

Government Building a Strong Agricultural Sector

THE AGRICULTURAL sector continues to be one of the main contributors to economic growth, employment and foreign exchange earnings for Jamaica.

The Government's policy for the sector is built on enhancing food safety, reducing the cost of food for all Jamaicans, maximising the productivity and potential of farmers and improving sustainability.

To this end, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining has allocated \$1.2 billion to the Production and Productivity Programme which will give direct support to farmers.

In addition, the Administration is investing \$6.3 billion over the next six years in the renovation of Bodles Research Station and other research stations.

Also, through the Jamaica Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority (JACRA), at least 10,000 new coffee seedlings will be distributed in the coming months, so coffee farmers can expand their yields and replace ageing crops.

Speaking at the launch of the Parnassus Agro Park in Clarendon on April 23, Prime Minister, Dr. the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, said the Government "is building a



Prime Minister, Dr. the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (left), opens the valve for an irrigation system at the Parnassus Agro Park in Clarendon, on April 23. Observing are Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining, Hon. Floyd Green (second left), and British High Commissioner to Jamaica, Her Excellency Judith Slater (third left).

strong agricultural sector to ensure that our people have access to affordable, nutritious food, even in times of crises".

"Agriculture is not just a pillar of our economy; it is the foun-

dation of our national food security. As global supply chains face increasing pressure and climate change threatens traditional productive systems, it is more important than ever that

we, as a country, can feed ourselves," he said.

"This will reduce our dependence on imports, and protect us from external shocks," the Prime Minister emphasised.

He noted that in a world now marked by geopolitical tensions, rising energy costs and unpredictable commodity markets, food security is now a matter of national security.

Parnassus Park to Boost Irrigation in Southern Plains

A MODERN irrigation system to serve the 700-acre Parnassus Agro Park in Clarendon, was commissioned into service recently by Prime Minister, Dr. the Most Hon. Andrew Holness.

"We have allotted 400 of those acres specifically for small farmers. In everything we do, we think about every sector of Jamaica; we are making sure small farmers are included here at Parnassus," Dr. Holness said.

He also announced that a certain amount has been allocated to women, youth and persons with disabilities, and already, some 240 of the existing farmers in the area had been trained in various farming techniques by HEART/NSTA Trust.

The project was funded from a grant of £17 million (J\$3.5 billion) by the British Government, through the Caribbean Investment Fund.

The Parnassus Irrigation Scheme is part of the Southern Plains Agricultural Development Project, which aims to provide irrigation access to arable lands in Amity Hall and Bridge Pen in



Prime Minister, Dr. the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (2nd right), plants a seedling on an irrigated farm at the Parnassus Agro Park in Clarendon, on April 23. Also participating are Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining, Hon. Floyd Green (right), and British High Commissioner to Jamaica, Her Excellency Judith Slater (left). Occasion was the commissioning of an irrigation system for the Agro Park by the Prime Minister.

St. Catherine to increase agricultural productivity.

Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining, Hon. Floyd Green said the project forms part of the Ministry's objective to bring 1,600 hectares of land under irrigation.

Civil engineering work is also set to commence for the \$30-billion Pedro Plains Irrigation Scheme, which will benefit over 5,000 farmers.

Meanwhile, farmers and agro-processors will have increased cold storage access as early as June 2025 when the Essex Valley cold storage unit in St. Elizabeth is slated for completion.

It is expected to be the largest Government-owned cold storage facility, occupying more than 3,000 square feet.

"It can hold about 20 containers and has processing capability. It's going to be something to behold. We do expect it will be completed by June, and our Prime Minister [Dr. the Most Hon. Andrew Holness] will be able to open that facility," Mr. Green said.

Additionally, work on the \$124-million cold storage unit in Kirkvine, Manchester, is under way and is expected to be completed by August 2025.

The Government has also commenced the procurement process to undertake refurbishing of the Coleyville cold-storage unit in Manchester.



Clarence White (right) shows a piece of yam dug from his family farm in Craighead, Manchester. Sharing in the moment are his sons Orlando White (centre) and Ranoy White. The Agricultural sector continues to be one of the main contributors to economic growth, employment and foreign exchange earnings for Jamaica.