



Ministry of Industry, Commerce
Agriculture and Fisheries



Presentation - Sectoral Debate 2019
By the Honourable Audley Shaw, CD, MP
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, AGRICULTURE
AND FISHERIES

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Theme: On the Road to Prosperity...Growing Jamaica's Industries



GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA

SECTORAL PRESENTATION

2019

Presented by:

Hon. Audley Shaw, CD, MP

Minister of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries

On the Road to Prosperity...

Growing Jamaica's Industries

GORDON HOUSE Tuesday April 23, 2019



Opening of JAMPRO's New York Office



Scotiabank Achievers Awards Ceremony

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS



Mr. Speaker, I had the very great privilege and honour during last year's Budget and Sectoral Debates to address this Honourable House, and the nation we all serve, three times.

This year, my privilege and my honour are rooted in the fact that I am a member of a team and an Administration that is growing the economy; creating a new Jamaica and increasing the prosperity of our people.

I am proud and honoured to represent and to serve the 230,000 small farmers of Jamaica; the over 20,000 fishers; and the thousands of entrepreneurs in the micro, small and medium-sized businesses as well as our large business enterprises; our manufacturers, exporters, traders and investors that keep Jamaica growing.

I thank Almighty God, my family, my constituents and staff for enabling me to continue to serve.

Mr. Speaker, the role of Government in engendering growth and prosperity is crystal clear. And so the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, under my watch, and in collaboration with my colleague Ministers Hutchinson and Green along with the dedicated members of staff, led by the Permanent Secretary, will continue, under this Administration, to create the enabling environment for individuals and businesses to thrive and create wealth for themselves, their families, communities and their country.

Mr. Speaker, I am buoyed today by the fact that Jamaica has been hailed as:

- The best country to do business in the Caribbean, for the fourth consecutive year, and 10th in Latin America (Forbes, 2018)
- The home of the world's best performing stock market (Bloomberg, 2018)
- The 6th easiest country in which to start a business globally (Doing Business Report, 2018).

Mr. Speaker, the expansion of our economy is palpable - you can almost feel it; we have attained macroeconomic stability with incrementally improving levels of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, even while several fledgling industries find their footing and inspire further growth in the economy.

Mr. Speaker, I can boldly attest to the fact that Jamaica is on a path of economic growth and has been so for the last few years.

We, of course, are also working closely with the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation let by the Most Honourable Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, we are on the road to greater prosperity. Ain't no stopping us now; and there will be no turning back.

We intend to grow; grow; grow – grow our industries – the agricultural industry, the micro-small and medium-sized businesses; the manufacturing sector and the services sector.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the journey along the road to prosperity is not without its challenges; it's not an easy road. It is one that requires commitment, hard work and resilience.

Yes, it requires the kind of resilience that defines the character of the Jamaican farmer, whether he works his banana walk in the cool hills of Portland, his vegetable plot on the dry plains of St Elizabeth or the potato and yam fields of Manchester or Trelawny. This resilience, Mr Speaker, finds fodder and nurture in the creative will of our small business owners and entrepreneurs.

PERFORMANCE 2018-2019

Mr. Speaker, for the calendar year 2018 preliminary estimates from STATIN show that the quantity of food imported declined by 5.1% when compared to food imports in 2017. A total of 1,017.8 million kg was imported in 2018, down from the 1042.8 million kg imported in 2017.

Exports

Preliminary estimates from STATIN show that a total of 121.9 million kg of food was exported in 2018, a marginal decline of .04% when compared with the 122.4 million kg exported in 2017. The value derived from exports stood at US\$214 million. Are we “growing what we eat and eating what we grow”? Certainly Mr. Speaker!

It cannot be lost on us that overall growth for the Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing Industry stood at 4.2% while contributing approximately 7.2% to GDP. Domestic crop production rebounded to an annual total of 7.2% when compared to the prior year, 2017.

Comparative Estimates of Domestic Crop Production by Crop Group 2018/2017

Crop Group	Production (Tonnes)		
	2018	2017	% Change
Legumes	4630.1	5278.0	- 12.3
Vegetables	246159.4	230092.8	7.0
Condiments	52175.6	45883.8	13.7
Fruits	62127.3	51894.0	19.7
Cereals	2177.1	2540.0	- 14.3
Plantains	49907.2	46093.0	8.3
Potatoes	61593.5	59144.4	4.1
Yams	148674.8	144319.1	3.0
Other Tubers	49849.7	46228.8	7.8
Sorrel	1151.5	1252.9	- 8.1
Total	678446.1	632726.7	7.2

Mr. Speaker, there was an overall growth rate of 0.2% in the manufacturing sector, an increase which was based primarily on the food and beverages sub-industry. This sends a clear message to us of the very serious linkage between agriculture and industry and the need to further develop the value chain.

In every challenge there is a seed of opportunity and agriculture is the seed to Jamaica's economic prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the agriculture sector, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries has portfolio responsibility for the main productive sectors of the economy.

We take this very seriously, Mr Speaker, bearing in mind that these goods-producing sectors account for some 45% of the labour force while contributing over 33% to our annual GDP.

We are aligned, Mr Speaker, umbilically aligned, to the country's growth agenda and the national Growth Inducement Strategy.

And so, **Mr. Speaker**, even as we assess the achievements of the past, we are focused on the future. We are focused on inducing growth; we are bent on attracting more and more investment; we are going forward with prosperity!

INVESTMENT

So let us talk a little about investment.

Mr Speaker, our lead investment and promotions agency, JAMPRO, reports that preliminary data show that in Fiscal Year 2018-2019:

1. The value of Local & Foreign Direct Investments (LDI & FDI) by their clients was US\$545.5 million, 87% of a targeted US\$625.5 million.
2. The number of jobs created by JAMPRO clients was 14,401, exceeding the target of 14,156.
3. The value of export shipments (export sales) by JAMPRO clients was US\$762 million, some 43% above target, Mr Speaker.

Projections for 2019-2020

Mr. Speaker, in this fiscal year, JAMPRO will continue to connect both local and international private sector members to opportunities in the economy in the mining and quarrying, energy, manufacturing, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), and the hospitality sectors and I wish, **Mr. Speaker**, to join, today in offering our heartiest congratulations to the success stories in several of these industries, with tourism being the poster child.

EXIM Bank

Mr. Speaker, in the 2018-2019 Fiscal Year, the EXIM Bank disbursed some \$9.40 billion to the productive sector, 72% of which went towards providing financing to the MSME sector, its highest ever contribution to the growth and development of small and medium enterprises in Jamaica. This Fiscal Year, 2019-2020, an additional \$400 million has already been committed by the Bank for investment in the MSME sector. This is growth-inducing investment, **Mr. Speaker!**

And so, **Mr. Speaker**, this Minister and this Ministry have every intention of continuing to work with the EXIM Bank to strengthen their ability to facilitate increased levels of financing for micro, small and medium-sized businesses, particularly for those in emerging sectors which have demonstrated a competitive advantage.

The Bank is projecting to provide in excess of \$9.4 billion in credit this fiscal year but is hopeful of being able to increase this target with increased capital injections to facilitate export growth for new and existing clients while expanding its role as a capacity builder for the SME sector through its tailored financing solutions.

The Private Sector

Mr. Speaker, our partners and stakeholders in the private sector are also to be commended. They are using more local produce in baking and brewing, expanding the export of fresh produce and manufactured goods, and continue to grow their businesses by investing in Jamaica.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Mr. Speaker, even as we recognise, welcome and encourage the invaluable participation and investment of the private sector in growing the economy of this country, we are gathered in this assembly to also review and underscore our own role and leadership as Government.



POLICY PRIORITIES

We have not only planned, but we intend to implement those plans and to work for Jamaica. And that is why for the fiscal year ahead, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries will anchor our growth initiatives in eight main policy priorities and I wish to highlight some of these in this Honourable House today.

Mr. Speaker, our priorities are targeted at keeping Jamaican industries growing by:

1. Optimising the production and productivity of key local produce and products towards targeted markets in order to increase agricultural production and productivity; achieve food security while increasing access to financing; and employ appropriate technology and infrastructure development. In other words, **Mr. Speaker**, we want to modernise the sector and outfit it with the requirements to increase production and productivity efficiency.
2. We plan to work for Jamaica, **Mr. Speaker**, by increasing the access of select local industries to emerging and existing markets. We simply have to strengthen the marketing linkages and opportunities available to us locally, regionally and internationally.
3. In 2019-2020 and going forward, **Mr. Speaker**, my Ministry intends to work for Jamaica by strengthening the contribution of Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) to the economy.

In this regard, our goal is to improve the business environment regarding starting a business, business formalisation, accessing credit, and resolving insolvency.

We intend to increase the formal operations of MSMEs through adequate business development support services and to increase the opportunities for youth, the disabled and women to utilise business and entrepreneurship to enhance their economic and social well-being.

4. **Mr. Speaker**, number four on our priority list is to build on our great tradition of human resilience and apply that commitment and strength to building climate-resilient agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing and services sectors and, especially to develop and adopt climate-resilient practices among targeted farming and fishing communities in Jamaica.
5. **Mr. Speaker**, this is the business Ministry. One of our top priorities, therefore, is to continually improve the ease of doing business to facilitate investment in Jamaica.

We intend to make the trading environment more transparent and more predictable so that traders will have better access to trade information!

Having broadly outlined some of our priorities, **Mr. Speaker**, let us now turn the attention of this Honourable House to some specific actions for the coming year.

TRADE FACILITATION

The Trade Facilitation Programme seeks to implement trade reforms, while simultaneously ensuring that appropriate trade policy prescriptions are in place to preserve the livelihood of our stakeholders and to ensure the nation's food safety and security as well as adherence to intellectual property rights, laws and anti-dumping and subsidies legislation.

The Trade Facilitation Programme, **Mr. Speaker**, works hand in hand with the Investment Promotion Programme, which seeks to ensure that Jamaica's business environment supports the increase in

Foreign Direct Investments, Local Direct Investments, local jobs and businesses.

All of this is premised on the protection of consumer rights and the upholding of fair competitive spaces and prioritises the strengthening of the capacity of local industries to take advantage of regional and global trade agreements.

Mr. Speaker, we are improving transparency and predictability in the trading environment and enhancing the country's trade support services.

Removal of Specific Permits and Licenses

Through the Trade Facilitation Task Force's efforts to gradually reduce the unnecessary and burdensome 'red-tape' associated with regulatory compliance in the trading environment, my ministry, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAF), has received the green light from the Cabinet for the removal of specific permits, licenses and charges currently being issued by the Trade Board Limited (TBL), which are no longer relevant, since they were duplications.

While this is being done within the context of Jamaica's commitment under the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), to reduce the overall time and cost to trade and create a more agile business and trading environment, the benefits that will be derived from the removal of these irrelevant permit applications positions our investors and producers on the tarmac for take-off and complements well, our other initiatives such as the Jamaica Trade Information Portal and single window facilities.

Jamaica Trade Information Portal

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased, today, to officially announce in this Honourable House and to the nation that on Thursday, May 16, 2019, we will launch the Jamaica Trade Information Portal (JTIP).

This JTIP, the first of its kind in the English-speaking Caribbean, will literally provide all trade information for importers and exporters at their fingertips.

This trade information portal will provide access to such information as the laws, processes, and requirements for trade. The Trade Information Portal has a rich database, including standards, procedures, tariff, fees, taxes, levies and applicable penalties; various authorizations, inspections and verifications; trade agreements details and opportunities; downloadable forms for applications, licences, and permits; as well as links to regulatory and various other bodies engaged in trade facilitation.

Mr. Speaker, JTIP will be managed by the Trade Board Limited and will complement the other pillars in the modern infrastructure to facilitate and boost trade. The other pillars are the Single Window Facility, our Border Regulatory Agencies and the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), managed by the Jamaica Customs Department.

I highlight this launch of the JTIP, **Mr. Speaker**, to demonstrate just how serious this government is about expanding trade. JTIP will provide a one-stop shop for the business community to get information on import-export regulations and procedures. With this portal, Jamaica will have a single, authoritative trade information source for businesses to easily access information they need when they need it.

The Jamaica Trade Information Portal will provide the responsiveness and agility our producers and service providers need to become more competitive in the global market.

This is all about making it easier to do business in Jamaica, Mr. Speaker.



Touring Kingston Wharves

INITIATIVES IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

Mr. Speaker, this Ministry is pleased, every year, to share with you, the members of this Honourable House, a small gift basket showcasing some of our locally produced crops and value-added products.

We do this because it is so important to reinforce the message of the critical role that agriculture and fisheries, along with the agro-industry, play in our economy. We do it, also, to help us reflect upon and salute the handiwork of our farmers and our entrepreneurs. Without them, growth and expansion would not be possible and we honour and thank them for feeding Jamaica, and for contributing to import substitution and the export market. Accordingly Mr Speaker, I implore this nation to grow what we eat and eat what we grow.

Mr. Speaker, agriculturalists are well aware that sometimes it becomes necessary to regenerate the soil, let some fields lie fallow and adjust the production practices to get the best yield from crops and livestock. They know that you can't do the same things the same way all the time and expect better results.

Our agriculture expansion programme is articulated within the context of the national agriculture development strategy and will serve as a catalyst to enhance production and productive capacity, improve infrastructure, provide domestic food security, earn foreign exchange as well as support the expansion of businesses, particularly in the MSME sector.

Part of the strategy includes the stratification of the sector, Mr Speaker, and that is why you hear me talking so much about utilising our idle lands and matching them with our idle hands.

Land Utilisation

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of acres of idle government lands across this island. Time has come, **Mr. Speaker**, to revolutionise, expand and modernise the use of these lands! And so we are stratifying the use of available lands.

The acreage of lands managed by the SCJ Holdings alone is some 120,000 acres. Of this amount, 55,000 are being retained in sugar while 65,000 acres are being redirected into other crops as well as into housing and other industries.

SCJ Holdings, **Mr. Speaker**, let us recall, was established in 2008 under the Sugar Privatisation Policy to manage Government's sugar lands and to promote viable investments by expanding agricultural production, supporting youth in agriculture and MSME programmes and enterprises as well as to regularise existing tenants and reduce informal settlements.

Critical to this objective is the Bernard Lodge lands under the Bernard Lodge Development plan, which have now been earmarked and are already being used for increased economic activity including the production of crops such as cassava for industrial use, vegetables for domestic consumption, housing development, small business enterprises, agro-processing, small manufacturing projects and quarrying, just to name a few, as we continue to build a new town and expand the urban landscape along the east-west Highway 2000 corridor. Further along that corridor, more lands have come into Government's land bank with the return of some 44,000 acres by the Pan Caribbean Sugar Company Ltd.

So, **Mr. Speaker**, as we build a new Jamaica, we recognize that housing and commercial activity must be a part of our land utilisation strategy. We recognise too that this necessitates the relocation

of some of our lessee farmers to other fertile and arable lands, good for agriculture production! We respect our farmers! We are not leaving them out, but including them!

As we ramp up the utilisation of idle lands, **Mr. Speaker**, I can report to this Honourable House today:

- As at July 2018 we received over 300 applications for lease of the SCJ lands;
- The applications are for various sizes – from small farmers to large enterprises, some of which are eligible for entering into mother farm and satellite farm relationships;
- It is expected that in the first phase of these projects employment of in excess of 3,000 people will be generated;
- The businesses to be established will have cumulatively inject some \$58 Billion into the economy, **Mr. Speaker**.

So, **Mr. Speaker**, let me assure my colleagues on the other side that the consolidation of Agriculture and Industry and Commerce was not misconceived; this is the wave of the future and Rural Development and Agriculture are in good hands as we continue to grow all Jamaican industries and the economy.

Strategically, the rationalisation and large-scale leasing of lands under SCJ Holdings Ltd and arable lands under the National Land Agency is being undertaken to produce industrial crops such as cannabis, hemp, castor beans, bamboo, coconuts, West Indian Sea Island Cotton and orchards to include avocados, mangoes, breadfruit, ackee, and papayas.



Mr. Speaker, in relation to the restructuring of sugar lands, the Ministry has been in touch with the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation and the Ministry of Transport and Mining to systematically identify the availability of arable lands at the National Land Agency, the National Land Utilisation Commission under the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), as well as the Jamaica Bauxite Institute in relation to mined-out land.

The objective of this is to identify a comprehensive catalogue of arable idle lands across the country, suitable and available for agricultural production.

And **Mr. Speaker**, I also use this opportunity today to invite private citizens who are holders of idle lands, to join us in the revolution to use these lands or lease these lands for use in the agriculture sector.

Mango Programme

And having mentioned mangoes, **Mr. Speaker**, I am very pleased to advise that under the Mango Irradiation Programme, Jamaica will send its first shipment of mangoes to the USA in May 2019, when the mango season begins.

As an incentive, **Mr. Speaker**, the Ministry will provide assistance by waiving the fees associated with inspection, storage and usage of the Plant Quarantine/Produce Inspection facilities for the one-year period May 2019 to May 2020.

Only approved mango exporters to the USA will be eligible for this waiver, at an estimated value of \$1million per exporter for the year.

Three farms have already been approved and 12 more are on the way to being approved.

Mr. Speaker, Jamaican mangoes, the best and the sweetest, are on their way to the US market after being absent for almost 20 years!

Jamaica Fruit Trees Programme

Mr. Speaker, it is not only mangoes that we will be growing. It will be recalled that I announced in my 2018/2019 sectoral speech that my Ministry will be exploring the planting of 5 million fruit trees over a five year period.

While we are exploring grant funds to boost the programme, (Including the UN Green Climate fund) in this financial year we will be establishing a Fruit Trees Programme Unit to initiate the work. The unit will be staffed by RADA, the Research and Development Division of the Ministry and the 4-H Clubs. I will say more about this very important programme during the launch exercise to take place soon.

South Plains Development

In addition to leasing lands to investors, the Ministry will be developing and initiating the development of arable lands in St. Catherine and Clarendon under the proposed South Plains Agricultural Development (SPAD) Project. Three parcels totalling 795 hectares have been selected for this project and SPAD is to be funded through a grant of approximately £17.5 million from the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Fund (UK-CIF), administered by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB).

And this, **Mr. Speaker**, is the same source of funding for the Essex Valley Agriculture Development Project now under way in South St. Elizabeth valuing some £35 million.

New and Emerging Industries

Mr. Speaker, support is being given to new and emerging industries, with the big ticket items being bamboo, cannabis, Sea Island cotton, hemp, castor bean, coconut, along with orchard crops, such as mangoes. ***These products, Mr. Speaker, are part of the vision for a new agro-based industry in a new Jamaica, on the road to increased economic growth and job creation.***

Bamboo

The estimated value of the global bamboo industry is over US\$1.6 billion annually and growing, **Mr. Speaker**. And hear what, Jamaica will not be left behind because this product offers us the next best opportunity to grow the green economy, even as we diversify our manufacturing sector. It is bamboo, **Mr. Speaker**, which offers environmentally friendly alternatives to existing products on the market such as paper, bed sheets, cups, kitchen and facial towels, diapers, tissue, furniture and home accent pieces and even bags and drinking straws that are biodegradable in our quest to protect the environment.

Bamboo, as my colleague Minister J.C Hutchinson will agree, is super big business globally, and it is time for Jamaica to claim our stake in this business.

Castor Bean

Mr. Speaker, Jamaican castor bean is the best in the world and this will thrive in marginal lands on the plains of St Catherine and Clarendon so that we can claim our pride of place in the international castor oil markets, with the volumes needed in the cosmetic, industrial, medicinal, pharmaceutical and therapeutic industries.

Cannabis

As it relates to cannabis and medicinal marijuana, we are on that train, **Mr. Speaker**.

As at March 31, 2019, the Cannabis Licensing Authority has received 627 applications from over 200 applicants in Jamaica's medical cannabis industry, with a total of 33 licences issued to date. As we speak, 11 more applications have been approved and the applicants are preparing to receive their licences.

Mr. Speaker, 178 applications are at the conditional approval stage. These companies would have successfully passed the Authority's due diligence process and are now undergoing preparatory work to move to the licensing stage.

The capacity of the Authority has been strengthened with an increased staff complement to respond more efficiently to the growing demands in the industry. Additionally, greater technical competencies are being acquired to include agricultural specialists.

The Authority is also contemplating amendments to the existing regulations in keeping with the development of the local and global medical cannabis industry and will in the near future complete the drafting instructions of regulations concerning import, export and trans-shipment as we move to capitalise on the opening up of greater opportunities in the international space.

Mr. Speaker, our small traditional growers will not be left out and it is for that reason that the Prime Minister announced the Alternative Development Programme, with two pilot projects for the cultivation of marijuana for medicinal use, in Accompong, St Elizabeth, and Orange Hill in St James. Funding of \$15 million was provided, and a coordinating unit established and systems are now set up to ensure that the programme gets under way. We also expect that by August of this year, **Mr Speaker**, we should have finalized arrangements with an investor from Australia for the production and export of cannabis oil.



Launch of Mission: Food Possible School Feeding Programme



Launch of Jamaica Producers Heritage Banana Project in St. Mary.

The Production and Productivity Programme

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry, through the revitalised thrust for agricultural production, will provide incentives for small farmers and other investors in the production of strategically selected crops and livestock for local consumption but with export potential. These include Irish potato, sweet potatoes, peppers, sweet corn, dasheen, cassava, yams, sorrel, spices, strawberry, pineapples, onions and other condiments and livestock such as small ruminants.

Mr. Speaker, a total of \$552 million, has been allocated in this year's budget to provide the necessary incentives to grow those special crops.

In order to grow domestic production, keen focus will be paid to crops and meat that support the import-substitution agenda in order to reduce the food import bill. To this end, fresh and processed foods will be produced to target five distinct markets:

1. Hotels (and restaurants)
2. CARICOM (and regional markets)
3. Diaspora (and international markets)
4. Third country markets for exotic Jamaican products; and **Mr. Speaker**, the fifth but not the least, our
5. School Feeding Programme

Agro-Processing Centres

In addition to this, I wish to mention the expansion of interest in setting up agro-processing centres across the island, **Mr. Speaker**, and to highlight a few emerging ones to include:

- a. The AMC Complex at Spanish Town Road (under a Public-Private Partnership arrangement)
- b. GraceKennedy's new centre at Denbigh, Clarendon
- c. Lydford Logistics, Lydford St. Ann
- d. JamIsland processing Limited in Williamsfield, Manchester
- e. Caribbean Producers of Jamaica
- f. Rainforest Seafoods Limited

School Feeding Programme

Mr. Speaker, I wish to elaborate on the school feeding programme, a programme that excites me tremendously! It excites me because it constitutes the perfect plan to match the use of local, nutritious ingredients in school diets to demand for increased production by our farmers and increased opportunities for agro-processing.

It excites me because it opens up a world of possibilities for growth in the agricultural sector, even as we address the nutritional and health needs of our young people in schools.

In this regard, **Mr. Speaker**, I wish to salute the move by Jamaica Producers Limited, who now provide bananas to schools at a reduced price of \$5 per kilo. They are showing the way to what is possible, **Mr. Speaker!**

I also wish to commend the Mission: Food Possible team who launched their school meal programme at St John's Primary School in February, with a revised menu utilising Jamaica's indigenous produce such as pumpkin, cassava, yams and green bananas.

Mr. Speaker, my challenge to you all, my colleagues in this Honourable House, today, is to join me in promoting this effort throughout the schools in your constituencies.

And, I wish to declare today, that my Ministry will work with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information and the Ministry of Health to implement a vibrant and sustainable School Feeding Programme for the children of Jamaica!

True wealth creation begins in our children's brain. Our Children must not be fed with imported genetically modified food when we have the God given potential to feed our children with highly nutritious locally grown food.

Agriculture Infrastructure Development

Mr. Speaker, it is a given that agricultural production requires, not just hard labour, investment and inputs, but also necessary infrastructure such as roads, drains, storage facilities and irrigation.

It is for that reason, **Mr. Speaker**, that last year we spent approximately \$800 million to rehabilitate 141 km of farm roads across 13 parishes. This year the Ministry, through RADA, will continue this very successful programme with the rehabilitation of approximately 100 kilometres of farm roads throughout the island and already \$752 million has been allocated in this year's budget to achieve this. Roads will be targeted across all farming communities and constituencies to ensure farmers are able to bring quality produce to markets.

The Ministry will also focus on a very aggressive infrastructure development programme for production areas, agro-parks and agro-economic zones to include:

- a. Catchment and water storage systems
- b. Expansion of irrigation networks – in fact on May 9, on behalf of the farmers of Bull Savannah and Southfield in St Elizabeth, we will receive 150 acres of drip irrigation equipment to be handed over by Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF), through a grant from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB);
- c. Expansion of drainage systems and road networks
- d. Construction of processing and grading facilities and
- e. Construction of GLOBAL GAP facilities for traceability, health and food safety.

The stratification of the agriculture infrastructure or landscape into production areas, agro-parks and agro-economic zones will provide an opportunity for investors to target the agriculture value chain at varying points to ensure a fully vertically integrated system to support investment and further expansion in agricultural production systems to cover the small, medium and large players in the industry.

Mr. Speaker, I can report to this Honourable House, today, that the Ministry has signed an MoU for the establishment of an agro-economic zone at Holland in St. Elizabeth; the new Spring Gardens Agro-Park in Portland is 80% established and before the end of this fiscal year, the extension of agro-park at Ridge Pen in Hounslow, St. Elizabeth will be launched, focusing on the production of hot peppers and vegetables.

Traditional Export Crops

Mr. Speaker, even as we look to the future and a new day, with a diversified agricultural sector, including new industrial and non-traditional crops, we are also keeping careful watch on our traditional crops such as those in the banana, cocoa, coconut, coffee and spices subsectors.

Preliminary data from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica indicate that last year the gross output for Traditional Export Crops grew by 0.8 per cent, with banana exports achieving 18.8 % growth. Sugar exports increased slightly to 35, 910 tonnes, up from 34, 967 tonnes; however, the income declined to US\$16 million compared with US\$17.2 million in 2017. Cocoa exports also increased by 4.4%, while the other traditional exports - pimento, citrus and coffee - registered declines in exports.

Mr. Speaker, I think we will all agree that Jamaica still holds the gold standard for many of these

crops, so even as we seek to diversify the sector and to introduce emerging and alternative crops, **Mr. Speaker**, we recognise the value and brand recognition of our traditional crops.

We will not abandon these subsectors. The Ministry will provide a facilitating and regulatory environment for traditional export crops such as banana, coffee, cocoa, coconut and spices.

As you know, the Ministry has divested the commercial functions of these crops, with banana to come on stream, and they are now regulated under the newly established Jamaica Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority (JACRA).

Over the next four years, 2019/20 – 2022/23, the Ministry will provide a regulatory framework that promotes growth and expansion of each industry to markets and along the value chain. It is expected that going forward:

- The coffee industry will produce 235,000 to 260,000 boxes of Jamaica Blue-Mountain Coffee (JBM) and 28,000 to 34,000 boxes of Jamaica High Mountain (JHM) with an average of less than 10% defects.
- A marketing and investment plan will be prepared for Blue Mountain Coffee
- The pimento industry is projected to produce between 200 to 300 metric tonnes of whole berries
- The cocoa industry is projected to produce between 15,000 to 30,000 cocoa beans with an average of less than 5% defects.

One hundred million (\$100 million) has been allocated to continue management activities for the Frosty Pod Rot disease affecting cocoa pods as detected in the parishes of Clarendon, St. Catherine, St. Andrew and St. Mary as we work to revitalise the cocoa subsector.

Sugar Cane

Mr. Speaker, allow me a special word for the sugar cane industry, which has been ailing for some time now. As has been demonstrated in our recent support to the industry, **Mr Speaker**, there is clear evidence of this Government's commitment to find the best and most sustainable solutions for sugar. The current situation at Monymusk is an indication of the extent of the challenges now being faced by the sugar industry - perhaps the most challenging period in the industry's history.

We recognise, **Mr. Speaker**, that the model for charting a sustainable future for the industry is destined to fail if predicated on perpetual government subsidies. Sugar, **Mr. Speaker**, needs sustainable long-term investment.

So, **Mr. Speaker**, in addition to the short-term interventions, including \$200 million for the transportation of sugar cane from the Monymusk area to the factories at Worthy Park in St. Catherine and Appleton in St. Elizabeth as well as the \$100 million to assist the factory workers and their families reintegrate and adjust to new livelihoods, the Ministry is working assiduously to select the best investor to operate the Monymusk factory. The selection criteria are based on proposals for product diversification and reliable and sustainable operations and production and the strictest levels of due diligence are being applied in the selection process.

On that note, **Mr. Speaker**, Jamaica also welcomes the recent announcement by the CDB to provide over US\$97,000 in funding a research on the suitability of plantation white sugar in the manufacturing industry in the Caribbean. A green light on this, **Mr. Speaker**, would signal the creation of market demand in the Caribbean and address the demand for refined sugar, two-thirds of which is now provided by extra-regional sources.



MSMES

Mr. Speaker, our attainment of increased economic growth and prosperity is totally aligned with the legendary creativity and entrepreneurship of the Jamaican people.

The MSME sector is a major catalyst in any effort to induce inclusive growth, social development and job creation. Moreover, the sector is indispensable to achieving broad-based and inclusive growth.

The development of the MSME sector is critical to the transformational growth envisioned for other sectors of the economy such as manufacturing, agriculture, logistics, offshore services and tourism and it is for that reason that so much emphasis is being placed on the strengthening, development and formalization of this sector, hence the numerous references I have made to the sector throughout my presentation today. The fact is, **Mr. Speaker**, big things are happening in our small business sector and we are determined to make even bigger things happen.

We will be further developing the MSME sector through policy, programmes and strategic partnerships because start-ups, scale-ups, high-growth and innovative MSMEs are critical to creating jobs, fostering growth, and making the economy more competitive and resilient. However, while businesses have the potential to grow, most of them face impediments such as access to finance and lack of collateral, as well as cumbersome business regulations and high interest rates.

During FY 2018/2019 there were several developments:

The MSME & Entrepreneurship Policy and 5-Year Implementation Plan was tabled in Parliament as a White Paper in July 2018 as the most comprehensive, coherent and coordinated framework for addressing the policy issues facing the sector, as well as, providing an outline for targeted support to the sector to expand its contribution to socio-economic development.

Public Procurement Regulations (PPR)

In recognition of the crucial development role of public procurement, the Public Procurement Regulations were passed in July 2018 allowing for the development of Offset Regulations that allow special and differential treatment to increase opportunities for small and vulnerable suppliers such as MSMEs within the public procurement system.

The Offset Regulations will also ensure that an adequate amount of GOJ contracts are set aside for MSME participation while giving domestically manufactured content a margin of preference within the procurement tendering process for selected industries, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of the sector and improving their abilities to scale up and internationalise.

We are continuing to roll out the Small Business Development Centre (SBDC), Model. Memoranda of Agreements (MOAs) were signed with three entities for the establishment of SBDC centres in Manchester at Northern Caribbean University, in Kingston at the Caribbean Maritime University, and in Trelawny at the RADA Office, while an additional JBDC Office was established during the last financial year in Morant Bay that will serve as a SBDC centre and this fiscal year the target is for the establishment of five more centres across the island.

Access to Finance Initiatives

A long-standing hurdle for MSMEs growth and development has been the lack of appropriate forms of financing, with the severity of financing varying across sectors. A recent World Bank Report estimates the percentage of MSMEs unserved or underserved by the formal financial sector is between 19 and 23 per cent in developed economies, and rises to 26-32 per cent in developing economies. This amounts to a credit gap of US\$1 trillion, which rises to US\$2 trillion if informal MSMEs are taken into account.

According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a subsidiary operation of the World Bank, SMEs worldwide face a US\$2.1 to US\$2.6 trillion financing gap. This means approximately 200 to 240 million formal and informal businesses need loans, insurance, and credit, but are unable to access these financial and risk management instruments.

So, **Mr. Speaker**, we are addressing these hurdles. In this financial year, in order to efficiently and effectively streamline financing for productive MSMEs, MICAF will fold the functions of MIDA's Self Start Fund's operations within the EXIM Bank, thereby allowing the EXIM Bank to develop and offer specialized and competitive financing products to targeted productive enterprises at affordable rates to promote their growth and development.

MICAF will be launching a \$600-million MSME Capital and Business Loan (MSME/CBL) Programme, - a concessionary loan facility for productive MSMEs at a low single-digit rate.

Credit will be accessed by productive MSMEs at a concessionary rate of 5-6% per annum. Eligible SMEs would be able to access up to \$25 million per borrower under the programme, while loans to micro enterprises should not exceed \$5 million per borrower. The period for payback for loans to MSMEs will not exceed 60 months. The programme will be managed and administered by the EXIM Bank;

The PIOJ has also engaged technical consultancy to assess the efficacy and feasibility of utilising unclaimed funds to finance MSMEs growth and development. The consultants will be submitting an interim report on their preliminary findings during this month.

Mr. Speaker, pioneered by the JSE, the **Jamaica Social Stock Exchange** was launched in January 2019 and this too, along with the **Junior Stock Exchange** will bolster funding opportunities for MSMEs, particularly non-profits and social enterprises through online crowd-funding platform, for example.

Micro Credit Act

The Micro Credit Act, tabled by the Minister of Finance and the Public Service in the Houses of Parliament on February 26, 2019, Mr Speaker, will regulate micro financiers and protect their customers with the intention to make registration mandatory, establish qualifying criteria for registration, and create a regulatory authority to govern business standards and practices for the sector. It will also incorporate new provisions to promote full disclosure of all rates, fees and charges on principal debt.

MICAF'S LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr Speaker, as we here in this Honourable House are aware, Jamaica is a country of laws. We see it from the perspective that our laws and regulations enable and empower us to act in a fair, just and equitable manner that fosters fairness and integrity within the context of our democratic traditions. Our laws give us the legs on which we stand.

And that is why we continue to build on our proud achievements in promoting an enabling policy and legislative agenda. Let me just mention a few of those achievements in that regard, Mr Speaker.

During the FY 2018/2019, the Ministry continued to pursue its legislative agenda aimed at supporting the achievement of its strategic priorities. Major achievements in this regard include:

1. Enactment of the Agricultural Loan Societies and Approved Organizations Act
2. Passage of the Fisheries Act 2018
3. Passage of The Protection of Geographical Indications (Amendment) Act and Regulations, 2017
4. The Food Storage and Prevention of Infestation (Amendment) Act and Regulation was tabled in

the House of Parliament on November 20, 2018 and passed in this House in January 2019.

As we move into the FY2019/2020, our priority targets on the legislative programme include:

- i. Companies (Amendment) Act
- ii. The Co-operatives Societies (Amendment) Act:
- iii. Modernisation of Intellectual Property Legislation, with key areas being:
 - a. The Trade Marks Act and Rules
 - b. The Protection of New Plant Varieties Bill
- iv. Enactment of the Scrap Metal Act
- v. The National Compliance and Regulatory Authority Act and related legislations
- vi. The Amendment to the Registration of Business Name Act
- vii. The Custom Duties (Dumping and Subsidies) (Amendment) Act
- viii. The Fair Competition Act
- ix. Protection of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Amendment) Bill
- x. The Plants and Plant Products (Inspection and Quarantine) Bill; Animals (Diseases and Importation) (Change of Name and Amendment) Bill
- xi. Veterinary Amendment (Amendment) Bill
- xii. Legislation in relation to the modified Insolvency Framework for Financial Institutions
- xiii. Amendments to the Security Interest in Personal Property Act (3-year legal review being undertaken).

Standards

Mr. Speaker, even as agencies of the Ministry such as the Bureau of Standards Jamaica, the National Compliance Regulatory Authority, Veterinary Services Division, Plant Quarantine and Plant Inspection Branch, Food Storage and Pest Infestation Division and others promulgate and promote the highest applicable standards and regulations for Good Agricultural Practices, Good Manufacturing Practices, Food Safety Standards and others, so too do we recognise that beyond being standard bearers, we are also ambassadors for international standards and so our mission is to make Jamaica become an ISO standards-driven country. My Ministry, **Mr. Speaker**, is working therefore with over 17 key agencies of Government to implement the ISO 9001 Quality Management Standard with the expectation that they will become ISO 901:2015 certified. The overarching goal is to improve the business environment and the quality of public service and so boost investor confidence.

MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

In congruence with the Public Sector Modernisation Programme, **Mr. Speaker**, MICAF, having carefully reviewed and assessed its structures and business processes, has embarked on a modernisation and transformation programme aimed at making our operations more targeted and efficient.

Fisheries

In this regard, **Mr. Speaker**, we can cite the modernisation of the Fisheries Division. With the passage of the Fisheries Bill last year, the Fisheries Division is now being transformed into the National Fisheries Authority, thus positioning Jamaica to further benefit from the Blue Economy, valued at some US\$1.3 trillion annually in the Caribbean Region.

Update on Fisheries Authority

Now that the law has been passed, we are seeking to promulgate it by June of this financial year to enable a full transition to the Authority.

This new law will not only facilitate modern fisheries management and development strategies and significantly increase the maximum fines for breaches of the law; it will also transform the Fisheries Division into a statutory body, the National Fisheries Authority (NFA). This Authority will be properly

staffed and resourced to better meet the challenges of managing and developing the fisheries and aquaculture subsectors. Our recruitment process for a CEO for the authority is already in train and we look forward to an early appointment to lead the team.

Among the key improvements to be facilitated by the creation of the NFA is the establishment of a Compliance Division, which will have staff dedicated to fisheries surveillance and enforcement. The NFA's compliance staff will certainly bolster the cadre of existing enforcement personnel from the partner entities such as the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) Coast Guard and the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), Marine Police among other regulators such as the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) and supporting structures like the Special Fishery Conservation Area (SFCA).

As an accompanying measure to the full establishment of the Fisheries Authority, **Mr. Speaker**, the Fisheries Division is also implementing a national web-based licensing and registration system aimed at making our interactions with all our stakeholders, including the primary stakeholders, our fishers, more efficient.

The Division will also continue implementation of The Promoting Community-Based Climate Resilience in the Fisheries Sector Project (PCBCR). This project, valued at some US\$4.875 million, is a five-year project that is expected to end March 31, 2023. The project seeks to build community-based climate resilience among targeted fishing and fish farming communities. The key outcomes expected from the project include:

- I. Strengthened and climate-smart fisheries and policy and regulatory framework;
- II. Reduced vulnerability of the targeted fishing and fish farming communities to climate shocks;
- III. Diversified and strengthened livelihoods of targeted artisanal fishers and fish farmers.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue to sustainably grow the fisheries industry in Jamaica, we are also pursuing the commercial diversification of our fisheries species to include pelagic resources, deep and long line fishing, and other species such as glass eels, crabs and sea cucumbers.

We are also aware, **Mr. Speaker**, of the increased need to protect our marine resources in order to preserve the sustainability of the industry. More and more, we are being faced with the depletion of several species. Our 'quality' fish such as our snappers, groupers and goat fish have been steadily decreasing over the years and many fishers are catching what can only be described as 'baby fish'.

Mr. Speaker, it was against this background that I recently had no choice but to impose an extended close season for queen conch, which is being inaccurately reported in some quarters as a ban on conch. The close season will last until January 2020.

Parrotfish

We note also, **Mr. Speaker**, the ongoing controversy regarding parrotfish, which again is being reported in some quarters and is apparently widely believed to be banned. But, to set the record straight, **Mr. Speaker**, I wish to state, loud and clear, that there is no ban on parrotfish in Jamaica.

We have heard the calls; we are aware of the persistent lobby and so we have done the research and consulted widely with local and international experts. The consensus is that while there is a correlation between reduced herbivory and degraded coral reef systems there is no conclusive evidence that the consumption of parrotfish is the cause of the depletion of the coral reefs. In addition to the fact that there is no scientific basis on which to impose a ban of parrotfish, it is not practical or pragmatic to impose a ban on a single species in a multi-species fishery without serious negative impact on some of our most vulnerable citizens.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear, there is no ban on parrotfish in Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to place emphasis on the revitalisation efforts through the programmes managed by the Jamaica Dairy Development Board and assistance to the small ruminants subsector.

As part of the revitalisation strategies, **Mr. Speaker**, the Dairy Board has placed important focus on cattle feeding training initiatives to combat the effects of climate change on dairy production.

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry takes very seriously, the impact of praedial larceny on the small ruminants industry. This threatens the gains made in the subsector in which there was a positive trend in terms of local production of goat and sheep meat, which moved from about 680,000 kg in 2006 to close to 1.1 million in 2016.

I have therefore, **Mr. Speaker**, charged the Praedial Larceny Prevention Coordination Unit to intensify its strategies to specially target the crime being perpetuated against not just our goat farmers, but all farmers threatened by this scourge inflicted by criminals.

Climate Resilience

Mr. Speaker, having mentioned the impact of climate change on the fisheries and livestock industries, I wish to briefly point out that our Ministry recognises the vulnerability of Jamaican industries and livelihoods to the impact of climate change.

Indeed, **Mr. Speaker**, MICAF has factored in the impact of adverse weather on the agricultural sector, and the economy, on the whole, in our planning. Our response is to pursue climate-smart policies and programmes geared towards sustainable production and consistent levels of support for the economy.

JACRA

In discussing the transformation of business operations in the sector, **Mr. Speaker**, we can also cite the case of the Jamaica Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority (JACRA).

Update on JACRA

JACRA may have had some teething pains since its operations became effective in April of last year, but it has facilitated a number of initiatives over the period to boost sustainability in the commodities subsectors. These include:

- Smooth transitioning of the regulatory functions of the Coconut Industry Board;
- Processing an average of 309 customs releases and 186 import permits per month for products with cocoa, coconut, ginger and turmeric;
- Drafting a development plan for the commodities; the funds have been earmarked and JACRA is in the process of developing an MoU with the relevant stakeholder groupings.
- Establishing a training institute and
- Engaging in seedling production for pimento, while examining the development of the value chain and potential markets for essential oils, berries, etc.

In addition, the coffee warehouse is 70% complete and is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year at a cost of \$40 million.

Transformation of Entities

Mr. Speaker, the transformation and modernisation process involves the merger, removal, privatization and close out of 11 entities in our Ministry, and we are currently well down the wicket with our rationalisation and improvement programme.

By way of Cabinet Decision No. 20/18 dated June 4, 2018, the following transformation activities are being executed:

1. Merger of the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) and the Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC)
2. Completion of the merger of the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC), Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) and the Agricultural Support Services & Productive Projects Fund Limited (ASSPFL) into the Agro-Investment Corporation (AIC)
3. The Banana Board to be included in the Jamaica Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority (JACRA)
4. Jamaica Agricultural Society (JAS) to transition to a non-governmental organisation (NGO) status
5. Tobacco Industry Control Authority to be closed and the Tobacco Industry Regulation Act repealed
6. Veterinary Board to transition to body corporate status.
7. Jamaica 4-H Clubs to transition to a non-governmental organization (NGO) status and the
8. Jamaica Exotic Flavours & Essences to be divested/privatized.

A September 30, 2019 deadline has been communicated for completion of some of the transformation activities, with the exception of the Jamaica 4-H Clubs, Jamaica Agricultural Society, Veterinary Board and the Jamaica Exotic Flavours & Essences.

Research and Development

As a part of the sector's modernization thrust, the Research and Development Programme is also being modernized to ensure improved governance, accountability and financial sustainability towards strengthening the agriculture health and food safety system, while providing improved technology through research in the areas of crops and livestock.

So, in addition to the provision of modern equipment and techniques, we are also engaged in the rehabilitation of infrastructure, for example, at the Bodles Research Station, where some \$150 million was expended in the 2018-2019 financial year on redevelopment projects.

This year \$295 million has been budgeted to continue the work there, while over at the research stations at Orange River in St Mary and Top Mountain in St Andrew, plant seedlings are being prepared to revitalise the cocoa subsector and jump-start strawberry production, respectively.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Speaker, before I close my presentation, today, I wish to bring to the attention of this Honourable House, an emerging issue in the agricultural sector and in particular as it concerns the use of pesticides. There have been recent calls for the banning of the Roundup brand of weed killer, the most popularly used worldwide and here in Jamaica. These calls, Mr Speaker, are based on allegations and fear that Roundup is cancer causing, as well as recent awards of large sums of money in cases brought before the Courts in the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious matter. I have therefore heeded the calls and responded swiftly to address it. My Ministry has brought the matter to the attention of our colleagues at the Ministry of Health, which houses the responsible authority for regulating such substances. Mr Speaker, we have established a multi-agency technical working group to thoroughly investigate this issue and to make recommendations as to how to respond to these concerns.

Mr. Speaker, the facts at this time are as follows:

1. Roundup is a brand name for one of about 12 herbicides used locally containing the chemical glyphosate

2. In Jamaica, it is used primarily for land clearance and preparation purposes and not for crop production of mostly genetically modified foods as is done in some jurisdictions. In fact, GMO products are not used in local agriculture
3. International studies conducted to ascertain whether the product is carcinogenic, or not, have proven inconclusive although a few studies have pointed to possible cancer-causing properties.
4. A review conducted locally in 2016 of international research findings found that seven out of nine studies pointed to inconclusiveness regarding any cancer-causing effect of Roundup.
5. Some 25 countries, including at least two of our neighbours in the Caribbean, Mr Speaker, have now either restricted the use of, or banned, Roundup.

So what are we doing, **Mr. Speaker**?

Having launched our own investigations to guide our decision making process, we will also intensify our pesticides monitoring and public education activities as we work collaboratively with other Ministries, agencies and members of the distributive trade and the end users, our beloved farmers.

Mr. Speaker, we place the safety and protection of all consumers at the heart of all we do. The safety and protection of Jamaicans come first. We must, therefore, exercise the greatest level of care and due diligence in assessing any likely risks associated with this herbicide.

I have instructed my own Ministry to act swiftly and efficiently on this matter and, in the meantime, I am appealing to our farmers, our landscapers and gardeners and all stakeholders who use this product to exercise the greatest level of care in using it. Use it wisely, if you must, and please adhere to all the instructions for correct usage as printed on the label.

Agricultural Food Health and Safety is a top priority of the Government, **Mr. Speaker**, and my Ministry will continue to intensify our programme in the interest of our stakeholders, consumers and all Jamaicans.

In collaboration with industry players and the relevant Government agencies, we will therefore roll out, with immediate effect, increased public awareness activities to encourage the safe use of all pesticides and underscore compliance with instructions on the labels.

INCLUSIVE GROWTH – THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND YOUTH

But, I did not wish to close my presentation on that somber note, **Mr. Speaker** I have sought to place the focus this afternoon on the road ahead, the big wide open future before us and so I wish to close by emphasising that we are pursuing inclusive growth and development.

The role of women and youth in industry is of particular importance.

To this end, our target as a Ministry is to ensure that at least 30% of all participants in the Ministry's programmes are women and youth.

Women Entrepreneurship Support Project

The Women Entrepreneurship Support Project, **Mr. Speaker**, aims to strengthen and support women in the field of entrepreneurship in Jamaica. The project has three phases to be implemented over a three-year period and provide a grant to selected women entrepreneurs. Initially, the project was to commence with four grants of \$250,000 during the course of the fiscal year and a capacity building workshop offered through the JBDC, however, at the launch of the project on November 13, 2018, I consulted with the Hon. Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, and we agreed to



Visiting Potato Farmer in Manchester

increase the grant to approximately \$500,000 and we also increased the number of grantees to 10. This is now being reflected in the project brief. So, going forward, we have three phases:

Phase 1: provision of an entrepreneurial grant to 10 shortlisted recipients for the 2019/2020 fiscal year

Phase 2: aims to increase the number of recipients to 15 during the 2020/2021 fiscal year

Phase 3: increase the number of recipients to 20 in the 2021/2022 fiscal year

Youth Involvement

Mr. Speaker, there is perhaps nothing that gives me greater joy in managing this extensive portfolio, than to experience the involvement of young people in agriculture and entrepreneurship.

Our young people are involved in the range of micro businesses facilitated through the JBDC, JAM-PRO, Agro Investment Corporation (AIC) and the 4-H Clubs, just to name a few.

The recent Kingston Festival saw them out in their numbers; the recently held National 4-H Clubs Achievement Day, was also positive proof of their acuity and agility and the mission of my generation must be to ensure that those talents are channelled into the kind of productive use that will help us all realize our national vision for a prosperous Jamaica.

We have some bright, enthusiastic and innovative young Jamaicans and as Minister of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, I want them to join us in growing Jamaican industries as we travel the road to greater prosperity!



CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that these are exciting times for Jamaica – for our economy, our industries and our people.

I am very happy, **Mr. Speaker**, to be a part of this movement towards creating a more prosperous, equitable and inclusive society.

The Ministry I have the privilege to lead at this time in our history and our development has a huge responsibility and role to play in the nation's growth and development.

We accept that duty willingly and commit ourselves to being in the vanguard of this movement.

Mr. Speaker, I have exhausted the time allowed for my presentation today but, by no means, have I exhausted all that I could share with you, this Honourable House, and the people of Jamaica. Indeed more will be shared by my colleague Ministers Hutchinson and Green in their presentations.

The work of this Ministry, Mr. Prime Minister, is multifaceted, complex and diverse. We are cognisant of the tasks assigned to us; we are committed to the job at hand and the journey ahead.

Today, I reach out to all Jamaica, to our partners, local and international; to our customers and stakeholders to join us on the way ahead as we recommit our pledge to work diligently and creatively so that Jamaica may, under God, increase in beauty, fellowship and prosperity.

May God bless you all, and bless Jamaica, land we love.

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