2nd left) farm in New Pen, St. Mary. At left is Member of Parliament Robert Montague and RADA Parish Agricultural Manager Delroy Luke at right



Minister Green (2nd left) views strawberry along with (from left) Peter Thompson, CEO, RADA; Cecil Rope, farmer; and Permanent Secretary Dermon Spence at Rock Spring in Trelawny.



Shannon Gayle (left), Agricultural Extension Officer, RADA; and farmer Tanasha Parchment examine hot peppers at her farm in Santa Cruz, St. Elizabeth.

■ Equipment Support

Madam Speaker, as we craft the New FACE of Food, our farmers need to have greater access to the tools needed to make them more efficient and productive. It is for this reason that we will be providing six (6) new tractors to enhance the RADA tractor service across the parishes Manchester, Clarendon, St. Ann, St. Thomas, St. Mary and St. Catherine.

We will also be providing four (4) drones to enable our extension officers to better capture data and guide our farmers into precision-based agriculture.

Madam Speaker, we intend to continue our growth momentum through increased focus on these priority crops and livestock under the Production Incentive Programme. I am therefore pleased to announce that for this year \$1.02 billion has been allocated under the programme aimed at boosting the capacity of our farmers and fishers as follows:

- **Crops – \$280 million**
- **Livestock – \$80 million**
- **Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation – \$152 million**
- **Infrastructure Support – \$30 million**
- **Grant Assistance/Agricultural Promotions – \$210 million**
- **Buy-Back Programme – \$200 million**
- **Equipment – \$50 million**

Madam Speaker, this Government promised the farmers and fishers of this country that the sector would be given a minimum of \$1 billion in annual support over three years and has kept its promise over two years – A promise made and a promise delivered!

■ Traditional Crops

Madam Speaker, the traditional crops subsector to include cocoa, coffee, coconut, citrus, banana and the spices such as turmeric, ginger and pimento experienced a mix of challenges and successes over the period. However, one thing we are sure of is the urgency of implementing our plans and programmes to continue the reinvigoration of these crops through the facilitation of increased private-sector-led investments in these lucrative crops, for expanded supplies to both the local and export markets.

Cocoa Industry

Madam Speaker, the focus on the industry is to continue the privatization of the cocoa industry with the government's main role being that of facilitating the development of the industry. We are therefore making moves to further divest our cocoa assets and have re-advertised for expression of interest for the divestment of the government's cocoa industry assets in a bid to get investors to come in and drive development.

On the other hand, the Government has injected some \$426 million to bring the Frosty Pod Rot disease under control. In collaboration with the Plant Quarantine and Produce Inspection Branch, farmers and other stakeholders, the Frosty Pod Rot disease in the parish of St Mary has now been declared under full control.

With the agronomic practices and training provided to farmers, **Madam Speaker**, we should not see a resurgence of the disease in those areas completed under Phase One as we move to Phase Two in the parishes of Clarendon and St. Catherine.

It is expected that yields will continue to increase with the management and training that have been given to farmers and production is expected to expand. We are well under way in Clarendon and it is expected that in the upcoming year we will at least cover 50% of 5,500 acres in that parish, with budgetary support of over \$103 million.

To further support the resuscitation and expansion in production, the Ministry has established a nursery at the Orange River Research Station that can produce over 60,000 clean planting seedlings of highly tolerant Frosty Pod Rot disease varieties and, so far, over 5,000 plants have been produced for the replanting programme.

The Jamaica Agricultural Commodities and Regulatory Authority (JACRA), the regulatory authority for cocoa, has been tasked with the responsibility to further expand the capacity for replacement of planting material by using the Haughton Court facility in Hanover as a nursery to increase production of disease-tolerant varieties.

Through the Export Division, \$20 million was used to support the purchase of farmers' cocoa and we contributed \$5 million to a joint-venture programme in St. Thomas with small farmers to establish a processing facility.

Coffee Industry

Madam Speaker, Jamaica continues to produce the best coffee in the world 'our Blue Mountain coffee'. This Ministry joined our Prime Minister and thousands of coffee stakeholders around the world in the recent celebrations of Blue Mountain Coffee Day and promoting the 'Sip a Cup Today' action.

As a demonstration of our consistent support to the sector, over \$100 million worth of inputs and subsidy for the processing of farmers' coffee was committed to the sector. We are indeed promoting, with the support of JAMPRO, JACRA, the Tourism Ministry and sector, our farmers, manufacturers and exporters, the islandwide production of high mountain coffee to enhance blending and diversification of production.

The industry, however, has not been without its challenges to include climatic, phytosanitary, markets and social issues which have been affecting production and, by extension, the earning power of the industry.

In that regard, JACRA has been developing the coffee industry business model. The plan will give dedicated focus to resuscitating high mountain coffee and centres on expanding public-private partnerships to drive the development.

I have already had meetings with farmers, exporters and our major players like Salada and Nestlé to gather their views and share my vision.

As part of the Ministry's private-public collaboration, Nestlé Jamaica Limited, in recognition of its 80th year of doing business in Jamaica, has decided to demonstrate its long-term commitment to the country by scaling up of coffee production in the Jamaica High Mountain region through funding support, technical assistance and the provision of planting materials through nursery support. This programme will be carried out initially for seven years with an overall commitment for 25 years.

Madam Speaker, I wish to commend Nestlé for its tangible commitment to the sector as well as for choosing to make Jamaica its headquarters for the 23 countries in which it operates in the region.

Modernizing the Sugar Sector

This year, Cabinet approved the final portion of a 3-year subsidy payment of \$119 million to facilitate transportation and logistics of moving 35,000 metric tonnes of sugar cane from Clarendon, St. Catherine and Trelawny to the Worthy Park Factory.

Madam Speaker, the traditional way of operating and managing this industry is over, and so while the prevailing trend is for the industry to contract, there is a possibility of stabilising this trend.

In this regard, several initiatives are under way to right-size the sugar industry to make it more effective and efficient to respond to emerging demands. This includes the organizational review of the Sugar Industry Authority (SIA) and supporting the initiatives of the private sector investments in the sugar industry by making additional lands available as we work with the Worthy Park and Frome factories to expand their sugar cane production for this crop year by a combined 2,023.43 hectares (5,000 acres).

The Monymusk sugar lands, under the purview of the SCJH, and possibly the sugar factory owned by Pan-Caribbean are to be divested. With the successful divestment of these assets, sugar cane production along with the concomitant economic activities would recommence, thus achieving, to a large extent, the objectives of the Alternative Livelihood Programme.

Accordingly, serious discussions and consultations are underway with the manufacturers, farmers and the SIA in a bid to finalise the strategy and structure of the modern sugar industry going forward.





Coconut Industry

The tremendous demand for coconuts and its by-products such as coconut water and coconut oil is a clear opportunity for our country. Over the last year we have expanded our nurseries at Barton Isles and Plantation Garden, distributed over 75,000 seedlings and planted over 100,000 seed nuts. We need to accelerate this pace.

Grace Foods has indicated that they could utilise 24,000 coconuts daily to satisfy their coconut water needs. To this end, the Coconut Industry Board, both Government and our growers, are looking to enter into a suitable public-private partnership to accelerate the pace of expansion.

Under the partnership we are looking to target producing 400,000 seedlings per year, which is a 400% increase, and to plant over 3,000 acres of coconuts.

■ Land

Madam speaker, a lot has been said in recent times about agricultural lands.

The need for sufficient arable land is critical to our food security and as Minister I am seized of that fact and will do all in my power to achieve this end. We cannot, however, approach the preservation of agricultural land as we have over the last five decades. That approach has focused more on preservation and less on utilization and has left us with thousands of acres of agricultural land that have been transformed into informal settlements and countless acres of unused or underutilized land. In the new dispensation the approach is threefold:

1. Increase our agricultural land bank
2. Assess all of the Ministry's agricultural land holdings and craft a structured and strategic approach to their use, and;
3. Engage the private sector.

Increasing our Land Bank

Part of my vision is for lands that are good agricultural lands, owned by the Government but are now outside the purview of the Ministry of Agriculture, to be transferred to the MOAF. In this regard, we have engaged the National Housing Trust (NHT) and the National Land Agency (NLA) to transfer land to the Ministry that is appropriate for agriculture. Accordingly, the Agro-Investment Corporation (AIC) has recently gained control of nearly 4,000 hectares of land, this is over 9,000 acres, which would have otherwise gone into housing, or otherwise, to expand agricultural production. These include areas such as New Pen in St Mary and Seven Rivers in St. James, amounting to an additional 404.68 hectares (1,000 acres).

Madam Speaker, the Ministry that I now lead has seen the return of land into agriculture, we are not only protecting, but we are increasing our fold.

Further in line with these efforts, the Ministry has also embarked on a Land Owner Match Programme where the AIC leases privately owned agricultural lands and matches those with suitable agricultural investment. Thus far, over 121.41 hectares (300 acres) have been so leased and we continue to appeal to persons who own unused agricultural land to contact the AIC.

Alternative Use of Sugar Lands

Madam Speaker, parallel to our support for the sugar cane industry, we are continuing the productive use of sugar cane lands freed up by the rationalization of the sugar industry into other crops and enterprises to facilitate innovation and growth of the agricultural sector.

In this regard, the SCJ Holdings Ltd (SCJH) approved some 117 leases covering just over 1,299 hectares (3,210 acres) of land. This brings the total amount of lands leased to 10,466 hectares (25,862 acres) over the 2018 to 2021 period.

The purposes for which lands were leased include sugar cane, cash crops, animal rearing, hemp, cannabis, castor beans, agro-processing, commercial activities, solar energy, mining of aggregates and a climate-smart demonstration site.

Of note, **Madam Speaker**, is the fact that SCJH has collaborated with the All-Island Jamaica Cane Farmers Association to facilitate hundreds of former sugar workers establish alternative economic livelihoods in Trelawny and St. Thomas. These include leasing of:

- Some 1,457 hectares (3,600 acres) of former Long Pond Estate lands for the establishment of a project known as Trelawny Pride. This project is based on the mother farm-satellite farms concept and will see the placement of numerous small farmers on lands for the production of agricultural outputs for the tourism market and exports.

In St. Thomas, approximately 809.37 hectares (2,000 acres) of land have been leased as follows:

- Some 226.6 hectares (560 acres) through sub-leases to former sugar workers displaced by the closure of the Golden Grove Sugar Factory as well as the relocation and regularization of informal occupants.
- Expansion of the Plantain Garden Agro-Park, managed by the AIC, by 58.7 hectares (145 acres) to a total of 169.56 hectares (419 acres).
- 202.34 hectares (500 acres) to the Plantain Garden River Co-operative Society Limited for on-leasing to its members.

Thus, almost 607 hectares (1,500 acres) have been made available, at concessionary rates to individuals, small farmers and groups in the area.

Additionally, in recognition of the need to attract medium-sized investors in order to create jobs and boost economic activity in the Golden Grove Community, the SCJH leased 253 hectares (625 acres) of land from Jamaica Producers Group Limited. A request for proposals (RFP) was made for the agricultural development of three blocks on this land and one block from SCJH's own holdings, each between 73 to 77 hectares (180-190 acres).

Preference will be given to investors with agro-processing components in their proposals which can expand job creation and provide markets for the small farmers' produce to be processed.

The SCJH has also leased some 202.34 hectares (500 acres), previously leased to the Seprod Group for the establishment of a modern cattle breeding operation, with emphasis on the Red Poll and Jamaica Black species. This operation will also provide jobs and other major economic spin-offs for the beef supply chain.

In Westmoreland, the SCJH has approved a proposal for the sale of 141.64 hectares (350 acres) to investors to build a US\$300 million bamboo pulp factory, which is expected to create 500 jobs at a full operating capacity by 2023.

Madam Speaker, this is the second step in the transformation of former sugar-dependent communities as the country seeks to build new and invigorate existing industries that have tremendous potential for profitability and sustainability. For the new financial year, 2021/2022, SCJH plans to make increasing amounts of former sugar cane lands available to investors for productive activities. In doing so, they will seek to ensure support for initiatives identified by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. These include:

- (a) Production of strategic priority crops and livestock;
- (b) Value-chain development through agro processing and marketing;
- (c) Promotion and facilitation of youth and women in agriculture; and
- (d) Increased production to meet higher percentage of domestic and export demand.

The Ministry, through SCJH, will also seek to ensure that lands leased are being utilized in operationally and financially viable economic activities that are sustainable and are contributing to economic growth and job creation. This means that SCJH will be taking an inventory of the state of activities on lands the company has leased. The company will be following the instruction of the Government to lessees to "use it or lose it", which is a conditionality of these leases.

Madam Speaker, I have also met with Minister Aubyn Hill, in an attempt to ensure that titles for agricultural land holdings are fast tracked. He has set an ambitious target of 10,000 titles to be issued this year. I am confident that agricultural lands will amount for a significant part thereof.

Transition of the Jamaica Dairy Development Board into a National Livestock Board

Madam Speaker, in recognition of the need to structure the livestock industry to harness opportunities for the sector, the Ministry conducted a strategic review of the initiatives geared towards the small ruminants, and cattle (dairy and beef) sectors.

We have decided to expand the reach of the Jamaica Dairy Development Board (JDDDB), transforming it into the National Livestock Development Board, which will be supported by a revised Act and the development of a National Livestock Development Policy.

This will require an amendment of the JDDDB Act No. 4 of 2009 to create the Livestock Development Board, which will embrace the wider livestock sector without diminishing the focus on dairy industries development. Consultations in promoting the very lucrative dairy industry have been bearing fruit with new and expanded investments by Tru Juice Ltd, Serge Island and Nestlé.

Significant work and consultation have been conducted regarding the Dairy Board Act, and among the strategies to be employed are:

- Planning, promoting, facilitating and coordinating an accelerated development of the livestock and dairy industries.
- This will include, among other things, widening of the focus from strictly goat meat production to include milk and milk products such as cottage cheese.
- Development of a Livestock Marketing Information System (LMIS)

- Implementation of Herd Management and Animal Registration System for small ruminants to be integrated within the National Animal Identification and Traceability System (NAITS).
- Facilitation of the establishment of a scientifically determined target for local milk production using population demographics and distribution analysis.
- Development of a system to export Jamaican livestock meats and meat by-products.
- Promote and facilitate product diversification through research, training and the introduction of new technology.
- **Madam Speaker**, we will also be encouraging private sector investment in livestock and dairy through facilitation of a synergistic cluster concept.
- In alignment with the resuscitation of the beef industry, Madam Speaker, we will also facilitate the creation of a Beef Producers Co-operative to operate its own multispecies abattoir and process and market specialized cuts to the hotel, restaurant and supermarket sector.
- Another key initiative will be capacity building of all stakeholders through the promotion of the strengthening of Livestock Producers' Associations (dairy and beef farmers; small ruminant farmers; pig farmers and pork producers; poultry and egg farmers).
- Overall, Madam Speaker, we will create an enabling environment for product diversification, improve alignment of the value chain for increased returns to farmers as well as facilitate, promote and support the development and dissemination of improved technologies.



Goat farmer Joseph Ivey (left) and Minister Green at a livestock farm in Kingsland, Manchester.



Livestock Research Officer Dwight McKie demonstrates artificial insemination at Hounslow Research Station.

■ Small Ruminants

Madam Speaker, Jamaicans' appetite for the consumption of goat meat or chevron is insatiable. The very popular curry goat and white rice meal, and head and belly or ram goat soup is a standard for parties, celebrations of life and deaths and has become a menu item for restaurants, cook shops, hotels and homes.

Madam Speaker, despite this high demand for locally grown goat meat, we continue to import some 80–85% of our consumptive needs. Between 2015 to 2019, 1.002 million kilogrammes of goat meat, valuing US\$3.7 million, was imported.

The Ministry has had many interventions over a number of years to boost production with varying degrees of success but, **Madam Speaker**, we are not daunted and will continue with our current programme of purchase and distribution of mature bucks to expand breeding support to small ruminant clusters across the island.

However, to further boost this programme, I am announcing today that we will be launching a special Artificial Insemination and Embryo Transfer project for small ruminants to the tune of \$50 million.

Under this programme to be headed by our Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr. Osbil Watson of the Veterinary Services Division, over 6,000 registered small ruminant farmers will be provided with between 1–3 inseminations from any breed of their choice and an ovum/embryo transfer for selected animals completely free of cost.

Madam Speaker, the objective is a rapid multiplication of the small ruminant population to satisfy the nation's animal protein demand in a sustainable food-secured way. The current national semen inventory stands at 1,990 straws, with 700 straws at Bodles, 790 at Caribbean Broilers, 400 straws at Jamaica Broilers, and 100 straws under procurement at the JDDB.



Madam Speaker, this is a game changer, it will create the NEW FACE of our Livestock sector as through the application of new and existing technology our farmers can rapidly expand production to ensure our country's food security.

The programme will involve a very strong collaboration between the Small Ruminant Farmers Association, private sector companies, such as Caribbean Broilers and Jamaica Broilers, RADA, Bodles Research Station, CARDI and the JDDB coordinated by our own Veterinary Services Division.

Madam Speaker, the efficiency and management parameters of proper recordkeeping, tagging for traceability, fodder bank development and heat synchronization will be addressed under the technical components of the programme.

Madam Speaker, there is a reality brought about by the COVID-19 crisis. Our critical input such as our feed prices is seeing exponential price increases. This, Members of the House, is largely due to what is happening on the international stage. Corn prices have risen by 80% on the world market between September 2020 and May 2021 and soya bean prices by 355.9%. Average feed prices on the worldwide market have risen by 64%. Locally, we have seen increases of between 15% to 20% across all feed categories. This is a real threat to the industry. I have asked the Permanent Secretary to meet with the main producers to explore ways to contain cost. I have also asked the research and development team to revive our drive to explore local substitution. In the short term, we are exploring the potential of subsidising some of the costs. As a medium to long-term measure, the country will have to look into purchase and storage of some critical inputs to guard against these fluctuations in times of crisis.

National Farm Road Rehabilitation Programme

Madam Speaker, for the 2020–2021 period, with a budget of \$375 million, we were able to rehabilitate 56 roads with another 10 at varying stages of completion. Of this number, repairs were carried out on 19 roads that were severely damaged by the flood rains during last October and November accounting for \$25 million.

For financial year 2021–2022, **\$650 million** has been allocated for the rehabilitation of 63 farm roads impacting directly over 2,000 farmers and farm families across rural Jamaica through increased access to markets and ease of transportation of goods and services.

Madam Speaker, we have reviewed and revamped our Farm Road Programme, and this year's policy directive targets a minimum of one farm road per farming constituency, selected after consultation with the Members of Parliament. Additional roads will be awarded from RADA's master list which consists of recommendations from PMOs, JAS groups, extension officers and various stakeholders. Each year, we will attempt to undertake a number of marquee farm road projects in communities for greatest impact. They will be selected based on priority for full completion.

Farmers in Leamington, East Westmoreland, farmers in Comfort Road, South West Clarendon, farmers in New Fine Road, South East St. Ann, farmers in Nuts River, St. Thomas Eastern, farmers in Raggsville, North East St. Catherine, and Africa to Hopewell, Central St. Mary. Plus areas like New Pen in St Mary, Douglas Castle in St. Ann and Flagaman in St. Elizabeth can look for major farm road improvement coming your way.



Farm road at Kimma in St. Ann, before and after.

Fruit Tree Planting Programme

Madam Speaker, this Ministry recalls the launch of Jamaica's National Tree Planting Programme by our Prime Minister and immediately placed ourselves at its centre by contracting a National Coordinator who has coordinated our efforts through the mantra of "plant a tree for life" working with the Forestry Department, Jamaica 4-H Clubs, RADA, Jamaica Fire Brigade, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, the Jamaica Agricultural Society, several private companies, agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in distributing over 43,000 fruit and timber trees which have been planted across the island.

Madam Speaker, through our Bodles Research Station, Orange River, Montpelier and Hope Gardens nurseries an in-kind and cash injection strategy of over \$250 million has been given in support of seedlings production, promotion and distribution.

Madam speaker, I am pleased to advise this House that for the 2021-2022 financial year we will be distributing over 1 million fruit trees to include ackee, jackfruit, breadfruit, soursop and mango fruit tree seedlings.

The country can therefore rest assured that this piece of rock is playing its part in support of the FAO's target through a decade of planting a tree.



Sustainable Fisheries Development

I put it to us as a nation that Jamaica has not begun to fully harness the full potential of its blue economy. Opportunities abound in the development of new fisheries, energy and clean water generation, craft and creation of works of arts and the harvesting of marine flora and fauna such as sea moss, and seaweed, among other species, for food, medicinal and nutraceutical purposes. We must also not lose sight of the multidimensional potential for recreation, mariculture and sporting activities.

Madam Speaker, with respect to the Fisheries Industry, the Honourable House may recall the reported negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on local fish production. While the basic production systems are still intact with most small-scale fishers and fish farmers still being able to produce and sell at farm gate, the slowdown or loss of markets has had the contingent effect of slowing down production operations and deprivation of income. Similarly, there has been an increase in the cost of inputs such as mesh wire, feed and chemicals required for aquaculture.

As an incentive to our small-scale fishers and fish farmers, who are in many cases the backbone of economic support in many rural communities, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries made available \$146 million to facilitate these persons getting back into production.

More than 2,500 fishers have already received grants in the form of vouchers valued at up to \$30,000 each to procure fishing mesh wire and other related equipment. Similarly, 72 fish farmers are now benefiting from fish meal and fingerlings valued at over \$20 million.

Hon. Floyd Green (left) presents voucher to Daniel Jaghoo, fisher from Hunts Bay (Jam World).

Madam Speaker, while working within the strictures of the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) is working to ensure that only legitimate fishers receive these incentives. The Authority also anticipates that up to 2,000 more fishers will receive grants that are being disseminated in collaboration with Members of Parliament in the coming weeks.

This Honourable House should also be advised that we have not forgotten our larger industrial fishing operators who were also struggling to get back into operations due to the fallout created by the closure of the conch season, which was further exacerbated by the pandemic. And so, **Madam Speaker**, as promised, for these industrialized fishing operations, we have provided grant support totalling \$83 million for fin fish, conch and lobster operators through the NFA.

Madam Speaker, it should be noted that these industrial operators directly support more than 6,000 jobs and generate foreign exchange earnings of over US\$12 million annually.



Reopening of the Conch Fishery

Speaking of the industrial fishing operations, **Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that after more than two years of closure due to heavy poaching and illegal, unreported, unregulated (IUU) fishing, the Queen Conch fishery was reopened on April 1 of this year (i.e., just last month).**

Based on results of research surveys on the Pedro Bank in 2020 to assess the status of the Queen Conch population and after discussions with the National Environment and Planning Agency, the NFA recommended that the Queen Conch fishery should be reopened, and a national total allowable catch for conch be set at 300 metric tonnes. Of note, 30 metric tonnes will be set aside exclusively for local trade (Artisanal Fishery) while the remaining 270 metric tonnes will be allocated to the Industrial Queen Conch fishery for exports.

With our promise to not increase the cess on conch exports, it will remain at US\$0.50 per pound. Our revised projection is to earn some US\$4 million.

Madam Speaker, I wish to warn all poachers, both foreign and local, that we will not sit back and allow the continuous illegal fishing of our stocks. I, therefore, commend the JDF Coast Guard and Marine Police for the tremendous support given over the period and urge them to be resolute in stamping out IUU fishing in our waters and in the region as the NFA moves to fully staff its newly established Compliance Unit.



Managing our Fisheries Resources

Madam Speaker, as we strive towards food security it is critical that we assess our fin fish stock levels. It is a fact that if we are not careful we can lose our most bountiful resource. All of us have seen the declines and the negative impact of overfishing. We are particularly concerned about parrotfish, especially because of its critical role in protecting our coral reefs.

With this in mind, the NFA will be developing a national assessment programme that will include islandwide reef fish surveys inclusive of parrotfish and other important herbivores. These surveys will provide data that will aid in determining the diversity and abundance of these species and will facilitate the implementation of an ecosystem-based approach to sustainable management of this fishery.

Legislation such as that found in the Wildlife Protection Act (1945) makes the taking of juvenile fish illegal. However, juvenile fish (fin fish) is not defined by any current legislation. This poses challenges for enforcement and the sustainability of our fisheries.

To address this gap, the NFA will start consultation this year towards promulgating regulations that will seek to establish minimum size limits on catch for all reef fish species, including parrotfish.

This, **Madam Speaker**, along with a strict control over the mesh and net sizes and types will begin a process of developing regulations to prevent the unwarranted catch and sale of undersized fish and minimize by catch as we implement further strategies in our bid to strengthen the sustainable fishing of these resources.

The Ministry will be introducing regulations to govern and restrict the use of beach seines and trawl nets. The NFA will develop guidelines for proper construction of these nets, and where and how these nets may be used in a responsible and sustainable manner. These are expected to be in place by the end of fiscal year 2021/22.

The NFA will also be working with the HEART Trust/NSTA and Caribbean Maritime University to develop boat captaincy, dive training and certification courses for any fisher who intends to learn to sail or operate boats, learn to scuba to fish.

Registration and Licensing

While there are over 40,000 persons directly involved in fishing, the total annual average of fishers registered is 26,000, with only a 10% renewal rate.

The NFA is developing a national online licensing and registration system aimed at making our interactions with all our fishers, fish farmers and other stakeholders more efficient. The new Fisheries Licensing and Registration System, which is being financed by a \$1.2-million IDB loan to the Ministry of Finance's Transformation Implementation Unit, will be ready by the end of 2023.

Madam Speaker, this new system will allow persons to be able to register from anywhere anytime using their personal electronic devices. It targets compliance of up to 80% over a three-year period.

Fishing Beach Rehabilitation

Over the next five years, we intend to redevelop 15 fishing beaches, with three fishing beaches completed per year at an estimated cost of \$2.25 billion, beginning with beaches in Clarendon, St. Elizabeth and Hanover.

The development of fishing beaches will include cold storage and sanitation facilities, safe food market arrangements, fishing equipment storage and general security systems.

Additionally, the NFA is currently procuring 10 refrigerated containers to be placed in fishing communities that meet the requirements to manage these cold storage facilities.

Aquaculture Development

The ability to expand the participants in aquaculture is critical to our food security. This can only be achieved if we have a modern and efficient aquaculture hatchery facility.

Madam Speaker, a new state-of-the-art hatchery will be constructed at the NFA's Aquaculture Branch at Twickenham Park in St. Catherine at an estimated cost of US\$460,000 (J\$69 million) with funding provided through the World Bank PPCR Project and is expected to be completed by 2023.

Madam Speaker, through this new hatchery there will be a 300% increase in fish fingerling (Advanced Fry) production. This will increase the NFA's current capacity of 1.5 million to 5 million fry per year when fully operational. This directly translates to an increase in the country's freshwater fish productivity capacity by over 400% to some 870 million tonnes.

This expansion will be coupled with a promotional campaign to encourage more Jamaicans to eat freshwater fish, such as tilapia.

Vessel Monitoring Systems

Madam Speaker, the safety at sea of our fishers is first. We bemoan the loss of life of our fishermen that occurred over the year, as well as the recent shark attacks and express our sincere condolences to the families and friends they have left behind. I, too, have lost a very close friend at sea and it saddens me as I relate to his wife and three kids left behind. My commitment to his and many other grieving families is very strong. And that is why in continuation of our modernization efforts, the NFA will institute a modern and improved satellite-based vessel monitoring system which will be piloted by our conch fishers in the season now under way.

Madam Speaker, in fact, by 2022/23, the Ministry will be adding a marine very high frequency (VHF) radio communication system as well as introducing shark repellent technologies which will further serve to enhance safety of our fishers at sea.

This programme, along with strict adherence to the safety regulations, will significantly reduce the number of lives lost annually at sea by providing a means for fishers to communicate distress situations and for the JDF and other first responders to be able to track and locate their positions in offshore waters.



Agribusiness Development

Agricultural Insurance

Madam Speaker, as we continue to adapt to our new normal, and adjust to living with the COVID-19 pandemic our sectoral outlook will include some key initiatives.

Madam Speaker, the Agri-Care and the Fisheries and Agricultural Multi-Advantage insurance programmes were launched in February and March 2021, respectively. Last year, I made a commitment to provide an insurance facility that would enable our farm heroes to breathe a sigh of relief. I am proud to say that this commitment has been met through the Sagicor Agri-Care plan and Guardian FAMA for our fishers and farmers.



From left, Guardian Life Vice-President, Constance Hoo, Minister Green and Executive Advisor Fay Hutchinson from Guardian Life examine insurance document for farmers and fishers.

Fishing Vessel Insurance

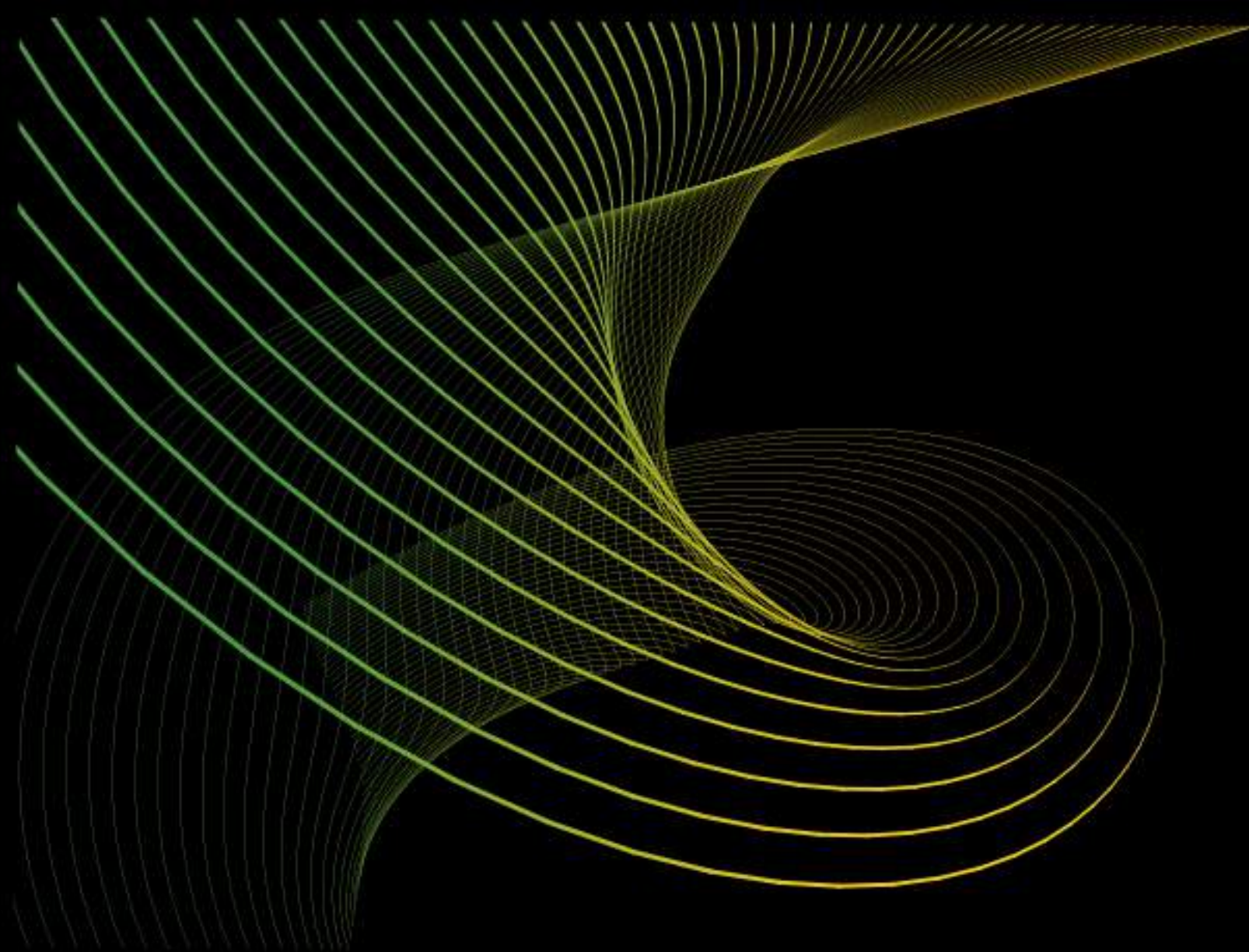
Madam Speaker, the Ministry through the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) has been working with multiple insurance providers to finalize a proposal for the insurance of fishing vessels and related equipment. It is anticipated that packaged insurance options for both industrial, small-scale and recreational fishers will be ready by mid-year.



Willard Brown (right), Executive Vice-President, Employee Benefits Division, Sagicor Life, converses with the Hon. Floyd Green (left), Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and Dr. Gavin Bellamy, CEO of the National Fisheries Authority.

Crop Insurance

Madam Speaker, we are far advanced with one local insurance provider towards offering a crop insurance scheme for our farmers. I have also pulled together a team from the Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ) to conduct a more broad based exploration looking at possible international partners that may be needed to make this a reality. The de-risking of agriculture is critical to further investment and business development.



■ Agricultural Extension

Madam Speaker, RADA's new board has been charged with executing a critical review of the organization with a view to strengthening our support services to the sector.

Madam Speaker, a farmer is an entrepreneur. As such, business principles have to be applied by our farmers to achieve greater productivity and better market engagement. Since September 2020 we have launched a farming as a business training course which is being done in collaboration with (and through funding from) Canada's Commonwealth of Learning (COL). Our first port of call was an islandwide training programme for all our RADA extension officers, who in turn are to administer the programme to registered farmers through their farmers groups. The programme provides farmers with training in record keeping, tracing and managing their day-to-day expenses (labour, family care and miscellaneous), how to qualify for loans and access small business benefits, how to take greater care in market analysis and how to organize the business component of their agricultural operations. We will be rolling this out throughout this year.

Madam Speaker, we have to use the technology we have to better manage our extension services. We still hear far too many concerns being raised of farmers not being reached. As such, Madam Speaker, over the next two years we will do a full rollout of the **Extension Activities Services Management System (EASMS)**; a system which our extension officers use to input real time data about farmers and their activities.

Madam Speaker, through this system we have started tracking all twelve priority crops. The aim is to be able to trace these crops from the land preparation stage to harvesting so that we are able to provide real time information on their performance. It will also provide us with the ability to monitor service delivery in real time and to capture engagement activities to support improvement strategies.

Colleagues, I have charged RADA to make better use of the available technology to get more information to our farmers. Each extension officer and each parish manager is expected to engage farmers through text messages and whats app groups regularly. Centrally, RADA has embarked on a robust text message system that is used to communicate with our farmers, with weekly messages about pertinent topics. We are also moving a lot of the technical content onto online platforms so they can be accessed at any time.



Agricultural Extension Officer Kevin Riley in dialogue with farmer Vanessa Burris.

■ Agricultural Education

Madam Speaker, as we support developing the business of Agriculture, the need for our education system to respond in ensuring that science, research and application programmes in agricultural education remain robust and essential in their system is utmost. I am excited by the Ministry of Education's plan to build STEM schools and those schools must include Agricultural Science.

The education systems need to be structured in an integrated way so that applied agriculture based on business principles is taught from primary through secondary to the tertiary level. The profession must be treated with the importance and respect that demonstrate a guaranteed standard of living for its professionals. HEART NSTA/Trust, Knockalva Polytechnic, Sydney Pagon and high schools must prepare young people for entry-level vocational pursuits in agricultural education programmes. Their qualifying certificates and diplomas must enable their transition to the tertiary level for higher degrees in applied science in agriculture, management, processing, marketing and finance.

Madam Speaker, this Ministry will continue to support the introduction and preparation of our children for a vocation in agriculture through an expansion in our school gardening programme targeting an additional 20 primary schools in St. Elizabeth and Manchester for this fiscal year. We will be providing \$2.8 million in irrigation support systems to the primary schools through collaboration with the Food And Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Jamaica 4-H Clubs.

Madam Speaker, in support of agricultural education instruction development, a direct grant of \$20 million will be provided to the College of Agriculture, Science and Education (CASE) to assist with the completion of selected projects. Similarly, we will be working with these schools to ensure that they benefit from our programmes in livestock and crop husbandry through a combined value of over \$100 million in inputs, stock and infrastructure support through the RADA, Jamaica Dairy Development Board Jamaica 4-H Clubs and Bodles Research Station.

Madam Speaker through partnership with the USAID a new Agro-processing lab has been established at the Knockalava Polytechnic College to give students first-hand knowledge of value added production as part of their study. Addition the J. Wray and Nephew Foundation, which gets its resources from an agro- processing company, is ploughing \$35 million into building a state-of-the-art agro-processing facility at the Sydney Pagon High School.

The Jamaica 4-H Clubs will also be offering over 300 grants this year for youth wishing to study agriculture and on the initiative of the Costa Rican Ambassador 2 students will be travelling to the Earth University in Costa Rica to take up agricultural scholarships.

Minister Green in dialogue with Charge'd' Affaires of Costa Rica, Mrs Georgina Guillen-Grillo.



■ Youth in Agriculture and Fisheries

Madam Speaker, as we craft the new FACE of food, youth have to be at the forefront of the revolution. It is the time for farming over flossing, investment over braffing and acres over Mark X.

We know our youth are interested in the sector. Our job as government is to provide the opportunities and guidance for growth, profit and innovation.

As such, the Ministry will be directing 20% of all its benefit towards youth in agriculture. I have also directed that 20% of all Agricultural land under government control be reserved for youth under preferential terms. We will publish the lands that are so reserved, and the methodology to acquire the same in the next quarter.

Madam Speaker, we are expanding our Rural Youth Economic Empowerment Programme (RYEEP). Youth participants will be exposed to life skills, entrepreneurship and the necessary tools to assess and pursue business opportunities in the agriculture sector. Youth participants will receive:

- Advanced training in business development and management
- Agricultural best practises for targeted production areas and training in basic computing. This will result in the development of business plans and management kits for their respective businesses.
- Start-up grant of J\$50,000.
- Up to six months of business coaching.

Each rural MP will be allowed to select 10 participants for the programme.

This year, we intend to table the National Youth In Agriculture Policy. Additionally, **Madam Speaker**, youth must be at the forefront of our decision making for Agriculture and Fisheries.

I am pleased to announce the establishment of the Agvocate Council. The Council will consist of Jamaicans between 18 to 35 years old who will meet quarterly with me as Minister to help provide policy direction and establish programmes and communications strategies to get more youth in farming. As Kenroy James would say, Youth fi farm! **Madam Speaker**, the new FACE of Agriculture is Youth.

Matthew Jones as a young boy with his own goat and later as owner of Fidelis Harvests in Clarendon.



■ Women in Agriculture and Fisheries Programme

Statistics from RADA's Agri-Business Information System (National Farmers Registration Programme) indicates that 32% (73,306) of farmers islandwide are women. Our women farm in every possible area: crops, livestock, fisheries, mushroom production, processing, agripreneurship – you name it. Sincere thanks to the Jamaica Network of Rural Women for the essential role that they have been playing in engaging new women in agriculture and expanding the reach of our women farmers.

We have launched Agriculture in Bloom, a multifaceted programme to celebrate our women involved in agriculture and fisheries highlighting them as examples to inspire other women. I want to publicly thank our participants for sharing their stories thus far. This year, we are seeking to engage 50 women, who are at different stages of their agri-entrepreneurial journey and help them to transition. We will be providing inputs, training and grant funding.

Madam Speaker, it is not by chance that the image to represent the new FACE of Agriculture is a young woman. We are being deliberate in trying to attract more youth and more women into Agriculture and Fisheries.

Minister Green views mushroom along with farmer Pauline Smith.



Praedial Larceny Prevention

One of the major deterrents to agribusiness and agricultural production in Jamaica, **Madam Speaker**, is the scourge of praedial larceny. Our last estimates still linger around \$5-6 billion annually in terms of loss of stocks, produce and equipment of all types.

With that in mind, we have been working assiduously with the Jamaica Constabulary Force under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner of Police Clifford Blake and Assistant Commissioner of Police Bishop Dr. Gary Welsh to pursue several strategies aimed at reducing the incidences of praedial larceny.

Madam Speaker, with the decentralization of the enforcement arm of the Praedial Larceny Prevention Coordination Unit, seven of 19 units have been established across seven police divisions, namely Trelawny, St. Catherine North, St. Catherine South, Clarendon, St. Mary, St. Elizabeth and St. Thomas, each of which has been equipped with a motor vehicle to enhance their operations.

In each of these divisions we have seen increased focus being placed on praedial theft, with the Deputy Superintendent in Charge of Operations leading the charge.

A total of 64 JCF officers participated in training seminars from across nine policing divisions in St. Elizabeth, St. Catherine North & South, Clarendon, Manchester, Portland, St. Mary, St. Thomas and Trelawny.

For the 2020-2021 period 4,012 farm visits were conducted and 10 farmer establishment security assessments conducted aimed at assisting our farmers to better secure their farms from praedial thieves. We are reaping rewards. Last year, we saw a 60% increase in arrests moving from 72 in 2019 to 114 last year. Praedial larceny operations also moved from 289 in 2019 to 811, a 181% increase. Additionally, over 70 animals recovered and/or returned to owners.

Work is also in progress on the review of key legislations that guide the work of PLPCU; primarily the Agricultural Produce Act and the Praedial Larceny Prevention Act.

For the 2021/2022 period, **Madam Speaker**, in addition to the Ministry's ongoing initiatives such as our capacity-building sessions for members of the judiciary in partnership with the Office of the Chief Justice, and constabulary force, we intend to:

- Implement a pilot roll-out of the Agricultural Wardens Programme that is aimed at strengthening the fight against praedial larceny as well as to continue to
- Launch Community Farm Watch Groups.

Madam Speaker, we will not give up the fight against praedial larceny in this country and we encourage our farmers not to be deterred, but to work with the police through reporting of the incidences and collaborating at the community level with other farmers as we all work towards a praedial-larceny-free agricultural sector.



Minister Green with team members of the Praedial Larceny Unit in Trelawny.

■ Agro-Investment

Madam Speaker, the agro-parks initiative was established to enable the cohesive engagement of the factors of production – land, labour, capital and infrastructure – to increase production and productivity over large contiguous acreages, the strategy being, under the AIC, to invite investors to participate in agricultural pursuits in a structured way.

Jamaica's agricultural landscape is structured around Production Zones, the newly established Agro-Parks and the emerging Agro-Economic zones such as Holland Estate. The AIC's mandate is to ensure that all these resources are mobilized in creating a livelihood, value proposition and value-chain support and development for commercial agri-production.

The AIC currently manages six agro-parks and one agro-economic zone across five parishes, with an active farming population comprising 15% young farmers and 11% female farmers operating on 2,750 hectares occupied by 334 investors/farmers.

Over the last three years, production across the parks has seen a steady increase from 1.8 million kilogrammes in 2018/2019 to 3.3 million kilogrammes up to February 2021; representing a 66% increase over the period and valued in excess of \$731 million.

We have seen an increase in production across varying crop categories to include vegetables – up by 30%, herbs/condiments – 27%, fruits – 32%, and root crops and legumes – 11%.

In addition to the agro-parks, the completion of the Southern Plains and Essex Valley Agricultural Development projects that will provide irrigation support for over 1,545 hectares of lands and accompanying agro-processing infrastructure will result in the expansion of facilities under the AIC's management portfolio.

In order to strengthen the mandate of the AIC, **Madam Speaker**, the Agro-Investment (Amendment) Bill-2021, which was passed by the Legislative Committee of Parliament on February 10, 2021, is being tabled in the Parliament today.

The Bill will allow for the AIC to focus more on investment generation.

Madam Speaker in that vein, Spur Tree Spices has committed to invest 100 million dollars to develop an agro-processing facility at Holland Estate. Already \$44 Million have been spent in that regard. This is in keeping with a renewed wave of investments in Agriculture.

Madam Speaker, if you listen to some in this House, you would believe that no value addition is happening, that there is no transformation of our agri-systems. This flies in the face of the expansions happening at Rainforest Seafoods with their brand new bammy making plant or Grace Foods that has targeted to export 50% of their production by 2025, or Tru Juice that are now in dairy milk production or Seprod that are now exporting cassava flour and Caribbean Broilers that has invested \$15 billion in The Nest.

In fact, **Madam Speaker**, local company Shavuot, an agro-processing company based in Wynters Pen, St Catherine, has seen a 400% increase in demand for their products since COVID-19. They have had to move to a 24-hour work day, employing more people, with 90 per cent of their production being exported to 15 countries. Their next step, colleagues, is to invest \$250 million to construct a new factory on 206.79 hectares (511 acres) of land leased from the Government of Jamaica in Innswood, St. Catherine. Those who say it cannot be done should take a page from the books of those who are doing it. Agri-business is the new FACE of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Legislative and Policy Review

Madam Speaker, the Ministry continues to review and amend legislation to enable us to enforce the actions necessary to achieve our development goals. Some of the legislation being pursued are:

- a) **Plants (Quarantine) Act** – This Act is to be repealed and replaced by The Plants Health Act, which will, among other things, prescribe measures to prohibit the entry and establishment of plant pests and to prescribe measures to ensure the import and export of only the highest quality pest-free plants, plant products and other regulated articles. The Ministry has submitted a revised draft Cabinet Submission to the Attorney General's Chamber and the Chief Parliamentary Counsel (CPC) for comments and have received comments from the CPC.
- b) **Animals (Diseases and Importation) Act** – This Act will be repealed and replaced with The Animal Health Act. The new Act will make provisions to minimize the effects of diseases and toxic substances that may affect animals in Jamaica, whether they are imported or not, or that may be transmitted by such animals to humans.

Marketing

Madam Speaker, we are seeking to strengthen our marketing platforms, which not only support the hotel industry but potentially to expand its access to our international stakeholders. Accordingly, we will be conducting a technical review of the marketing platforms – JAMIS, ALEX and Linkages Hub – to improve the timeline of information updates, the take-off from initial contact with product demand from a customer, e.g., hotel as well as to effect a delivery schedule component.

Madam Speaker, no longer can anyone underestimate the value of these marketing arrangements on the supply of agricultural produce to the hospitality sector.

The impact of the absence of this market segment due to COVID-19 on the farming industry was widely felt by our farmers. Minister Bartlett and I have met with the Linkages Council and have agreed to a closer working relationship, especially in relation to information flow and financing arrangements around supplying our tourism sector. And, as we strive to recover and welcome the cautious reopening of the hotel sector, we must collectively strengthen our supply systems and cater to their greater demand beyond our current usual supplies. So this review is strategic as we continue production and preparation for the full reopening as promised by HM Bartlett.

Finance

One of the real threats to agribusiness development is the lack of financing options for our farmers and fishers. It is time, **Madam Speaker**, that our financial sector stop giving lip service to agriculture and provide competitive low interest facilities to drive agricultural expansion.

The Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ) had started a significant conversation in this regard last year, but today we are still to see the financial sector respond in a tangible way. The ability for farmers and fishers to access low cost capital is critical to the expansion of the sectors. I have met with the Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ) and we are discussing earmarking a specific segment of the credit enhancement facility for agricultural loans.

The PC Bank, credit unions, commercial banks and other financial institutions have a role to play and they must step up to the plate.

The PC Bank and credit unions must make loans more accessible.

The DBJ is also finalising a reserve factoring regime, which will allow banks to intervene to upfront the invoices of agricultural providers, so as to remove the wait time for payment which often negatively affects the cash flow of these businesses and the ability to reinvest.

■ Full Integration of Climate-Smart Technologies

Madam Speaker, we don't have the luxury of debating climate change, our farmers and fishers face this reality every day. As the world gets warmer, water remains a critical element in farming and we will ensure that we unveil a new FACE of food through providing water to our farmers.

Irrigation

Madam Speaker, we are working assiduously to ensure that we provide irrigation water for consistent production. In that regard, work is ongoing on the £35,515,000 UKCIF-funded, Caribbean Development Bank-facilitated Essex Valley Agriculture Development Project (EVADP) in South St. Elizabeth on some 718 hectares of land and the £17-million Southern Plains Agricultural Development Project (SPAD) on some 795 hectares of land in St. Catherine and Clarendon, both impacting a combined total of over 1,500 farmers and their families.

Madam Speaker, these projects should have been done at least two or three decades ago. I have indicated to the project teams that the timelines must be met and we have to accelerate the pace of implementation.

For the 2021-2022 financial year \$605 million have been allocated for the beginning of the laying of irrigation systems, implementation of capacity-building initiatives to improve stakeholder resilience and adaptation to climate change, and construction of a global-gap facility under SPAD.

From left , David Osborne, Country Representative for Development, Dr Wayne Henry, Director General, Planning Institute of Jamaica; Dermon Spence, Permanent Secretary, MOAF; Minister Green, His Excellency Asif Ahmad, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom to Jamaica, at the official launch of the Southern Plains Agricultural Development Project, held at the Office of the Prime Minister in St. Andrew on December 10, 2020.



To date, two of three programmed wells have been drilled and yield tests have been successfully completed.

For the 2021-2022 period, some \$300 million will be spent for well drilling in Parnassus, Clarendon.

Madam Speaker, while we welcome and continue the implementation of these game changing climate-resilient irrigation projects, we are not done yet with enhancing the supply of water, and so I wish to indicate that we are in serious discussions with the French Government to fund a multibillion-dollar project that will lift water from the Black River to irrigate the plains of Southern St. Elizabeth to include Flagaman. They are very keen on supporting this project as a follow-on to the successful completion of the feasibility study and design concept initial phase of this important impactful project.

■ Climate Resilience

Madam Speaker, the flood rains of last October and November, which severely impacted the agricultural sector resulting in losses of over \$2.5 billion, are stark reminders of the need to continue to employ climate-smart best practices to navigate these challenges.

Consistent with this reality, we have put in place, the groundwork for mitigation and in anticipation of our ongoing drought-related issues, have established several programmes.

Under the Drought Adaptation and Mitigation Programme, through the NIC, we earmarked \$12 million and have trucked approximately 276,000 gallons of water to 136 farmers who had experienced threats or damage to crops as a result of drought conditions. Additionally, some 500 water tanks have been distributed to farmers across the island to farms in key production areas.

Drip Irrigation Kits

The procurement was successful for the supply and distribution of 2,000 quarter-acre drip irrigation kits valued at \$126 million, covering 202.34 hectares (500 acres) of land, to our farmers. RADA began distribution of these special kits in early February and we anticipate that farmers will continue to expand the capacity of these systems as they increase production.



Minister Green (right) examines hot peppers along with farmer Orette Viscson (left) and Winston Simpson, Principal Director Field Services, Rural Agricultural Development Authority at waterlogged field in Hartlands, St. Catherine.

Catchment Areas

As the funds become available, the Ministry in its quest to build resilience, sustainability and increase productivity of the agricultural sector is focusing on the rehabilitation and construction of water catchment areas, which are considered as critical infrastructure to support crops and livestock production. Ten catchment ponds are currently undergoing rehabilitation, three in St. Elizabeth that will be utilized for greenhouse purposes, four in Manchester, and three in St. Ann. These will be used for support to greenhouses and open field production irrigation systems. Preliminary work has started in assessing promising areas for this intervention.

Madam Speaker, the application of new technology in our bid to modernize the sector that I consistently speak of is well under way. We recently commissioned in Ebony Park a solar-powered pumping system and so in keeping with our efforts to use more renewable energy, thus providing more environment-friendly, cost-effective irrigation to our farmers, the NIC will also solar retrofit its Beacon/Little Park Irrigation District in Hounslow, St. Elizabeth.



Disaster Risk Management and Mitigation Committee

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has revamped the Disaster Risk Management and Mitigation Committee, which is a part of the National Disaster Risk management structure, and they are to now implement the climate-smart framework and strategy plan which was developed for the sector. Our committed stakeholders that will ensure its implementation include RADA, NIC, National Fisheries Authority, the Veterinary Services Division, AIC, the Water Resources Authority, the Meteorological Services of Jamaica, and the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM).

Fish Sanctuaries Programme

While we seek to sustainably develop and expand our fisheries, our Ministry is 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 fiscal year 2020-2021 to continue the needed support to manage and enforce the Special Fishery Conservation Areas around the island shelf.

This year, we will be working with a number of our sanctuaries to institute self-sufficiency models focusing on mariculture and poly culture and seeing a number of these sanctuaries embark cultivate sea moss and other species to raise well needed funds. This is being funded through our World Bank project and will focus on capacity building with a specific focus on women.

Public Gardens

Madam Speaker, a critical part of our focus on climate resilience means renewed focus on our public gardens. Another reality that COVID-19 has brought to the fore is the need for these green spaces as they enhance the quality of life for our citizenry. . This year, we will be undertaking the following:

1) Rehabilitation of Bath Botanical Gardens in St. Thomas, to include: renovation of a perimeter fencing and creating a Georgian style entrance; construction of a new bathroom for persons with disability and renovation of the existing ones; labelling of all key plant species, installation of a storyboard; and renovation of gazebos.

2) The Castleton Botanical Gardens in St. Mary, will be part of a 5-year rehabilitation project funded by the European Union and the GOJ to the tune of six million euros. Our expenditure will focus on the overall management system for the Wag Water River, a landscape remodel, improved perimeter fence, increased biodiversity and a new shade house over three years.

We will also be partnering with the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) for the Holland Bamboo Replanting Project to the tune of \$8.57 million.

Madam Speaker, I have challenged the team at Public Gardens to, over the next three years, identify areas for the establishment of green spaces across the island.

■ EXPORT EXPANSION

Madam Speaker, despite the challenges from COVID-19 and extreme weather conditions, in 2020, the agricultural sector realised an 8.4% increase in export earnings valuing US\$238.5 million up from US\$216.9 million in 2019.

Madam Speaker in analysing figures in this House we have to dig deeper, we can't just read the headlines, yes if you look at sugar and cocoa you may say our exports are declining but you have to look at the new FACE of agriculture, the new winners, the new FACE of food:

Yams earned US\$37 million - up 24%
Ackee earned US\$31 million - up 7%
Our sauces earned US\$29 million - Up 23.7%

Mangoes have moved from 1,300 boxes in 2019 to over 9,000 boxes in 2020 and **Madam Speaker,** the season has just started, and despite significant logistic challenges we have already moved over 2000 boxes to the US and UK.

Madam Speaker, we mentioned earlier our thrust in the expansion of exports to improve the country's earnings from this sector and so through the efforts of our trade negotiators and technical team of the Plant Quarantine Produce Inspection (PQ/PI) Branch, we have submitted the requisite country declaration required by the United Kingdom (UK) in compliance with their 2020 (EU Exit) regulation and has since received official clearance to commence the export of our much sought after commodities such as mangoes, pineapples, coconuts, citrus, cotton, bananas, apples, plums, papaya and guava some of which were previously self-banned by Jamaica due to pest interceptions. This means, **Madam Speaker,** that we expect to see not only a return of these export commodities to the UK (Great Britain, England, Wales, Scotland) markets but also an expansion in the exports of yams, sweet potatoes, coco, dasheen and hot peppers which no longer require a plant pest declaration as they are now considered low risk and only to be accompanied by a pest-free certificate from our PQ/PI regulators.

Madam Speaker, our exporting stakeholders and farmers stand at the cusp of earning upwards of US\$175 million from these opportunities. Let this now stand as a national call for the expansion of production through increased private-driven investment in the sector for the increase and renewed export of these fine Jamaican agricultural produce.

Madam Speaker, the NFA will continue their very advanced discussion with internal and local partners who are interested in the fishing of our pelagic tunas and other species of fish in our waters. These discussions are being held with a view to have these investments grounded in Jamaica. This means that the catch will be landed and further processed in a factory to be built in Jamaica for value addition and job creation.

Combined with this effort, we have officially, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, requested market access for pork, sea cucumbers, crabs, oysters and conch to international markets (China) and now await their requirements/conditions to facilitate this access. When granted, we stand to capitalize on a potential earning of some US\$30 million while creating 5000 jobs in the fisheries and pork industries. These tuna species are imported at a value of approximately US\$5 million (J\$750 million) and even at a minimum import substitution rate of 5%, the impact would be substantial.

Capitalizing on Export Potential

Sea Cucumber Fishery

Continuing the positive news, Madam Speaker, the NFA has reported that it has completed its assessment of the status of the sea cucumber fish population around the Island Shelf as well as the Pedro Banks and will support the establishment of a small-scale sustainable fishery for this high-value fishery product.

Accordingly, Madam Speaker, I now announce the opening of a limited entry commercial fishery for sea cucumbers to commence September 1, 2021. The details for entry are to be published upon finalization in time for fishing.

Honourable members may be aware that there is a large demand for sea cucumber products, particularly in the East Asian market where prices have increased exponentially over the last decade, with dried sea cucumber (beche-de-mar) fetching up to US\$385 per kilogramme.

It is anticipated that Jamaica can sustainably produce more than 30 tonnes of wet weight per year for this species with some US\$30 million export earning potential.

Even as we establish this fishery, Madam Speaker, the Ministry and the NFA is acutely aware of the demand for other species such as pelagic species or tuna, glass eel, crabs, seaweed, and oysters.

A robust programme of work is being undertaken to prepare Jamaica's fishers through strategies of marine culture, partnership in investments, fishing for pelagic species, and structured development in the management and sustainable exploitation of these species.

*Research Scientist Sabrina Cain
with sea cucumber.*

A similar objective is also being met through the regional Steward-Fish Project being implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations with financing from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and supported by the CARICOM Fisheries Secretariat and other regional and national organizations, including the NFA.

Accordingly, we are now actively engaged in becoming a member of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) in order to be able to not only fish for local consumption but to export highly restricted tuna species. We are currently at the observer status and are actively submitting relevant data to support our attainment of full membership and a quota for export.

Madam Speaker, as we provide incentives and support the expansion of new fisheries, we are mindful of the potential negative impact on sustainability.

This is the new FACE of food.



Mangoes

We have a competitive advantage in mangoes, **Madam Speaker**. Our taste profile is second to none. We have earmarked \$128 million to put in the infrastructure of roads and water to build out 1000 acres of mango orchards this financial year. We invite our private sector to contact the AIC to see how they can become involved. Additionally, we have been approved by the USDA to construct a hot water plant here to treat our mangoes. This will allow us to significantly increase our mango exports. We already have an investor who is committed to establishing the hot water treatment plant this financial year.

This is the New FACE of Food.



Inspection of the first shipment of mangoes to the United Kingdom by (from left) Minister Green, Doreen Stirling, exporter, Yaah Maan; Courtney Cole, Chief Technical Director, MOAF; and Weavill Gordon, Plant Quarantine Produce Inspector.

Ackee

This is our yellow gold. Through public private partnership we are seeking to build out at least 404.69 hectares (1,000) acres of ackee over the next three years. We are also going to engage those with trees and who participate in the industry to teach proper practices of pruning and reaping to drive up productions.

This is the new FACE of food.

Turmeric

Madam Speaker, we have identified turmeric as one of those crop lines with tremendous local and export potential. In this vein, we are strengthening our turmeric industry by supplying 8.1 hectares (20 acres) of quality planting material produced at Montpellier Research Station.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that to facilitate the export market of turmeric, we are waiving all of JACRA's administrative fees for turmeric for the next two years.

This is the New FACE of Food.





Conclusion

Colleague Members of Parliament, **Madam Speaker**, Farmers, Fishers, Jamaicans, we are at a most critical juncture in the history of our country. This pandemic has rearranged our lives and our world. One thing has remained true, the countries who will survive, the countries that will do well are those that can feed themselves, those that can turn this crisis into an opportunity, those that value, appreciate and regard Agriculture and Fisheries. We have a long challenging road ahead of us, but I am assured that on this journey, I have the most talented innovative and hardworking people with me: our farmers and fishers. We will transform Jamaica, we will create a new FACE of food, where food security is priority, agribusiness development is key, climate smart technologies are being incorporated and we are expanding exports. Through Agriculture and Fisheries we will build back stronger, we will build back better, SO HELP US GOD.