

**Speaking Notes by Dr Christopher Tufton,
Minister of Agriculture at Gillings Gully Fishersmen
Co-operative – AGM at Culloden Vocational Training Centre Whitehouse,
Westmoreland on July 24, 2008, at 10 am**

Salutations:

Thank you for inviting me to address your AGM and to update you on the Ministry's policies and programmes for the fishing industry.

1. This is a big industry--- directly providing economic opportunities for some 34,000 persons and feeding the nation. But, like most other sector, you are faced with challenges that put your lives at risk, while limiting your earning potential.

2. In this regard, Government is allocating almost \$200 million in loan support and infrastructure development programmes for the sustainable development of the Fisheries sub-sector.

- **\$100 million to rehabilitate some 30 fishing beaches;**
- **\$29 Million to establish fish sanctuaries;**
- **\$20 million for Beach Infrastructure;**
- **\$50-million loan facility for the fishing industry**

3. We are committed to accelerating the conversion of the Fisheries Division to an Executive Agency, which will drive the sustainable management of the sector.

4. For the first time, a *Fisheries Advisory Board* has been appointed to guide the development and management of the soon to be established executive agency.

5. A new fisheries policy has been completed and will be in place shortly. We are also committed to the enactment of the new Fisheries Legislation.

6. The Government will forge a partnership with fishers, by improving their conditions of work, and showing them the respect that they deserve.

7. During this Financial Year, the Ministry will be undertaking a programme to rehabilitate some 30 fishing beaches, at a cost of nearly J\$100 million. This programme will include the installation of environmentally-friendly toilet facilities, storage sheds, an area for basic processing and signage.

8. The Development Bank of Jamaica has approved a \$50-million loan facility specifically for the fishing industry, targeting primarily small and medium size fishers, for the provision of fishing gear and safety equipment. This money will be available at an interest rate of 7.8%, and will be disbursed through the People's Cooperative Banks, Credit Unions or other approved micro finance institutions.

11. A major registration programme to bring existing fishers not registered into our data-base.

12. The establishment of five fish sanctuaries where no fishing will be permitted; and a management regime instituted for monitoring, supported by appropriate legislation. These sanctuaries will be located in Old Harbour Bay, Hellshire, Falmouth, Discovery Bay, and the Negril regions. These designated sections within those areas will be restricted from fishing activity, thereby becoming natural breeding grounds for our fish population.

13. In an effort to stop illegal harvesting during the lobster closed season of April 1 to June 30, we will be instituting legislative changes to ban the possession, storage and sale of lobsters during the close season.

14. Beginning in this financial year, we will move to impose a levy on every pound of conch exported from Jamaica to create a dedicated fund for the sustainable development of the fisheries sector. Based on projected export volumes this year, will see about \$75 million flowing into this fund. Appropriate legislative amendments will follow to make this initiative effective.

15. We intend to work with your Fisherman Co-operatives and other NGOs to organise fishers around beaches from which they will operate and to train them in best practices, as well as, to develop a maintenance and management programme for the facilities we will be installing.

Ladies and gentlemen; we need the fishermen but we must engage them in a positive way, and to re-orient them in more environmentally-friendly practices.

In closing, we want to ensure that our fishing industry is viable and sustainable.