

Minister's Presentation

Hon. Dr. Christopher Tufton
Minister of Agriculture

Vision 2030 Jamaica
National Development Plan

Official Opening Ceremony
Agricultural Sector Planning Workshop
November 7, 2007
Terra Nova Hotel

Mister Chairman,

Distinguished guests on the platform

Dr Peter-John Gordon, Director Economic Planning & Research Department, PIOJ

Mrs. Leila Palmer, Programme Director, Plan Development Unit, PIOJ

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture

Representatives from the:

- The European Union Delegation
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
- United Nations Development Programme
- United States Agency for International Development
- Other distinguished guests in the audience

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to commend the Planning Institute of Jamaica for leading and facilitating the preparation of a long-term national development plan, vision 2030 Jamaica, which will put Jamaica in a position to achieve developed country status by the year 2030. This goal can only be achieved with the collaboration and cooperation of all sectors of the economy including the agricultural sector. The agricultural sector is special in that it is possible to achieve growth from this sector in the shortest possible time given the plethora of opportunities that this sector has to offer and the god-given natural resources at its disposal. The sector, however, will have to be transformed into a modern and competitive one for it to survive and grow.

The Ministry of Agriculture is committed to the long-term planning process and, as a result, has already prepared an agricultural development strategy with a long-term vision for achieving a modern, efficient and competitive agricultural sector by the year 2020. We, at the ministry, therefore are even ahead of the PIOJ in that the long-term planning strategies have already been formulated and the process of development has begun.

The main objectives of the Agricultural Development Strategy are:

a. Contribution to *sustainable* growth and development through:

- i. Employment creation
- ii. Increased export earnings
- iii. Food security

b. Stabilization: - to halt the decline of the agricultural sector which has been undergoing years of negative growth.

- c. **Rehabilitation:** to restore the sector to levels of productivity which have been lost due to deterioration in cultural practices and reduced investments.
- d. **Expansion of products:** to increase the output of targeted crops and livestock products through increased productivity and efficiency.
- e. **Development of agro-industry:** to promote the development of sustainable linkages between agriculture and manufacturing.
- f. **Rural development:** to promote integrated rural development thus ensuring that farming communities provide meaningful livelihoods and living environments for thousands of Jamaicans who rely on the agricultural sector. This will contribute to more *sustainable* agriculture, reduced rural-urban drift as well as assist in reducing poverty in rural areas.
- g. **Youth in agriculture:** to further enhance sustainability and provide meaningful employment by actively engaging *young people* in agricultural enterprises.

These developmental objectives will be achieved through a reorganisation of the agricultural sector to ensure its effective integration into the global economy on the basis of increased competitiveness and efficiency through the application of modern *technology* and *management* as well as more effective institutional *arrangements*.

Sustainable development, however, should be the core principle underpinning the planning process. A widely used definition of sustainable development was drawn up by the world commission on environment and development in 1987 and is described as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) formulated a sustainable rural development policy in 2004. This policy recognizes that rural development entails more than agricultural development, but downplays the importance of agriculture to rural development.

The basis of any industrialized society, however, is a stable agricultural sector. Agriculture is the foundation on which all industrialized economies have been built. The Green Revolution is a term used to describe the worldwide transformation of agriculture that led to significant increases in agricultural production between the 1940s and 1960s. This transformation occurred as the result of programmes of agricultural research, extension, and infrastructural development. Massive public investments in modern scientific research for agriculture have led to dramatic yield breakthroughs in the industrial countries. Modern plant breeding, improved agronomy and the development of inorganic fertilizers and modern pesticides have fueled these advances. Most industrial countries achieved sustained food surpluses by the second half of the 20th century. These advances were much slower in reaching developing countries. By the mid-1960s, hunger and malnutrition were widespread, especially in Asia. The Green Revolution in many Asian countries which was supported by several international agencies and foundations has

provided the springboard for industrial and technological development now being seen in several Asian countries, including china and India.

This government, therefore, wishes to reiterate that agricultural development is the fulcrum on which sustainable development of our rural economy will be based in our quest for developed country status.

The present policy is to shift agriculture to the mainstream of social and economic development as agriculture has a critical role to play within rural development strategies. The modernisation of the agricultural sector will, therefore, be a central theme in the sustainable rural development policy.

The pillars on which sustainable development must be now be achieved are:

- Social inclusion thus recognizing the needs of everyone;
- Effective protection of the environment;
- The prudent use of natural resources; and,
- The provision for economic growth and employment.

In order to support the effort towards developed country status, we must have comprehensive research and development facilities for the agricultural sector. It is distressing that our research infrastructure has been allowed to deteriorate and disintegrate over the years. In the 1940s to 1960s, Jamaica's agricultural research infrastructure was the envy of the commonwealth countries and many foreign academics visited our agricultural research facilities in their quest for

advanced degrees and professional enrichment. Our several agricultural research stations were strategically positioned to allow for the research required in the various microclimates in the island.

With the new paradigm of scientific focus for development, our research capabilities and infrastructure will have to be strengthened to provide cutting-edge technological advancements in areas such as

- Genetic engineering
- Biotechnology and
- Nanotechnology

This proposed emphasis on science and technology will assist the sector to achieve the type of transformation necessary to propel the sector into the twenty-first century and beyond.

There is also the need for an efficient technology transfer mechanism which will ensure bi-directional movement of information from the farm to the laboratory and vice versa.

This will be facilitated by:

- An effective and efficient extension service
- Use of modern multi-media channels, and
- The use of the internet and other modern means of communication and training.

No longer can the sector survive with the current levels of production and productivity being achieved. We must strive to upgrade the production methods of many small farmers in this country. We are part of a new world where change is the only constant and the time for technological innovations has come.

Our agricultural training institutions must be seen as an essential ingredient in the promotion of this technological change. Most of our agricultural schools and training centres are now offering a multi-disciplinary curriculum because of the lack of interest of young people in the agricultural sector.

The modernisation of the agricultural sector will make agricultural investment more attractive to young people, many of whom do not now see agriculture as a viable business option. By focussing on the most profitable business options in the sector and promoting these options as viable business investments, more young persons will gravitate towards the agricultural sector.

One way of encouraging investment in the sector is to identify the linkages with other sectors which can produce a marriage of investment options. Agriculture can create backward and forward linkages with the larger rural economy, thereby fostering prosperity.

Rural areas can have a mix of agricultural production investments, agriculturally-related investments (e.g. agro-industry) and non-agricultural economic activities (e.g. tourism). As the primary agricultural sector modernizes, the importance of agriculturally-related activities and the linkages to non-agricultural rural economic activities will increase.

One of the possibilities for linkages with other sectors is for the production of fruits, vegetables, tubers and livestock products for the hospitality industry. Agricultural products for the agro-processing sector can provide business opportunities for agricultural producers. There are also the opportunities to combine a career in agriculture with other types of economic activity. Many persons have been able to supplement income from their day jobs with income derived from operating a weekend farm. The possibilities, therefore, are myriad and the some of these applications can change the thinking of persons who believe that agriculture cannot sustain themselves and their families and provide them with a better standard of living.

The development of the rural economy is also enhanced by the economic benefits that accrue to the agricultural sector, since these are also shared with the rural communities in which the agricultural activity is being undertaken, so that the shopkeepers, transport operators, artisans and small business persons also benefit.

Any modernisation strategies in the agricultural sector have first to be buttressed by strong policy initiatives.

These will include:

- Proper land utilisation and management
- Effective land zoning regulations
- A well –designed and executed afforestation policy

- An effective regulatory mechanism to ensure the availability of sufficient farm inputs and control of imports,
- Maintenance of quality standards
- Compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, and
- The development of an effective trade policy to ensure that our export sector is fully prepared for the challenges of the changing multilateral trading regimes.

To ensure sustainability, however, there is the need to promote environmentally-friendly production practices. In this context, the need to integrate agro-environmental policies and rural development policies must be emphasized.

The vision for any sustainable rural development planning mechanism must include the preservation of the character of rural life. The cultural identity of rural populations should be preserved as special and not replaced with urban values. The rural character and spirit should never be compromised in the modernisation of rural areas. The uniqueness of the Jamaican culture is rapidly being eroded. This uniqueness is the quality that endears visitors to our shores and these qualities can be used to promulgate the development of ecotourism and heritage tourism investments in agricultural areas.

My ministry will be continuing to seek alliances with international and local partners to bring about the transformation of the agricultural sector that we envisage by the year 2020, even ten years ahead of PIOJ's goal of achieving developed country status. This could very well be the right timing and order in order that the agricultural sector will be the springboard from which

development of the rural areas of the country will be achieved and will promote national economic development.

We, as a Government, however, cannot do it alone. It has to be achieved with the assistance of all the stakeholders in this room and others who will have to be engaged in the process. I challenge my own ministry to increase their level of efficiency and commitment to deal with the gargantuan task which lies ahead.

Good planning is a positive and proactive process and this is why we are gathered here to collaborate in the preparation of the Agricultural Sector Plan, which will form part of the overall national development plan for the country. We believe that the planning process should be participatory and that all the stakeholders represented here should participate fully to ensure that their views are aired and recorded. This will ensure that the planning process is transparent and reflective of the views of the stakeholders.

It is indeed a pleasure to be accorded the opportunity to open this workshop as strategies and plans for the agricultural sector will be developed which will help to achieve the vision 2030 goal of developed country status by 2030.