



Ministry of Agriculture
& Fisheries

SECTORAL PRESENTATION 2023

BY THE HON. PARNEL CHARLES JR., MP
Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries



TUESDAY
MAY 2, 2023
HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

WEALTH CREATION
THROUGH INVESTMENT IN THE
AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES SECTOR



@pcharlesjr



ROAST TILAPIA WITH CALLALOO AND COCONUT CREAM SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

4 tilapia fillets
1 bundle fresh callaloo (cut
up & heavy stalks removed)
3/4 tsp salt
1 medium onion
½ tsp blackpepper
4 cloves garlic
1 cup white vinegar
2 large plummie tomatoes
1 tbsp coconut oil
1 tsp sea salt
1 tsp Oregano
1 tsp blackpepper
1 scotch bonnet pepper
1 tbsp margarine
1 tsp fresh thyme leaves
Parmesan cheese (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Wash fish fillets in vinegar and pat dry.
2. Mix salt, black pepper and oregano.
3. Sprinkle salt, black pepper, and oregano mixture over each side of the fish to season to taste.
4. Cover with towel and set aside to marinate.
5. Add margarine and cut up tomatoes, onion, scotch bonnet pepper and add half of the seasoning along with callaloo to saucepan, steam for five (5) minutes.
6. Pour oil in frying pan and leave until hot (small bubbles emerging), then fry fish strips in oil until both sides are slightly browned but cooked. Remove from heat and set aside.
7. Sautee the left-over onion, garlic, thyme, scotch bonnet; add coconut milk cover and simmer for 3-5 minutes
8. Plate callaloo, place one piece of fillet on top of bed of callaloo and spoon coconut sauce over the top



SECTORAL PRESENTATION 2023

Delivered by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries

Hon. Parnell Charles Jr.

Houses of Parliament | May 2, 2023.

Grow Smart, Eat Smart 2.0

WEALTH CREATION

THROUGH INVESTMENT IN THE
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Welcome and introduction of the topic

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Madam Speaker, I am humbled and honoured to have the privilege of standing before you and this Honourable House as the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for a second year.

First of all, let me give thanks to the Almighty for His continued blessings and guidance which has allowed me to successfully navigate this multifaceted portfolio. May my steps continue to be ordered through His will.

To our fearless leader, the Most Honourable Andrew Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica, my deep gratitude for your continued confidence in my leadership within this crucial portfolio as we work to strengthen our nation's food security.

To my wife, children, and my family to whom I am eternally indebted for your unwavering support as I perform my duties as Minister and Member of Parliament for Southeast Clarendon. Thank you for your sacrifices, patience and understanding.

Madam Speaker, I am blessed with a wise and experienced Minister of State in the Hon. Franklyn Witter. We make a good team and together we will continue to lead the agricultural revolution for Jamaica.

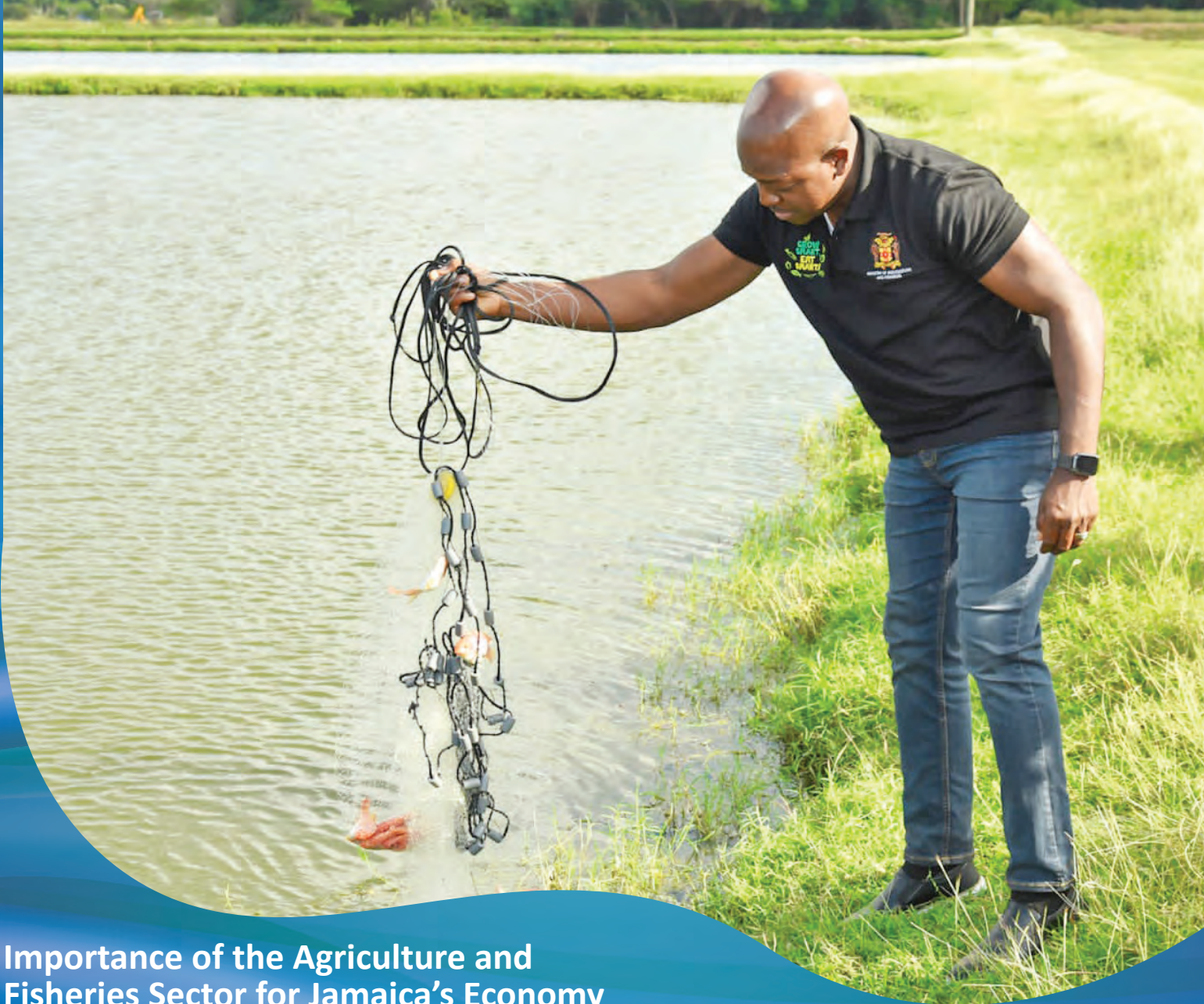
Madam Speaker, I must convey my sincere thanks and appreciation to Permanent Secretary Mr. Dermon Spence, the senior management and staff of the Ministry and Agencies, Board chairpersons and members within the remit of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, who work tirelessly to achieve the continued growth and expansion of our sector.

To my fellow Ministers, their staff and the several agencies who provide support to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, let me express my gratitude, as we work together as one government to achieve our goal of realizing Vision 2030 for Jamaica.

A big thank you to my vibrant and diligent office and constituency teams as well as my councillors, caretakers, workers and supporters without whom I would not be here today. Madam Speaker, they have stuck by me through thick and thin. Together we will continue to build Southeast Clarendon into a model constituency and I remain committed to providing the best representation and giving my all to ensure a better future for the next generation.

Madam Speaker, partnership is key and we must acknowledge our local, regional, and international partners who continue to be fully committed to supporting our programmes and initiatives, as we work towards improving and expanding the agriculture and fisheries sector.

Madam Speaker, from Westmoreland to St. Thomas it is our farmers and fishers that we depend on to feed the nation. These are not easy professions but they are honorable ones. Today, we thank our farmers and fishers, providers of the nation's food and sustenance, for pushing through the trying times and continuing to nourish us with their hard work, dedication and resilience. We stand with you and salute your efforts to build a better Jamaica.



Importance of the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector for Jamaica's Economy

OVERVIEW

Madam Speaker, this Government is serious about Agriculture and Fisheries and this is evident in our decisions and actions such as making the largest investment ever in irrigation, significantly expanding our research and development capacity to improve planting material and advance soil fertility mappings, introducing technological innovation like our breeding hatchery that will increase our fisheries production by multiples when it comes on stream and the improvement in resilience of our local goat and sheep through the small ruminant programme. All of this we are doing to ensure that stakeholders can create wealth from this vital sector which is a pillar of our nation's economy. This sector accounts for more than 250,000 registered farmers and fishers who have families that depend on them and consumers who rely on them.

Madam Speaker, at the heart of this sector lies the commitment of the Ministry's team to support and develop the industry, from farmers and fishers to agribusinesses and rural communities; we are dedicated to unlocking the full potential of agriculture and fisheries, ensuring that our nation remains competitive and sustainable in a rapidly changing world. From improving access to finance and technology, to promoting sustainable practices and expanding markets for our products, the Ministry and our agencies are working tirelessly to create a brighter future for all those who depend on the land and sea for their livelihoods.

Madam Speaker, Jamaica's agriculture sector contributed **8.3% to our GDP in 2022** and experienced unprecedented growth, setting new records in production with a historic seven (7) consecutive quarters of growth and a first time ever surpassing 800,000 tonnes of domestic crop with a record **846,508 tonnes in 2022, representing a 9.9% increase compared to 770,456 tonnes in 2021.**

Madam Speaker, we have developed and structured the Grow Smart, Eat Smart, strategy to drive production, improve efficiency and advance sustainability. This is the first step in changing the mindset in how we approach

farming operations, management and overall development of the sector. The Grow Smart, Eat Smart strategy is not a restart, it was designed to build on the existing structures, programmes and policies, to expand those that need further development and to enhance innovation, technology and research application.

Madam Speaker, time will not allow us to detail the scope of activities being undertaken by the Ministry but we will highlight the major established and new programmes and initiatives being implemented to support our farmers and fishers as we continue our thrust to generate wealth.



Overview of

PRODUCTION INCENTIVES FOR FARMERS

These programmes and initiatives include our Production Incentive Programme (PIP), Fisheries Production initiatives, the rehabilitation of our Research and Development facilities, the Farm Road Rehabilitation programme, upgrading of our irrigation infrastructure and our Drought Adaptation and Mitigation programme, developing our Agri-business portfolio and the expansion of our praedial larceny initiatives to cauterize this scourge, to ensure our farmers are the primary beneficiaries of all their hard work.

Madam Speaker, our farmers have to contend with droughts, floods, and extreme weather events that lead to crop failures, reduced yields, and lower incomes. The Government has stepped in to provide support to overcome these and other challenges. Through the National Agricultural Production and Productivity Programme, my Ministry expended over \$1 billion to provide production incentive support to our farmers and fishers.

Through the Production Incentive Programme (PIP), we continue to provide support to farmers in a deliberate and structured way, utilizing adaptable climate-smart and resilient approaches to improve production that will help to conserve natural resources, protect the environment, and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

This production incentive programme for farmers has four (4) main components:

- 1. Crop Production** – The Ministry has expended \$366 million to strengthen and expand production of priority crops namely cocoa, cassava, dasheen, yam, ginger, hot pepper, Irish potato, onion and strawberry.
- 2. Livestock Development with a strategic focus on the expansion of the Small Ruminants Industry** – The Ministry expended \$30.7 million to expand the small ruminants' industry through improved genetics, capacity building and infrastructure and animal nutrition support.



3. Climate Change Adaptation and Drought Mitigation –

The Ministry expended \$255.5 million to support resilience of the sector and mitigate the effects of drought.

4. Special Incentives to select production initiatives –

Madam Speaker, the Ministry expended \$317.1 million to support ongoing production initiatives including:

- a. The National Broiler Programme
- b. Land Clearance & Preparation subsidy
- c. Home Garden Programme
- d. Livestock research
- e. Increased lab capacity
- f. Fisheries Development and Expansion
- g. Mango Industry Development
- h. Resuscitation of the Plantain Industry
- i. National Fruit Tree Programme
- j. Support to Youth Entrepreneurship
- k. Agriculture Education and Promotion Programmes

These interventions are critical investments and essential support for the single mother in Hayes, Clarendon who was able to restart her poultry farming with a boost in resources from RADA and the senior farmer in St. Elizabeth who received pond liner and drip irrigation kits that kept his production going throughout the drought period.

Madam Speaker, thousands of farmers need more and we remain committed to improving the delivery of service and support to them. All these activities are being streamlined through our agencies and divisions namely the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), National Fisheries Authority (NFA), Research and Development Division (R&DD), National Irrigation Commission (NIC), Agro-Invest Corporation (AIC), Jamaica 4-H Clubs, the Banana Board, and the Agricultural Land Management Division (ALMD).

RADA, Jamaica's chief agricultural extension service provider, is the agency primarily responsible for implementing the PIP. RADA continues to enhance the development of our farmers through an effective, efficient, and sustainable extension service in our efforts to expand production and productivity within the agricultural sector and improve the standard of living of our farm families. Under the PIP a total of \$674.2 million has been expended in extension services and this reflects a 30% increase over the 2021 – 2022 period.

Madam Speaker, while we are focusing on over nine (9) priority crops, plus expanding livestock and fisheries, the following are worth highlighting:

For Irish potato we have produced 80% of the total local demand for table potatoes (18,669 tonnes) which represents an 11.4% increase in comparison to the corresponding period for 2021/2022. This has generated \$2.1 billion and created temporary employment for over 18,000 skilled and unskilled labourers with a total of approximately 1,000 hectares planted.



For onion Madam Speaker, the country produced over 30% of the total local demand (3,257 tonnes), which represents an increase of 38.3%. This generated \$1.04 billion for our economy and provided temporary employment for over 3,800 skilled and unskilled labourers with substantial increased utilization of irrigated agricultural lands.



Madam Speaker, we are pleased to report on the improved quality and yields comparable with international standards and acknowledge the need to intensify our focus on expanding storage and drying facility capacity to accommodate the expected increased yields.

Madam Speaker, as it relates to **hot pepper** we are now producing 20,000 tonnes of hot pepper which has landed pepper in the top 10 list of domestic export crops.

Madam Speaker, among the domestic crops, yams reflected significant increases of 11.8 % moving from 185,637 tonnes in 2021 to 207,483 tonnes in 2022. Yams remain the second largest contributor to domestic crop production and had the highest value among agricultural exports for 2021 at US\$36,495,000.



Potential for Growth and Diversification

Small Ruminants Industry and Poultry Development Programme



During the 2022/2023 period, interventions for the small ruminant's industry and broiler production were undertaken for the total value of \$80M.

Most recently, **Madam Speaker**, the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries under PIP, began the process to import some 200 small ruminants from the United States of America in 2022 to improve our local herds. Fifty (50) of these animals arrived in March and the remainder are expected to be delivered by the end of this year. This supports the ongoing Small Ruminants Development Programme.

Madam Speaker, the importation of these animals and proper breeding management is critical for maintaining production and sustaining the industry. This move is a positive one and the Small Ruminants Development Programme is an important tool for poverty reduction and economic development, particularly in rural areas. By supporting smallholder farmers in the production of small ruminants, the programme helps to create new income opportunities and strengthen local food systems.

Overall, the Small Ruminant Programme is a critical initiative to drive wealth creation by improving the productivity, profitability, and sustainability of small ruminant production systems, while also promoting better nutrition and food security.

Madam Speaker, today we will provide three (3) goats from the programme to a youth, woman and a person with disabilities. Three more will be presented to outstanding winners at the 4 H Achievement Day on May 12th.

Madam Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the global food system, disrupting supply chains and causing significant economic challenges for farmers and food producers around the world. The Poultry Programme emerged as an important initiative to help address some of these challenges and important in creating new income opportunities for farmers and rural communities during the pandemic.

For the first time the Ministry has included a poultry component in the PIP to strengthen the value chain of our livestock industry. Through this component, **Madam Speaker**, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has provided 199,027 broiler chicks and 15,085 broiler rations to over 3,000 farmers. In addition, farmers benefited from the distribution of 200 water tanks with a 650-gallon capacity each, twelve (12) defeathering machines and rehabilitation of 104 backyard poultry houses.

Madam Speaker, by providing resources coupled with training, education, and support for small-scale poultry production, the programme has enabled farmers to diversify their income streams and mitigate some of the economic impacts of COVID-19. This programme continues to be important, especially for women and youth, who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and may face greater economic barriers.

Land Preparation Support

Madam Speaker, under the Grow Smart, Eat Smart strategy, the Ministry has enhanced our partnerships and synergies with private tractor operators and individual farmers, by providing support through the Production Incentive Programme (2022/2023) to facilitate land preparation for farmers.

The total value of this initiative was JMD\$153 million.

A more structured approach has been implemented in order to restore and preserve agricultural lands and enhance production and productivity. **Madam Speaker**, the initiatives undertaken enabled farmers to benefit from 1 acre (0.4 hectares) of land preparation support. This initiative targeted 5,000 farmers and resulted in the preparation of approximately 5,000 acres (2,000 hectares) of agricultural land.

Fisheries Production Incentive Programme

Madam Speaker, the Ministry through the National Fisheries Authority has provided financial and technical support to small-scale fishers, fish farmers, and other stakeholders involved in fisheries production, with the aim of increasing their productivity, income, and competitiveness.

The Ministry provided approximately \$25 million to the National Fisheries Authority which resulted in an increase in fry production of over 1.5 million, a 15% increase in comparison to the 2021 figure of 1.3 million fry. Four ponds were renovated and a further four are slated for renovation in 2023. We have identified areas for rehabilitation

in Clarendon that targets approximately 200 acres of aquaculture activity which would see a 25% increase in 3-5 years.

Plantain Industry Incentives

Madam Speaker, the Ministry, through the Banana Board, expended \$10 million to support the continued resuscitation of the plantain industry geared towards export production. In 2022, over 778 hectares was reaped, a 19.2% increase in the area reaped.

Madam Speaker, in 2022, Jamaica began exporting plantains to the Cayman Islands. The PIP will continue to support this project with a targeted additional 10 hectares expected to produce over 300 tonnes of plantain in 2023.

Extension Services

Madam Speaker, RADA continued to execute the Grow Smart, Eat Smart Strategy throughout the 2022-23 fiscal year, as the strategic focus of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries remains to maximize agricultural production and productivity within targeted production zones.



RADA has evolved and adapted over the last 32 years to meet the growing demands and needs of the farming population. Accordingly, the management of RADA has positioned the authority to be strategically aligned with the needs of our expanding technologically driven farming community.

In expanding their efforts to serve our stakeholders by providing additional opportunities for capacity building and to improve their support across our farming communities, RADA has secured an additional location for another field office. This property will strategically expand services across the northern Manchester and Clarendon areas and will be used to provide agriculture support facilities to farm stores, agriculture extension services to farming communities in the area and to drive production, serving as a nexus in a high-level production area.

Madam Speaker, the Authority expended \$2.507 billion on operational activities reflecting a 35% increase in allocation when compared to 2021-2022. This has assisted in bolstering the agricultural extension advisory services.

Madam Speaker, the Authority went on to see several achievements which steered the positive performance of the sector:

Madam Speaker, the Authority has achieved a major milestone by attaining ISO 9001: 2015 Quality Management System (QMS) Certification. Being ISO 9001 Certified means RADA has a Quality Management System (QMS) in place that utilizes international best practices, to standardize its processes and systems using the ISO 9001:2015 standard, to ensure that they consistently deliver services that meet and exceed our customer's expectations.

Madam Speaker, RADA continues to operate the Agricultural Linkages Exchange Project (ALEX), which is a unique marketing tool for moving agricultural produce along the supply chain. This marketing platform has facilitated several successful linkages between farmers and traders within the tourism and gastronomy sectors. During the 2022/2023 period, approximately 1.2 million kilograms of assorted agricultural produce was marketed with a total value of J\$415 million, benefitting over 1,200 farmers.

Madam Speaker, overall RADA has facilitated market linkages of an assortment of over **4,900 tonnes of agricultural produce, valued at J\$678 million, benefitting 3,173** farmers – including women, youth and persons with disabilities.

Madam Speaker, in our efforts to upscale RADA's equipment pool we have added six (6) 130 hp rubber-wheel tractors, which are now assigned to the parishes of St. Thomas, St. Catherine, Clarendon, St. Ann, Manchester and St. Elizabeth. It is expected that these new units will contribute to tillage operations for over 2,500 hectares per annum, benefiting over 6,000 farmers.

RADA enhanced their fleet further with the addition of two backhoe loaders, a recent initiative under the National Productivity Programme to assist with land preparation, cutting of drains, clearing operations and improving access to farms benefiting over 800 farmers and more than 2,000 hectares of farmlands.

Farm Road Rehabilitation Programme

Madam speaker, a priority component of Vision 2030 Jamaica aims to improve and rationalize the road network including farm roads by improving agriculture feeder roads. During the 2022/2023 fiscal year, RADA contracted 61 roads at an approximate total value of \$520 million. This has facilitated greater market access, linkages with farmers and other stakeholders and facilitated a reduction of operational expenses.

Madam Speaker, we are working to ensure that when our farmers give us another 7 consecutive quarters of growth there will be fewer roadblocks for our farmers to get their produce to market.

Permit me, **Madam Speaker**, at this time to make a call to our private sector, agriculture continues to grow and there are many viable investment options available. For the growth and wellbeing of our country and our sector I implore you to partner with us in boosting the future of our nation. An investment in agriculture **Madam Speaker** impacts us all not just the agriculture sector, but also the future of Jamaica and our children's future.

In working together we can bolster the sector's efficiency, sustainability and marketability.



CHALLENGES FACING THE SECTOR

Praedial Larceny

Madam Speaker, addressing praedial larceny requires a multi-faceted approach that involves the active participation of farmers, law enforcement, and the Government. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries continues to encourage and support farmers to organize into groups which not only helps in production but also makes the community unit more vigilant and protected. We have expanded our training of security forces to better equip them to address these crimes reaffirmed its commitment to rid Jamaica of praedial larceny and Illegal Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fisheries.

Madam Speaker, we understand the debilitating impact of these crimes and also note the brazen and increasingly organized nature. When we consider the many families that have suffered loss of produce and life arising from these criminal activities, we are justified in making the effort to rid Jamaica of this scourge a priority.

Madam Speaker, for that reason, we are laying the foundation that is required to adequately address these issues in the long term.

The Ministry has adopted broad strategies to respond to praedial larceny. A five (5) – prong approach to provide the framework for actions against praedial larceny. These include:

1. **Compliance and enforcement**
2. **Strengthening legislation under the Agriculture Produce Act (2004) and Praedial Larceny Prevention Act (2009)**
3. **Traceability supported by the Agri-Business Information System (ABIS) and NAITS**
4. **Institutional arrangements**
5. **Public education**

So far, we have recorded some incremental success in recent times and will be advancing strategies to improve effectiveness to handling this plague.

Madam Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to thank and commend the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) in moving swiftly and skilfully to manage this nuisance so far.

Let me reiterate that this is not only a national security issue but also a public health issue and everybody's business.

Madam Speaker, in 2022/2023, in partnership with JCF, **3,849** special operations/raids were conducted; **thirty (30) farm watch groups** were established, one hundred and forty two (142) arrests were made relating to breaches of the legislation and fifty-two (52) praedial larceny-related offences were reported officially for the period 2022/2023.

Madam Speaker, we aware **this is indicative of gross underreporting for the period. So**, we are imploring farmers to report these crimes.

Parallel to JCF operations, the Praedial Larceny Prevention Unit conducted 13 sensitization sessions with Rural Agricultural Development Authority and Jamaica Agricultural Society extension officers islandwide to increase awareness among internal stakeholders regarding the relevance of various pieces of legislation, the implementation, and usage of the Ministry's traceability systems. Other achievements include:

- Nine (9) training sessions were conducted for JCF personnel (Station, Divisional, and Area Commanders) across all nineteen (19) geographic police divisions.
- Four hundred and forty (440) police personnel were trained on how to effectively investigate praedial larceny cases and prepare case files.
- A total of fifty-eight (58) public education initiatives are completed.
- One hundred thirty (130) farmers were sensitized during a series of sensitization sessions islandwide, which included representatives from respective JCF divisional HQs, Community Safety and Security, VSD, RADA, JAS, and Public Health.
- Eight (8) episodes of the Under the Law radio programmes featured breaches of the Agricultural Produce Act – failure to issue/produce a receipt, Larceny Act – praedial larceny, larceny of cattle, receiving stolen property and simple larceny, and unlawful possession of the property.
- One hundred and fifty (150) Praedial Larceny Prevention Enforcement Guides were disseminated islandwide.

Madam Speaker, in 2023, the Ministry will continue to consult with the Ministry of Health and Wellness to facilitate monitoring of all slaughterhouses and abattoirs islandwide. This is in a bid to cauterize the theft of livestock.

In addition, **Madam Speaker**, the Ministry has allocated funds to continue to assess and gather empirical evidence of the financial implications of praedial larceny and other farm theft in the agricultural sector.

Madam speaker, the Ministry is currently in the process of seeking Cabinet's approval for the implementation of the Agriculture Warden Programme. This will significantly change the landscape of how we treat with the scourge of praedial larceny and crime in agriculture.

Finally, **Madam Speaker**, praedial larceny prevention must be a crusade, as it is everyone's business.

Insurance for the Agriculture Sector

Madam Speaker, in our ongoing efforts to build the resilience of the agricultural sector to the climate change related stresses and to improve our ability to recover from the impacts of natural disasters and safeguard the sector, several agricultural insurance tools became available to our farmers and fishers.

Madam Speaker, Gk General Insurance Weather Protect is now offering a new type of micro-insurance. It is a trigger-based insurance policy, which designed to provide help especially to non-salary income earners to cope with impacts of extreme weather events (wind and rain). Pay-out is based on weather index (excess rainfall and high wind speed measured in each parish). Once a trigger value is reached, the payroll will be triggered automatically.

Additionally, **Madam Speaker**, other products available for life and health insurance is the GK Insurance Agri-Care Plan and Sagicor Agri-Care Plan, for farmers and fisherfolk. This has enabled registered farmers, fisherfolk and their families to obtain well-needed health insurance coverage. We want to ensure, **Madam Speaker**, that our farmers and fishers are well taken care of and have the means to secure access to health services, should the need arise.

Also, **Madam Speaker**, there is now available the Advantage General farmers & fisherfolk motor & home bundled insurance package. This is the first time where insurance is being made available for fishing vessels.

We are growing the sector, **Madam Speaker**, and we are instituting smart programmes, initiatives, and resources to bolster and safeguard the livelihoods of our farmers and fisherfolk.

Pest and Disease Surveillance Management

Madam Speaker, pressure from pests and disease is a constant challenge for our farmers. **Madam Speaker**, Research and Development, RADA, Veterinary Services and the Plant Quarantine teams are working together to build farmers' capacity, monitor crops, livestock, and fisheries and provide integrated pest and disease management solutions.

These entities, **Madam Speaker** are jointly responsible for the country's pest and disease surveillance system.

Madam Speaker, reliance on conventional pesticides is not always sustainable. It can be costly, has negative impacts on users and the environment and can pose food safety issues.

There are great advances and developments being realized at our Bodles research station, with the opening of the new Biocontrol Laboratory, which will be starting to produce several environmentally friendly pesticide options.

Cocoa Frosty Pod Disease Management Programme

Madam Speaker, RADA has been given the task to continue the management of the Frosty Pod Rot Disease in the Cocoa Industry. The programme focuses on tree pruning, field sanitation and farmer capacity building in managing the disease. Approximately 1,000 hectares (2,500 acres) are targeted for intervention in Clarendon.

Madam Speaker, to date, over 120 hectares of cocoa field in Clarendon have been pruned to facilitate increase in crop productivity, and this initiative has impacted 140 farmers.

It is expected that rehabilitation of cocoa trees will result in increased yields, resulting in production of over 4,500 boxes annually, at a value of \$13.5M. Approximately \$100M will be allocated for 2023/2024 period and RADA will be extending interventions to the parishes of St. Catherine and St. Mary.

Madam Speaker, during the 2022/2023 period RADA delivered 1,345 training sessions, impacting over 20,000 farmers. We will continue these training sessions as we remain committed to building the capacity of our farmers and fisherfolk.

MAIN PRODUCTS AND MARKETS

Livestock

Madam Speaker, the livestock industry continues to weather the challenges and use them as opportunities to develop and establish a more resilient sector that is amendable to shocks both unprecedented and foreseen.

We continue to adapt to the challenges as they arise and institute programmes and initiatives to mitigate any potential fallout. So far our efforts have been fruitful and we continue to grow and adapt, which has enabled us to further develop a resilient and sustainable livestock industry.

Madam Speaker, as a result of new fodder production, development and practices, national milk production for 2022 was calculated to be 12.4 million litres. This is the first time it has passed that mark in two years, and this was achieved with fewer cows in production than previous years.

Madam Speaker, the JDDDB has successfully completed the first year of the National Livestock Genetic Improvement Programme and is currently in the second year of activities. This project, which has been made available to dairy, beef and goat farmers, is aimed to diversify and improve the existing genetic composition of the industry's animals. During the first year of the programme, over 233 animals had been inseminated, with a conception rate of over 41%.

As we upskill the dairy industry, we will be applying the use of more technology and innovation to improve production and productivity within the sector. To this end, **Madam Speaker**, the Dairy Board Field App is another resource being developed, which is set to be launched this year. With this application, members will be able to collect real-time, on-farm data, which will enable the efficient processing of grants, loans, or any other farmer assistance.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that plans are also underway to launch the JDDDB Farm Technology & Equipment Resource Center. This will provide information on modern technology farming practices, and access to high-tech equipment and machinery. This will be available for use via lease and loan arrangements.

Madam Speaker, also within the remit of the dairy industry, we realized that in order for us to be competitive against imports, there is a need for the industry to improve its supply of locally produced meat of good quality and affordable prices. This requires an increased number of high-quality animals that can be used for breeding, multiplication, and production. The JDDDB plans to import 1,000 heads of dairy (Jersey, Brown Swiss, Holstein) and beef (Augus, Red Poll, Red Brahman) cattle, as well as 50 goats (Boers, Nubians, Alpines).

Poultry Meat & Eggs

Madam Speaker, the poultry industry continues to expand, with total poultry meat production amounted to 140 million kilograms in 2022, increasing by 11.8% over the 125 million kilograms produced in 2021. **Madam Speaker**, I am pleased to advise, that this is the highest level of production on record for the poultry industry. Furthermore, **Madam Speaker**, I must highlight our "Small Farmers" who contributed approximately 40% of the production seen for 2022.

Madam Speaker, we have the potential to excel further, it is time to invest in creating wealth for our farmers, our stakeholders and for the growth of our economy.

Madam Speaker, the egg industry has also seen consistent growth over the last few years, moving from 166 million eggs produced in 2019 to approximately 232 million eggs produced in 2022, representing growth of approximately 39% over the period. This industry has also yielded the highest levels of production on record, **Madam Speaker**. My Ministry continues to promote egg production as a viable source of income for our farmers as well as the consumption of eggs for its high nutritive value. Jamaica's average per capita consumption of eggs is estimated at approximately 1.6 eggs per person, per week in 2022.

Beef & Pork

Madam Speaker, the beef and pork industry also performed well in 2022 despite the fact that both industries were significantly impacted by the fallout in markets resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 7.6 million kilograms of beef was produced in 2022, from approximately



29,000 animals slaughtered for the period. The sector has seen some upward movement within the last 5 years, with production for 2022 increasing by 13.0% over the production seen in 2018. The beef and dairy industries have been positively impacted by several initiatives coming out of the Dairy Board such the rehabilitation of several pastures with grasses such Mombasa, Mullato and Caymanas which has positively impacted production.

Madam Speaker, pork production for 2022 amounted 8.7 million kilograms, representing a recovery from the reduction seen in 2021, when farmers were significantly impacted by the fallout in markets resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The subsector was bolstered by the increased demand resulting in higher numbers of pigs being slaughtered.

This was consistent with the increasing demand from supermarkets and restaurants and the reopening of the hotel, tourism and entertainment sectors.

Goat & Sheep

Madam Speaker, the production for goat and sheep meat amounted to approximately 583 thousand kilograms in 2022, reflecting an increase over the production seen in 2021. The small ruminant industry continues to be negatively impacted by high levels of praedial larceny, however the high levels of informal slaughter also significantly impacts the proper monitoring of the industry.

The Ministry has however taken significant steps to enhance the production and productivity of the small ruminant industry by providing assistance to farmers through the provision of inputs and the importation of improved breeding stock in a bid to ensure the consistent supply of affordable, locally produced meat of high quality.



Innovative Technologies and Best Practices in Agriculture and Fisheries

Improving Research and Development

Madam Speaker, the MOAF recognizes the critical role of research and development. I want to assure you that the Ministry's Research and Development arm is actively working to support the National Agricultural Production and Productivity Programme.

Madam Speaker, this is why the Ministry has spent close to \$1 billion over the past 5 years under the Rehabilitation of Research Centres Project Phase 1, upgrading the infrastructure of our Bodles Research Station.

Madam Speaker, this is just the beginning, I would like to re-emphasize that while financial resources may be limited, we have been certainly deliberate with providing support for the Ministry's strategic programmes and interventions. Research and extension are closely working together and maximizing the use of available human and financial resources.

Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to highlight some of key outputs from our Research and Development Arm:

- Development and Provision of adaptable and resilient seeds and clean planting material to facilitate sustainable production. This includes scotch bonnett pepper, 'bodles globe' variety of pumpkin, ginger, sweet potato, cassava and yam.

- Maintenance of a Germplasm collection including varieties of cassava and sweet potato as part of Jamaica's food security efforts.
- Development of local mixed rations for drought mitigation in dairy animals.
- Ginger certification programme, which aims to produce clean planting material for ginger farmers. This programme involves collaboration with JACRA, FAO, RADA, SRC and farmers. Local and international demand for Jamaican ginger is high. The Ministry continues to work with farmers to improve crop and disease management practices.
- Post Entry Quarantine Facility (PEQF) at Bodles Research Station, provides multiplication of clean citrus budwood. In 2022, 14,097 citrus budwood were distributed to certified nurseries for production of seedlings.
- Preservation and maintenance of an in-vitro collection of local citrus cultivars.
- Viability tests for seeds as a service to farmers.

The background features a dynamic splash of water in various shades of blue, with white highlights and dark blue shadows, creating a sense of movement and freshness. The text is centered over the splash.

Investment Opportunities in Agriculture and Fisheries

Agro-Processing Industry

Madam Speaker, the Ministry will continue its effort in increasing production and productivity to support the agro-processing sector. The Ministry will continue to drive production initiatives such as development of the orchard and spices industry. Concurrently, we will be working with partners to develop value chains.

Madam Speaker, let me take this opportunity to thank those private sector entities who have partnered with us to store excess produce as well as convert these into high-quality, fresh, and nutritious juice products from our fruits as well as condiments along the value chain. We continue to facilitate ackee, which is among our top exports. This while, **Madam Speaker**, we continue to be proud of the moves and growing trend in value production for callaloo.

Madam Speaker, through the Banana Board the Ministry has facilitated and will continue to ramp up value-added production in banana to include chips and ready to cook peeled banana which are now deliberately a part of the offerings in the local as well as international stores.

Madam Speaker, these are the practical and sensible Grow Smart Eat Smart areas and initiatives that we will be increasing support as we expand the production line along the value chain. It is with this in mind, **Madam Speaker**, that we did not hesitate to partner with Spur Tree Spice to establish 225,587 square feet of Agro-processing factory in Holland Bamboo Agro Economic Zone. This, **Madam Speaker**, is further indication that there is room in the agricultural sector for investments and large investments at that.

Cold Chain Facilities for Small Farmers in Jamaica

Madam Speaker, the Ministry aims to build a more resilient sector to ensure food security for the nation especially during times of scarcity. As such, we continue to collaborate with our multilaterals and bilaterals to develop a network of storage facilities as part of our strategy to meet our goal of NET FOOD RESERVE (NFR). **Madam Speaker**, this year will see the rehabilitation and expansion of our cold chain facilities starting with the 907.18 tonnes facility in Coleyville, Manchester. This rehabilitation is valued at approximately J\$92M, which will be funded by our partner, the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF). The facility will provide storage for farmers within the Christiana belt and other production areas.

Madam Speaker, this is only the beginning, the Ministry continues its work to develop an Agri-Business Cold Chain Framework that would guide a national build out of a resilient and sustainable climate-smart cold chain infrastructure. This is a joint effort with the Moroccan Government and is valued at US\$1.05M.

Madam Speaker, parallel to this framework, this year will see further partnership with other Food Agriculture Organization (FAO) to establish other cold storage facilities/ refrigerated containers in the island. These investments are valued at over US\$200,000.00.

Madam Speaker, this is a huge area for investment. We welcome the private sector to partner with us in providing a sustainable and viable cold chain network across the island.

Agro Entertainment Proposal

We welcome what has been a growing trend that we are seeing where it is that not the typical persons normally invest in agro eco ventures that we are seeing. We want to welcome the members from the entertainment fraternity who have joined both the Ministry of Agriculture as well as the Tourism Ministry in establishing facilities that we are classifying as “Agro Adventure Destinations”.

The concept is one in which there is a combination of presenting agriculture in an existing way, one in which it engages in the context of agriculture whether it be animals or plants or fish or birds or butterflies or insects in a space where persons can come and be comfortable in a pristine environment and at the same time enjoying agricultural-related sightseeing and so forth to trails. Make mention of Sasco’s “Mulberry Valley” who are well-known and recognized entertainers who have taken it upon themselves to invest in properties that can be used accordingly and therefore, the Minister is encouraging this or see it as a new product not only for the tourism sector but also for the agriculture sector. Accordingly, we will be seeking to partner with the Tourism Ministry through the Tourism Enhancement Fund and using our agencies to support persons who are desirous of establishing more of these facilities we could consider what has been developed so far could be looked at as a Agro Tourism Zone with its pristine rugged terrain that provides the opportunity to capture all of the different feels and vibes, flavour of agriculture, music and tourism.

In line with this view of “agro-adventure destinations”, the Ministry has partnered with tourism and other funding partners in the rehabilitation of the country’s 3 public gardens and 2 scenic avenues. **Madam Speaker**, Castleton Botanical Gardens is the second oldest garden in Jamaica, and under the European Union (EU) Hills to Ocean Development Project is currently being upgraded. The Project is currently in the tendering process to secure contractors. In April of this year, the first staging of a Health and Wellness Hiking Trail was executed. This session was approximately two (2) km of hiking in the Castleton Hills. The major intention for this location is to create highly recognized hiking trails in

Jamaica, attracting both locals and tourists. A proposal is being developed, along with partnership with the TPDCo., to build log cabins to complement this hiking feature with bird watching and flora and fauna touring activities to attract more visitors to this location.



Government's Commitment to Sector Development

Production Incentive Programme FY 2023/2024

Madam Speaker, this year the Ministry will continue its drive to support production and productivity within the Agriculture and Fisheries sector through the Production Incentive Programme in the tune of \$1.13B

Intervention	Cost
Crop Production (cassava, coco, dasheen, ginger, hot pepper, irish potato, lime, onion, plantain, red peas (pilot), strawberry, sweet potato, yam)	\$310.5M
Land Preparation and Management (including small tools and equipment)	\$193M
Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation	\$202.2M
Livestock Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fisheries \$25M - Small Ruminant \$10M - Poultry \$50M - Rabbits \$5M - Pigs (genetic improvement programme) \$25M - Infrastructure for livestock \$10M 	\$125M
Support to other Production Initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agriculture Education and Promotion - Youth Entrepreneurship 	\$300M



Crop Production

Of note this financial year is the ramping up of production of tubers such as yams, cassava, dasheen, coco, with special focus on sweet potatoes. As part of our incentive programme we will be distributing slips of our clean varieties, yellow belly and clarendon, which have demonstrated improved yields. The slips will be made available through the Research and Development Division as part of the Clean Seed Programme. The other priority crops include hot pepper, ginger, strawberry, lime and plantain.

The hectares targeted for crop production is approximately 2,385 ha and the number of farmers is approximately 10,500.



Land Preparation and Management

A land preparation subsidy will be provided in the amount of \$63M to continue on the strategy to assist in the effective preparation of land to improve crop production. In the financial year 2022/23, approximately x farmers have benefited from this subsidy. For this year, the incentive will be skewed towards our youth farmers and first-time entrants into crop production.



Small Tools, Equipment and Technologies

Approximately \$50M will be provided as an incentive programme for small tools and technologies to assist farmers with low-scale mechanization to improve land husbandry practices and harvesting. Farmers and farmers' groups will be provided with small-scale equipment which will be maintained by them. These small tools, equipment and technologies include rototillers, irrigation equipment and soil test kits. Soil sampling is very important for farmers as it provides them with information on what kind of nutrients their soil will need for maximum crop production. As part of the Grow Smart, Eat Smart strategy, the MOAF will be empowering farmers to be able to at least be knowledgeable about the macro nutrients which are present in the soil before production.



Drought Management Programme

The drought adaptation programme continues which embraces a proactive management approach. This will continue to see the construction and micro dams, water-harvesting structures and other small-scale irrigation solutions to farmers to aid in the mitigation of drought and dry spells which negatively impact production.



Livestock

The MOAF will continue to add to its improved genetic bank through the importation of small ruminant and pigs. Much like the small ruminant development programme, a programme has been developed for the provision of animals to farmers to facilitate breeding and pork production. The amount allocated for this venture is approximately \$25 million. It is anticipated that 30 animals will be imported in this first year of the programme.

As part of the food security improvement mandate, the MOAF will also be promoting the rearing and consumption of rabbits as an additional protein source. Rabbits are predominantly consumed in the jerk market segment and has long been included on the palette of both locals and visitors. This incentive to produce rabbits will be geared towards youth farmers through the Jamaica 4H Clubs.

The Ministry remains committed to ensuring sustained growth of the sector, and we will continue to implement initiatives using research and technology-based approaches to grow the Grow Smart, Eat Smart way.



Onion

The ministry has presented a level of support to farmers that has increased their production by multiples, improved their productivity, and stimulate interest beyond our productions. St. Thomas stands as the epicentre of onion production and an example to many for the prospect of wealth creation, as the programme involves and addresses the growing pains.

Our role as Government is to encourage more investment along the value chain such as to increase the storage capacity. As we produce more, we will need to store so that we can sufficiently prolong the shelf life of these products for processing, provision to consumers throughout the period of low production and export as necessary. Due to the seasonal fragility of our country, we need storage to hold produce during times of high yields. Jamaica is a country vulnerable to climate change, so we produce more in the times of optimal conditions.

We intend to increase our production in the good times which means we have to increase our capacity to store and prolong that shelf life, while we build out market linkages and the relationships to build the gap between farmers and buyers.

Thank the purveyors for their commitment and the farmers for their patience, understanding and determination to move forward. This is a shining example of a country pushing through the challenges to move itself up through the developmental stages.

We will allow no detractors from the level of success we have had with our unprecedented production levels. Our long-term vision will allow us to produce in large quantities and hold produce so that we may distribute at a fair price.

Because of the nature of some crops like onions, the agricultural scientist will tell you that any unforeseen intervention in its development, such as heavy rain, long drought or beet armyworm can completely wipe out the

crop from 1-1000 acres. It is for that reason that until we exceed our national demand and have sufficient excess in storage, we have no choice but to fill that gap with support from external sources. We do so, **Madam Speaker**, subsequent to intricate analysis, assessment of the market from our experts and consistent observation and engagement with our stakeholders. To ensure we are within a margin that does not negatively impact the local crop. Is it perfect, **Madam Speaker?** No, but while we move along the developmental stage it is necessary so that our consumers and the tourism stakeholders are not left crying for lack of product in the market. **Madam Speaker**, we have to grow the sector responsibly.

In an effort to consolidate, we are seeking to structure production around a larger number of medium and large farmers for select crops. We will attract through incentives these larger farmers using the mother farm/satellite farm model in the various Irish potato and onion production zones.

Jamaica currently only provides 30% of its local onion consumptive demand. **Madam Speaker**, what this means is we need to expand investment in onion production, NOW. However, **Madam Speaker**, while we expand production we must upscale the supply chain to include storage of onions during periods of high level of production and distribution in periods of scarcity. **Madam Speaker**, we have started the work and will be outlined further in my speech.

Opportunities for Local and Foreign Investors

Spices

Madam Speaker, global spice demand for use in food, seasonings, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and nutraceuticals continues to grow. With our distinctive flavours and characteristics, Jamaican spices have been historically recognized as premium products. However, falling production volumes and rising prices are leading overseas spice buyers to source ginger, turmeric, and pimento from other countries.

As such, **Madam Speaker**, the Ministry through its Agencies, has implemented several initiatives to rapidly produce and distribute clean seedlings to our farmers. This had ensured

an increase of 25.8% for ginger production compared to the previous year and increase establishment of turmeric plots.

In addition, **Madam Speaker**, there has been an increase in the harvesting of pimento totalling 338,819 kg of pimento increasing by 234% when compared to the 101,300 kg reaped in the previous year. Of this amount, we exported approximately 276,482 kg valued at US\$2.4M in the export market with local sales valued at J\$34M. **Madam Speaker**, JACRA has commenced production of grafted pimento plants aimed to repopulate over 500 acres. This will enable a shorter period to commercial production from 5-7 years to 2-3 years. **Madam Speaker**, wealth creation through agriculture and fisheries.



Madam Speaker, we know that Jamaican spices are in high demand across the world. **Madam Speaker**, production has increased for all our spices, but it is not enough. That is why **Madam Speaker**, we welcome the ACIDI-VOCA project commencing in 2023 with a targeted US\$22M or J\$3.3B over 5 years. This will focus exclusively on the upscaling of the turmeric, ginger and pimento spices along the supply and value chain. **Madam Speaker**, with this project, we intend to recapture our market segment and sustain our spices industry with new technologies.

Madam Speaker, we continue to strengthen our bilateral relationships with FAO, CARDI, IICA, World Bank, JSIF, UK CIF, PPCR, US AID, JICA, our Chinese and French partners to secure more investment for the spices industry as we work towards positing agriculture to create wealth and become a formidable driver of economic growth.

Traditional Crops

Sugar

Madam Speaker, the Sugar Industry Authority is charged with the responsibility to regulate and control the sugar industry in the facilitation of its growth and development. The functions of the SIA fall under two broad categories, regulatory and research.

Madam Speaker, the SIA has been commissioned to continue to be the leader of research and marketing for the sugar industry through the monitoring of core research labs and negotiation of price for cane.

In 2022, the Ministry took the strategic decision to transfer the extension service function from the All-Island Jamaica Cane Farmers' Association to the Sugar Industry Authority. This will enable the research arm of the Authority to directly transfer proven adapted technologies to our sugar farmers.

Madam Speaker, we intend to enhance the responsiveness of the regulatory and research needs of the industry. In order, for our cane farmers to optimally gain the best returns from their crop, the Research Division has developed high-sucrose-yielding and disease resistant cane varieties for the industry.

We have not stopped there, **Madam Speaker**, the Authority will be introducing the use of automated cane analysers at its core laboratories. The Ministry will be investing \$52M to improve and enhance this Management and Monitoring of the Cane Sampling, Testing and Payment System.

In the last crop year, although commercial production of sugar decreased over the last three years, the average price for cane has steadily increased from \$7,207.54 per tonne to \$8,183.66 per tonne, a% increase. Similarly, the value of sugar exports increased from J\$5.3B in 2021 to J\$6.1B in 2022.

Commodities regulated by the Jamaica Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority continue to enjoy strong interests from the global market. However, declining local production levels over the years has sparked the need for aggressive action to restore and develop these industries.

JACRA has submitted a proposal for the Crop Restoration and Establishment Programme (CREP) to provide support to the coffee, cocoa, turmeric, ginger, pimento and nutmeg commodities. This four-year revitalization Programme aims to support over 15,000 farmers through:

- **Capacity building, business development & training**
- **Production and distribution of planting material**
- **Supporting plant nutrition and pest control management**

This action plan will also see the rehabilitation of unproductive orchards; establishing and replacing over 6,000 acres of crop. The proposed cost of this programme is approximately \$3.77 billion.

Coffee

Madam Speaker, with coffee we have seen a 5.1 % increase in 2022, with dairy we have seen increase of 11.8 million to 12.3 million metres of production. These are incremental increases, but it suggests that we are moving in the right direction though not at the pace that is satisfactory to us. It is for that reason and because of the value of these products like coffee and dairy, that we are making investments and have been strengthening the relationships between the buyers, farmers and stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, greater collaboration and lower production costs are key ingredients required to grow coffee and create wealth within this industry . Our Jamaican Coffee has been a major contributor to our nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for decades. This Ministry intends to sustain and increase interest in Jamaica's rich tradition of coffee production. The coffee industry remains a priority for this ministry, and we intend to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to enter new markets as we continue our thrust to bolster the potential to earn foreign exchange and enhance livelihood of the stakeholders in the industry.

The Ministry continues to create smart initiatives with the aim of repositioning the coffee industry, as we seek to capitalize on its income-earning capabilities as well as ensure that our famous and much sought-after Blue Mountain Coffee can be enjoyed by more consumers as we expand the industries global footprint.

Madam Speaker, for the 2021-2022 period, a total of 251,296 boxes of coffee were produced, comprising 239,885 boxes of Blue Mountain Coffee and 11,407 boxes of High Mountain Coffee. The proportion of the coffee derived from the crop that was exported was valued at US\$17 million.

Madam Speaker, the ministry is committed to executing the coffee industry business model which seeks to identify product diversification and markets, investment opportunities and to identify the new technologies and practices with the aim of increasing coffee production for the mutual benefit of all stakeholders.

Cocoa

Madam Speaker, our cocoa has long been acclaimed for its fine flavour.

A total of 10,549 boxes of wet cocoa was produced in 2021-2022 period, the net dry recovery weight equals 105,497 kg. The proportion of the cocoa beans derived from the crop that was exported was valued at US\$422,481.75 whilst J\$19,550,907.20 was sold to local processors. This represents an approximately 2,165 boxes (20.52%) increase in production over the similar period in 2020-2021 period.

The production of tolerant cocoa planting material production is an important element in rehabilitating Jamaica's cocoa industry. In 2020, JACRA in collaboration with the Orange River Research Station commenced the production of 5,000 grafted Frosty Rod Rot tolerant varieties of cocoa plants. To date, all 5,000 seedlings have been produced and 1,250 grafted plants made available to JACRA for distribution.

Madam Speaker, working in tandem with international partners such as Tropical Agricultural and Higher Education Center, Canadian Company branched in Costa Rica (CATIE) – germplasm bank, JACRA and RADA are transferring adapted technology to further reduce the frosty pod rot disease in the cocoa industry.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry will aggressively the expansion of the Jamaican chocolate industry building on our world-renowned, fine-flavoured cocoa beans to create an equally world-renowned Jamaican chocolate industry.

Coconut Industry

Madam Speaker, there is a significant local and international demand for coconut seeds and coconut products, especially dry nuts, coconut water and virgin coconut oil. Currently, the number of hectares in coconuts was calculated as 16.9 thousand hectares, an increase from 16.6 thousand at the end of 2021. **Madam Speaker**, as of November 2022, according to the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), 16 metric tons (16,000kg) fresh nuts were exported, earning US\$69,000. **Madam Speaker**, wealth creation through agriculture and fisheries.

Madam Speaker, let me tell you a little about the local coconut industry.

- i. We have the largest coconut germplasm stock in the Caribbean boasting almost 30 varieties. **Madam Speaker**, this is an enviable position; and
- ii. We have a responsive breeding programme that provides our farmers with varieties/hybrids that are resistant to lethal yellowing disease.

Madam Speaker, there was an increase in production by 46.4 million nuts (38%) for the Year 2021-22. This result is attributable to recovery from the drought experienced islandwide in previous years.

Madam Speaker, as we are aware of the challenges that plague this industry, the ministry through the Coconut Industry Board, has instituted several programmes to increase the productivity of coconut farms and the farmers' income. One of the key initiatives is the Coconut Rehabilitation and Farm Productivity Programme.

Under the rehabilitation programme **Madam Speaker**, farmers receive 500 seedlings free of cost over five years, fertilizer and weed grants for 80% of seedlings (the percentage expected to survive) for the first three years. **Madam Speaker**, to be eligible for this programme, farmers must be registered with the Coconut Board and must have land which can accommodate at least 125 coconut seedlings. You got the land, we got the inputs, come an invest in the coconut industry.

In 2022, there were 41,000 seedlings distributed to registered growers and over \$21M spent for the Planting Programmes. **Madam Speaker** for the 2022-2023 FY, I am pleased to report that the Coconut Industry Board made several strides in research, which include the undertaking of several initiatives as we continued our efforts to mitigate many of the factors affecting the industry. One key research initiative is the review of five new varieties emphasizing value chain development for water, oil, and jelly.

Madam Speaker, the Coconut Industry Board continue to seek alliances to develop the industry these include the ITC/Cardi Project. From this Project, **Madam Speaker**, there were 11,375 coconut seedlings and 31,614 intercrops distributed to farmers in Portland, St. Catherine, Hanover, Westmoreland and Trelawny.

Madam Speaker, in November 2022, Jamaica won two awards, the best innovative coconut farm (Mr. Swaby farm) and second-best scientist (Dr. Wayne Myrie) in the coconut scientific field at the 50th COCOTECH Conference & Exhibition which was held in Malaysia. The Conference and Exhibition was the largest technical conference dedicated solely to coconut development. This, **Madam Speaker**, is a testament to our commitment to generate wealth through continued investment in the coconut industry.

Banana Industry

Madam Speaker, the Jamaica Banana, and Plantain Industry (JBPI) experienced robust growth in 2022. Despite the devastating effects of Tropical Storms Grace and Ida in 2021, targets were surpassed and production exceeded expected levels with 72,847.5 tonnes of bananas and 60,585.7 tonnes

of plantain produced in 2022, representing 12.5% and 18.5% increase, respectively. In addition, **Madam Speaker**, exports continued to increase, new markets are being explored; both locally and internationally. A total of 898.21 tonnes was exported in 2022, which represented a 9.17% increase over 2021. The Jamaica Banana and Plantain Industry continues to be lucrative, relevant, and vibrant.

Disease Mitigation in Banana Industry

Madam Speaker, all the major diseases affecting the banana industry including (Black Sigatoka, Moko Disease and Tropical Race 4) were either maintained at commercial level or excluded. The industry continued to be on high alert for *Fusarium odoratissimum* Tropical Race 4 (TR4). In 2020/21, the Ministry established the TR4 Task Force. **Madam Speaker**, let me pause here to speak directly to my fellow Jamaicans. TR4 disease poses a serious threat to Jamaican banana, plantain and ornamental Heliconia crops. It has the real potential to wipe out the entire industry. **Madam Speaker**, activities for communication, border security, farm bio-security, diagnostic and surveillance are ongoing. But I am appealing to you, do not pack a pest especially this TR4 be on the lookout.

Rural Development and Wealth Creation



Irrigation

On to water, the National Irrigation Commission Limited expended \$2,273,450,000 or 99.22% of the budgeted \$2,291,400,000 allocated. For the financial year water production was 75.40Mm³ and approximately 49 Mm³ was delivered to more than 8,700 hectares of irrigated land to approximately 2800 valued customers. The Renewable Energy (solar) utilization programme accounted for approximately 107,000,000 in total energy cost avoidance for the commission. Other achievements included the completion/rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure and the ongoing procurement of climate-smart equipment.

For the upcoming financial year, the budget is estimated at \$ 2,343,000,000 and the key activities targeted are the continued irrigation of approximately 11,500 ha, to more than 4,000 customers, the automation of Sluice Gated at Rio Cobre Dam, commence the Amity Hall Cashew Extension project as well as the Banana Board Project Bodles St. Catherine.

Madam Speaker, the Essex Valley Agricultural Development Project (EVADP) and the Southern Plains Agricultural Development Project (SPADP) are the largest infrastructure programmes ever undertaken in the history of my ministry. **Madam Speaker** when I say we are serious about wealth creation and investment in the sector, this is a prime example of *put yuh money whey yuh mouth dey*. This year we will be expending an estimated \$6.8B to cover irrigation infrastructure, farm roads, drains and commenced support agro-facilities.

The National Irrigation Commission Limited delivered water to more than 8,700 hectares of irrigated land to approximately 2,800 customers at a cost of \$2.3B.

NIC is expected to expend \$ 2.3B targeting approximately 11,500 ha, to more than 4,000 customers, the automation of Sluice Gated at Rio Cobre Dam, commence the Amity Hall Cashew Extension project as well as the Banana Board Project Bodles St. Catherine.

Lucky Hill Pen Agricultural Development Project:

Madam Speaker, this project will expand irrigation services to farmers in the Lucky Hill Pen area. When completed the project will provide irrigation services to approximately 70 farmers on 191 ha.

Madam Speaker, for the The Lucky Hill Pen Agricultural Development project's budget for the 2023-2024 financial year is estimated at \$203,400,000. The key activities targeted include the completion of core-hole drilling and finalizing production wells designs and commencing the drilling of two (2) production wells.

Pedro Plains Agricultural Development Project:

We are not stopping there, Madam Speaker, we have commenced pre-planning activities to expand irrigation services in Pedro Plains, St. Elizabeth, utilizing surface flows from the Black River at Lacovia. The project, when implemented, will impact at least 4,000 farm families on 4,103 hectares of land. For 2022, NIC was able to complete the Preliminary Engineering Designs and contracting of the Cadastral Survey and Titling, expending \$252M.

The key activities targeted for the 2023-2024 financial year are the commencement of ownership mapping of 14,000 parcels, delivery of 1000 titles and acquisition of four (4) parcels for irrigation infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, future irrigation projects include the Yallahs West Agricultural Development Project and Lucky Hill Pen Agricultural Development Project. These projects aim to expand irrigated agriculture in the Yallahs West area comprising West Albion, Cowan and Cow Bay and the Lucky Hill Area. When completed these projects will provide irrigation services to approximately 190 farmers on 351 ha.

Madam Speaker, the NIC is not only the largest provider for our sector but it is one of leading government entities which deliver their service using renewable energy. In 2023, NIC will expend approximately \$80 million to bring another 230 KW into operation making a total of 1 megawatt of renewable power. This represents over \$100 -130 million potential saving. This power is distributed across the parishes of St. Catherine, Manchester, St. Elizabeth and Trelawny.

Job Creation and Income Generation

Labour

Madam Speaker, the Ministry recognizes that farm labour is a critical component of the sustainability of agriculture sector. **Madam Speaker**, despite the belief that the downturn in the other sector will lead to labour transfer to the agriculture and fisheries sector, this did not happen. This critical shortage of labour has led to an increase in the cost of labour, to a point where it has become higher than minimum wage.

Madam Speaker, we need to arrest this problem because we are losing our labour force to either abroad or to crime. So how do we solve the labour problem? **Madam Speaker**, the Ministry will be partnering with stakeholders in the labour industry to analyze the labour landscape and develop appropriate strategies to cauterize this problem.



Youth in Agriculture

Madam Speaker, youth awareness and involvement in agriculture and its related areas is of strategic focus for the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. As such, **Madam Speaker**, my Ministry continues to support and guide the operations of the Jamaica 4 H Clubs who engage and stimulate youth participation in agriculture through training, venture inputs, disbursement of agricultural scholarships and grants to build agricultural capacity and support higher education.

In realizing their mandate, **Madam Speaker**, I am pleased to report that the Jamaica 4-H Clubs achievements for the 2022/2023 financial year include:

Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurship Programme

Madam Speaker under RYEEP, 845 youth were trained, exceeding the target of 750 by approximately 13%. 370 of these young farmers established agro-enterprises in areas such as apiculture, pig and goat rearing, broiler and crop production, with Ministry providing support amounting to over \$5 million dollars.



Established Youth in Fisheries Programme

Madam Speaker, in collaboration with INMED Caribbean Partnership for Children, the Jamaica 4-H Clubs was able to establish one of the largest commercial aquaponics systems in Jamaica with a potential capacity 5,000 tilapia fish, 5,000lbs of vegetables in a 1,000 square foot grow space capacity. The Facility will host theoretical and technical training geared towards bolstering production diversity and climate change mitigation. The purpose of the facility is to generate revenue to ensure financial sustainability for youth participants.

Established Youth in Fisheries Programme Climate Smart Agriculture and Climate Resilience

Madam Speaker, in order to strengthen the capacity of vulnerable youth aged 18–35 years in agriculture and fisheries, the Ministry through the EnGenDER Project (The Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean), provided 891 youth participants, 415 males and 476 females, training in climate smart agriculture, sustainable fisheries practices, and adaptive technologies. Of the 891 youth, 247 participants were trained in crop or livestock production, agro-processing and in areas related to fisheries. Additionally, 110 participants received inputs to either start or maintain, agro-processing, apiculture, aquaculture including aquaponics, livestock, and crop production.

Youth Farmer Training and Certification Programme

Madam Speaker, Jamaica 4-H Clubs, in collaboration with the HEART/NSTA Trust (Ebony Park), is aligning their training programme with the National Certification Framework to provide job certification through prior learning assessment for youth farmers. This year we have certified 756 youth farmers in the areas of poultry and livestock attendant, vegetable crop production, nursery attendant, propagation specialist, farm supervisor, and farm equipment operator.

Additionally, 2,368 youth were trained under the Jamaica 4-H Mastery level training programme and 1,359 certified in agriculture and agri-related areas.



Tractor Operation and Maintenance Training Programme

Madam Speaker, under the tractor operation and maintenance training programme, we have 14 trainees currently enrolled, who, upon completion, will receive their tractor license and an NVQJ Level 2 Certification, from HEART/NSTA Trust.

Agricultural Scholarships

Madam Speaker, the Jamaica 4-H Clubs distributed 262 scholarships and bursaries valued at over \$8,000,000. Recipients of scholarships and grants are currently attending institutions such as CASE, UWI Mona, Knox Community College, and Knockalva Polytechnic College, among others. The Rio Tinto Alcan Legacy Fund Scholarship, Earth University (Costa Rica), Hanover Charities, and Portland 4-H Scholarships are among the scholarships that have been offered to these youth recipients.

Access To Government Agricultural Lands (AGAL)

Madam Speaker, in our efforts to achieve an inclusive and viable agribusiness sector, the Ministry has mandated a 20 per cent quota of our land resources to youth in agriculture. This year thirty-three (33) youth farmers, benefitted from leases for agricultural lands in the Spring Plain Agro-Park and Hampshire Production Zones in Clarendon.

Crop and Livestock Development Programmes (Youth)

The crop and livestock programmes introduced 448 new entrants in the crop production and livestock sector. New entrants were provided with training and the necessary inputs support to start their own livestock enterprises. Specifically, our livestock production programme developed 169 youth livestock projects and 279 youth-led crop production projects.





Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits of Investing in Agriculture and Fisheries

Expansion of Linkages and Partnerships

Madam Speaker, my Ministry through Technical Corporations have forged partnerships with the FAO under its Country Framework Programme (CFP) 2022–2026.

This will lead to improvements in the capacity of our farmers in agribusiness, drought mitigation strategies and post-harvest management.

1. *Hand in Hand Project - “Inclusive and Resilient Agri-Food Systems in Rural and Peri-Urban Territories of Kingston”*

This project has led to:

- **57 farmers trained in entrepreneurship/business development**
- **14 ALMD officers strengthened in technical capacity in GIS; and**
- **Training of 40 trainers from RADA, AIC, ALMD & CASE to set up business incubators, provide the tools for their functioning and generate information and data for business analytics.**

Beneficiaries of the project are between the ages 19 and 69 with the majority being women with at least a high school education. This project is valued at US\$320,000.00 and should be completed in this financial year.

2. *Water Energy Nexus - Mexico - CARICOM -* FAO Initiative – Cooperation for Adaptation and Resilience to Climate Change in the Caribbean with the onset of drought conditions in the island, 39 farmers from the Mt. Airy farmer’s group in Mocho Clarendon and Amity Hall, Agro Park, St. Catherine are currently benefitting from a US\$120,000.00 project. This project will see select farmers receiving solar pumps, conveyance system, bladders, hydroponic systems, etc. Training has commenced for beneficiaries in crop production and productivity in targeted crops, soil health tools and strategies, and water harvesting conservation. The project is scheduled to conclude in December of this financial year.

3. This financial year will see the implementation of the “Food Loss and Waste Reduction through a value chain development approach to transform food systems” which is valued at US\$220,000. The aim is to assist farmers reduce post-harvest losses and improve the shelf life of local

produce. To accomplish this, the project has commenced the procurement of cold storage facilities which are to be located at strategic rural farming communities.

New projects forecasted for implementation in this financial year includes:

- 1. Improving Rural Livelihoods through Resilient Agrifood Systems which is funded by UN India Fund’s South –** South Cooperation Programme and is valued at US\$970,873.00. This project will seek to improve the livelihood of Kitson Town, St. Catherine. Participants will benefit from training in areas such as rainwater harvesting, post harvesting and business development/ entrepreneurship. Targeted individuals will also receive post harvesting, rainwater harvesting and greenhouse infrastructures.
- 2. Digital Ecosystems –** Jamaica FAO pilot project is aimed to impact over 40 farmers in the Mile Gully Community. The project is forecasted to design, develop, and implement a mobile app that will interface with the RADA’s ABIS system. The project will be used by farmers, purveyors, supermarkets, and RADA and should improve marketing and logistics coordination.
- 3. Assessment of locally produced livestock feed ingredients to strengthen the sector’s sustainability –** With the recent fallout resulting from the pandemic and the war in Europe, the Ministry has been actively seeking to develop alternative feed solutions to develop alternative feed solutions. These would then provide for substitutions for our traditional feed ingredient imports by the use of local raw material. This project is valued at US\$90,000 and will seek to develop a national animal feed policy, strengthen relevant national laboratory and private feed production companies as well as introduce new feed recipes and rations for ruminants and monogastric animals.
- 4. Improving Phytosanitary, Food Safety and market access opportunities along the Hot Pepper Value-Chain –** The Ministry will be partnering with the FAO along with other Ministries/agencies on this project which is funded by STDF UN is valued at US\$1,065,392.00. It will help to improve our hot pepper value chain by improving institutional capacity and supporting farmers in producing a consistent, high-quality supply and improving market access conditions.

Update on IICA's Collaborations

Madam Speaker, since 1999, the IICA Delegation in Jamaica, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, has been coordinating the annual Youth in Agribusiness Awards to promote entrepreneurship, innovation and employment among youth in agribusiness. Each year, IICA requests the submission of nominees for the awards from stakeholders in the agricultural sector. The nominees are reviewed and shortlisted by an evaluation team comprising the Ministry, Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), Jamaica Agricultural Society (JAS), Jamaica 4-H Clubs and IICA. Shortlisted candidates are visited and subsequently the awardees selected. You can view our awardees Highlight Farmers magazine.

Technical Support to Jamaican Castor Production

Madam Speaker, in 2022, IICA partnered with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Research Station at Bodles on the trialling of a new castor variety, Kika, which is imported from Brazil. The trialling of this new variety was part of technical support services provided to the Jamaica Baptist Union's castor cluster under a Compete Caribbean and Inter-American Development Bank funded project.

The trial of the Kika variety provided promising results as the variety was observed to reach reproduction capacity at

a shorter timespan after planting in comparison to the local varieties. Additionally, Kika is a shorter and more compact plant than the local varieties, making it easier to reap and suitable for high-density cultivation of approximately 4,000 plants per acre.

Soil Health Rapid Response Scoping Project

Madam Speaker, IICA Jamaica is currently partnering with the Jamaica Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Agency (JACRA) and the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) on a project funded by the International Trade Centre (ITC) to develop appropriate strategies to improve soil health in cocoa and coffee production systems in Jamaica. Under the project, the partners will collect soil samples across Coffee and Cocoa growing regions to facilitate subsequent laboratory analyses of these soil samples. IICA has contracted a Soil Specialist, who will review the lab results to recommend soil remediation actions to include compost solutions. The recommended actions are to be implemented via the soil health component of JACRA's Crop Development Programme.



FISHERIES

Madam Speaker, with respect to the Fisheries Industry, I will remind the Honourable House of the reasons for this industry being regarded as critical to the Jamaican economy. Apart from the fact that it employs 40,000 fishers, the Industry indirectly impacts the livelihood of over 200,000 persons and contributes over \$10 billion towards GDP. The sub-sector, led by the National Fisheries Authority, continues to make strides, earning export income of over US\$14 million according to STATIN.

Post-COVID-19 production from fisheries continues to grow and in 2022, the production estimate stood at 10,019.91MT. Aquaculture production increased to 949MT in 2022, up from 869MT in 2021, and will continue on this upward trajectory in 2023.

Madam Speaker, in 2022, a Quarantine Facility at the National Fisheries Authority, Aquaculture Division, valued at \$13.2M was established to support brood fish populations

with new genetic material from imported stock. This is an essential facility for improving the biosecurity of our aquaculture production facilities, as well as ensuring safe, disease free and high-quality fingerlings are provided to our fish farmers.

Following the finalization of the design in 2022, during this fiscal year, we will see the construction of a state-of-the-art climate resilient Recirculated Aquaculture System (RAS) hatchery. In the next two years, This system is expected to produce 5 million fry by 2025, leading to an increase in national production from 986 MT of fish to 3,400M metric tonnes of fish! This system, **Madam Speaker**, enables all-year-around production!

Development of Mariculture

Madam Speaker, in our bid to develop a market-driven fisheries production system, the Ministry through the National Fisheries Authority continues to develop underutilized fisheries namely oyster and sea moss. The first stage of the Bowden Mariculture Demonstration Facility in St. Thomas was completed, which should guide any advancement in the mariculture sub-sector. Parallel to infrastructure support, support to enable two fishing communities to establish oyster production farms in Savanna-la-Mar, Westmoreland and Green Island, Hanover in the form of a boat and engine to each group, training in oyster production techniques and other technical services.

Compliance Unit established at NFA

Madam Speaker, 2022 saw the establishment of the long-awaited Compliance, Licensing and Statistics Branch of the NFA. With this establishment, the branch has firmly announced its presence, with numerous seizures of illegal fish, with the largest seizure for 2022 being 2,750 pounds of conch. This has led to charges being laid. The Branch has conducted eighty-three (83) inspections during the 2022 Lobster Close Season, and based on charges laid, total fines levied to date, for offenses committed amounted to \$654,000.

Sustainable Development of Capture Fisheries

Madam Speaker, last year, we announced the National Fisheries Authority's programme to develop and encourage diversification of the marine fisheries sector. I am proud to now announce that in collaboration with the Caribbean Maritime University and the University of the West Indies training was offered to 35 fishers in Small Boat Handling, Safety at Sea and Safe Diving Practices. In addition to their certificates, fishers received life vests, GPS devices and dive computers.

Improvement in Offshore Radio Communication

Madam Speaker, the National Fisheries Authority has completed the development of a national marine VHF radio communication system that will enable communication

at sea by fishers and other marine users. The system now enables communication along the entire south coast of the island inclusive of the Pedro and Morant Banks. Work has already begun to facilitate communication along the north coast and is expected to be completed very shortly. With that completion, our fisherfolk will be able to signal distress anywhere in our popular fishing corridors.

Fish Sanctuaries Programme

Madam Speaker, Jamaica has committed to protecting our fisheries waters in 2023, two new sanctuaries are to be declared in Lucea, Hanover and Grange Pen in Lilliput, St. James. This will bring the volume of sanctuary cover to 10,498 hectares.

Blue Justice Initiative

Madam Speaker, Jamaica's fisheries sub-sector does not exist in a vacuum. It requires cooperation from multiple agencies in Jamaica as well as the rest of the world to enable practices and standards which will redound to sustainability in the sector. No better evidence is there of this than with the Blue Justice Initiative, BJI, which was launched in 2022 in Jamaica.

To enable a holistic approach, a multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding by various entities of government was signed to allow for a coordinated response to addressing Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and organized crime in the fishing industry. In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, Jamaica has taken the lead role in the coordination of the BJI Initiative in the region by conceptualizing and will be housing the first ever BJI regional hub. **Madam Speaker**, this is a 'Big Deal' for Jamaica's stocks locally as well as in the international community as it signals our commitment to fighting organized crime in the fisheries sector.

Regulations supporting Fisheries Act 2018

Whilst the new Fisheries Act was passed in December 2018, there remained outstanding appropriate regulations to support the legislation. I can now advise, **Madam Speaker**, that drafting has been completed for the regulations governing Queen Conch and Fish Sanctuaries. The spiny lobster regulation is at an advanced stage of completion and will be sent to Chief Parliamentary Council in the fiscal year.

In addition, the NFA has made advances in the definition of minimum size regulations for reef fish (e.g. snappers, parrotfish, grunts etc.) through field and desk research as well as stakeholder consultations. Through ongoing communication and education, this is intended to prevent the removal of undersized fish from our waters.

Common External Tariff

Madam Speaker, I am proud to announce the removal of the Common External Tariff (CET) on imported fish and shrimp feed in 2022. This will further contribute to growth in the Aquaculture sub-sector.

Online Licensing & Registration System

Madam Speaker, Cabinet has approved the contractor who will build out the platform for an Online Licensing & Registration System for the NFA and by extension the fishers of Jamaica. This community will be able to access online, the necessary forms and information to enable them to submit their applications. They will also be able to query the status of their application as well as other features from their own community anywhere in Jamaica or the world.

Madam Speaker, it is not business as usual in the Fisheries Industry. We are now poised with the advancement, transformation and modernization that we have been undertaking to leap into the future, and to take advantage of this vast industry by creating jobs and growing our blue economy.

Conclusion



Madam Speaker, the agricultural and fisheries sector has established through the positive trends and results that even in the most challenging times, agriculture can thrive and serve as an engine to create wealth when we work together.

As we call for investment in the sector and build the framework and ecosystems that enable growth and development, we have established that an investment in agriculture is a sound one and the return on investment can be exceedingly bountiful.

We have established that our farmers through their determination and dedication are the community leaders, food providers and the protectors of our food and nutrition security.

The Government's commitment to the sector, combined with the resilience and ingenuity of farmers, positions the sector for further growth and contribution to the country's economic development.

By investing in agriculture and fisheries, investors can benefit from the country's supportive policies, including initiatives aimed at increasing productivity, promoting sustainable farming practices, improving market access, and facilitating agricultural financing and investment.

Furthermore, investing in agriculture and fisheries not only creates economic benefits but also has significant social and environmental impacts. By supporting sustainable farming practices and promoting agro-ecotourism, investors can contribute to the development of local communities and help protect the environment.

This sector is essential to the country's economy, providing employment opportunities, food security, and foreign exchange earnings.

Clarifying the Food Import Bill

Madam Speaker, the Food Import Bill is always highlighted as a matter of concern, and rightly so. In 2021, the cost of food imports stood at J\$169B. However, one must look behind the figures and I will now speak to this in greater detail.

For the 21 years of 2001 to 2021, the import figure climbed from J\$23B increasing by 629% over the 21 years. Surprisingly, however, the volume of food imports in 2001 was 946.6 million kg, increasing to 1.2B kg, in 2021. **Madam Speaker**, this is a mere 26.5% over 21 years. This amounts to a little more than 1% per year, with a reducing rate of increase as we expand our import substitution drive.

Another surprising factor, **Madam Speaker**, is that the animal feed component of the food import bill matches the curve of the total food bill almost perfectly when one graphs the figures. The animal feed bill constantly approximates 30 - 35% of the total food import bill, securing the nutrition of our livestock, the aquaculture sector, racehorses and even your pet dogs, cats and birds at home as well as our animals in the zoos.

Madam Speaker, we use this data to guide how we design our next steps in developing a more sustainable agricultural sector, and from this we can identify several opportunities for potential input development and import substitution.

Contribution to Jamaica's GDP

Madam Speaker, my Ministry remains committed to providing our farmers and fishers with the various inputs they need to create wealth, enhance their livelihoods, contribute to the growth and expansion of the sector and by extension, the nation.

Madam Speaker, let me take this opportunity to encourage the private sector to take advantage of the many opportunities that abound within the sector and partner with us to augment and bolster our efforts to improve our food security and establish Jamaica as the food mecca of the Caribbean.

Madam Speaker, although we continue to use all our available resources to boost the sector, there is no denying the fact that greater levels of investment are needed to enable the generation of more wealth, and foster growth and expansion needed to position the sector as a primary driver of our economy.

We have a plan, **Madam Speaker**, to create a profitable agricultural and fisheries sector that can diversify our primary streams of income and contribute to the growth of our economy in an even more meaningful way. The targeted enhancement of this sector **Madam Speaker** will not only benefit those directly involved but all Jamaicans. I will take this opportunity to remind us all that Food Security is everyone's business.

As such, **Madam Speaker**, we continue to strategically deploy available resources in a manner that will generate wealth creation for the country. If properly funded, **Madam Speaker**, we could become a formidable supplier of unique agricultural produce globally which would allow us to utilize every inch of our arable lands to not only plant but plant with a purpose. Thereby elevating the livelihood of our rural communities and improving the standard of living for those in farm-driven communities.

Further, **Madam Speaker**, as we look to long-term development, we remain focused on building the capacity of our farmers and fishers.

Madam Speaker, “GDP Growth is a deliberate strategy” and requires all hands on deck. The Government has been doing its part, by providing \$10B worth of irrigation and other infrastructure for over 1,555 hectares across our production zones, Agro Parks and agro economic zones while importing hybrid stock for livestock and crop production, and expanding the production of fingerlings from 1.5 million to 5 million through the rapid aquaculture multiplication system. The farmers from New River and Breas River areas in St. Elizabeth, will no longer fear being flooded out due to the provision of an amphibious excavator to relieve flooding conditions.

Madam Speaker, we are laying the wicket and calling on the private sector to invest with us in this noble endeavour as we play our part to grow the economy and ensure food and nutrition security.

In conclusion, investment in the agriculture and fisheries sector in Jamaica presents significant opportunities for wealth creation and economic growth. With the sector’s potential for growth and the Government’s commitment to its development, now is the time for investors to grasp the opportunities available and contribute to the sustainable development of Jamaica’s agricultural sector.

The sector is diverse, with a range of traditional and non-traditional crops, livestock , and fisheries, providing numerous investment options for value chain development. Now is the time to invest **Madam Speaker,** in Jamaica, in our future, our food security, in our farmers.

According to Bernard Baruch, **Madam Speaker,** and I quote: *“Agriculture is the greatest and fundamentally the most important of our industries. The cities are but the branches of the tree of national life, the roots of which go deeply into the land. We all flourish or decline with the farmer”.*

Madam Speaker, God bless and one love.



**GROW
SMART,
EAT
SMART!**

