

Fighting the food crisis - Young farmer encourages his peers to get involved

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Westmoreland farmer, Clive Pringle, scouts his callaloo field for pests.

At a time when each country must ensure its own food security, and the cost of some agricultural inputs are escalating weekly, Clive Pringle, a farmer in Sheffield, Westmoreland, believes he, like other farmers, must continue to persevere if Jamaica is to win the battle.

This fight, he said, must be fuelled by renewed energy from the Ministry of Agriculture in getting more youths involved in the sector.

"If the Government can get young people and provide them with incentives, such as fertilizer and markets to sell the produce, then we will be able to survive this crisis," he maintained, adding that he was doing his part.

A good business

Pringle, 35, pointed out that he was the only young farmer in his community, a journey that started at age 13. Currently, he has seven of 40 hectares of land under cultivation, land that he inherited from his grandfather.

On this holding, he grows cabbage, pumpkin, lettuce, sweet peppers, pak choi and watermelons and supplies the HiLo chain of supermarkets.

Pringle also finds good business with vendors, Negril Tree House, the Coral Seas Hotel and the export of hot peppers to the United States.

Westmoreland's three-time champion farmer and the national under-35 third-place winner explained that agriculture for him was more than just a business venture, but a way of life.

He pointed out that agriculture was one of the areas he has always loved.

That love, he went on, was then transformed into a viable business.

"I have always asked myself why I chose to do the hardest job, but the answer has always been 'because it's something I love'. I believe that if I had chosen some other job I would be far worse than I am now," he said

Pringle, although using traditional farming techniques, has managed to grow his crops in an ingenious way. He revealed that he cultivates crops in the morass areas of Sheffield, where water supply is aplenty, hence no need for irrigation. Although quantity and quality of the vegetables produced using this technique has improved over time, the farmer was quick to point out that there are drawbacks.

"We plant in the morass and because of the 'sourness' (deficiency in lime) we have to use Salt Ammonia fertilizer, which is extremely expensive," he disclosed, explaining that to offset the spiraling cost of the commodity, he uses organic fertilizer.

Even though business is fairly successful, Pringle explained that he was considering expansion. However, funding this new venture has proven difficult.