

## INTRODUCTION

MR. SPEAKER,

ONCE AGAIN IT IS MY HONOUR AND PRIVILEGE TO REPORT TO THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR JUST ENDED, AS WELL AS ON THE PLANS FOR THE PERIOD 2005 – 2006 AND BEYOND.

I NEED, BEFORE DOING SO, HOWEVER, TO PLACE ON RECORD MY DEEP APPRECIATION TO A NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS AND AGENCIES THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE OUTSTANDING SUCCESSES AS WELL AS TO THE FORMULATION OF THE PLANS AND STRATEGIES, WHICH WILL DRIVE THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE SECTOR.

I WOULD LIKE, FIRST OF ALL MR. SPEAKER, TO THANK THE MOST HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER FOR HIS CONTINUED CONFIDENCE IN ME AND FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT HE PROVIDES, WITHOUT WHICH, THE TASK WOULD BE INSURMOUNTABLE.

MY HEARTFELT THANKS GO ALSO TO MY CABINET COLLEAGUES FOR THEIR READY ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION WHENEVER THEY ARE CALLED UPON. SPECIAL MENTION MUST OF COURSE, BE MADE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY, THE HON. ERROL ENNIS, WHO HAS BEEN A TOWER

OF STRENGTH IN HELPING ME TO CARRY THE HEAVY BURDEN OF THIS PORTFOLIO.

THE PAST YEAR WAS FRAUGHT WITH MANY CHALLENGES FOR THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, I WOULD SPECIALLY LIKE TO PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE OUTSTANDING WORK DONE BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM AND STAFF OF THE MINISTRY, HEADED BY PERMANENT SECRETARY DR. RICHARD HARRISON. WITHOUT THEIR DEDICATION THE VARIOUS RECOVERY EFFORTS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL.

THE AGENCIES WHICH MAKE THAT CRITICAL LINK BETWEEN THE MINISTRY AND ITS STAKEHOLDERS - THE FARMERS, HAVE ALSO MADE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SUCCESSES THAT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED. FOR THIS I WANT TO THANK MOST SINCERELY, THE CHAIRMEN, DIRECTORS AND STAFF OF THE RURAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, (RADA) THE VARIOUS COMMODITY BOARDS AND THE LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE JAMAICA AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY. WITHOUT THEIR SUPPORT, MR. SPEAKER, I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO STAND WITH SUCH CONFIDENCE BEFORE YOU TODAY.

MR. SPEAKER, WHEN ONE ACCEPTS MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES IT OFTEN REQUIRES OF HIM EXTENDED ABSENCE FROM HOME AND

CONSTITUENCY. WITHOUT A LOVING AND COMMITTED FAMILY AND A DEDICATED SUPPORT TEAM, ONE COULD EASILY BECOME THE VICTIM OF INTERLOPERS. IN THIS RESPECT MR. SPEAKER, I HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY FORTUNATE. I WANT TO PLACE ON RECORD YET AGAIN, MY DEEP APPRECIATION TO MY WIFE AND FAMILY FOR THEIR SUPPORT AND FORBEARANCE OVER THESE YEARS. TO THE MEMBERS OF MY CONSTITUENCY, MY SINCERE THANKS FOR YOUR CONTINUED LOYAL SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING.

MR. SPEAKER, THIS YEAR'S PRESENTATION IS BEING MADE AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE MANY CHALLENGES THAT THE SECTOR FACED OVER THE PAST YEAR, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH WERE THE EXTREMES OF WEATHER. WE STARTED OUT WITH DROUGHT CONDITIONS FOLLOWED BY HURRICANE CHARLEY, AND THIS WAS JUST A FORETASTE OF WHAT WAS TO COME IN SEPTEMBER IN THE FORM OF HURRICANE IVAN. ANY ONE OF THESE WOULD HAVE HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON PRODUCTION. COMBINED, THE RESULT WAS THE WIPING OUT OF THE BANANA INDUSTRY, DOMESTIC FOOD CROPS, FRUIT AND OTHER TREE CROPS, AND THE DEVASTATION OF THE SUGAR INDUSTRY. ON TOP OF ALL THAT, WE WERE HIT BY A PROTRACTED DROUGHT DURING THE LAST QUARTER OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR.

NOTWITHSTANDING THOSE CHALLENGES, MR. SPEAKER, AND THANKS TO THE RESILIENCE OF THE FARMERS, THE GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND OUR LOCAL CORPORATE CITIZENRY, WE WERE ABLE TO FAST-TRACK THE RECOVERY IN RECORD TIME.

### **ORDER OF PRESENTATION**

MR. SPEAKER, HAVING MADE MY OPENING REMARKS, I WOULD LIKE TO DELIVER THE REST OF MY PRESENTATION IN THE FOLLOWING ORDER:

- FIRSTLY, I WILL GIVE A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE FOR 2005/2006;
- SECONDLY, I WILL REVIEW THE PERFORMANCE OF THE SECTOR DURING 2004;
- THIRDLY, I WILL LOOK AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT, WHICH IS SO IMPORTANT TO THE SECTOR'S GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT; AND
- FINALLY, I WILL SHARE WITH YOU MY VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE SECTOR.

### **BUDGETARY ALLOCATION**

MR. SPEAKER, AN ANALYSIS OF THE 2005/2006 BUDGET INDICATES THAT THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE HAS RECEIVED A TOTAL ALLOCATION OF TWO BILLION, SIX MILLION AND NINETY THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$2,006,090,000), WHICH REFLECTS AN INCREASE OF FORTY-FOUR

MILLION SEVEN HUNDRED AND NINETY-THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$44,793,000) OR 2.3% ABOVE THE REVISED ESTIMATES OF ONE BILLION, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-ONE THOUSAND, TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY- SEVEN DOLLARS (\$1,961,297,000) FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2004/2005.

THIS YEAR’S PROVISION IS BROKEN DOWN AS FOLLOWS;

RECURRENT	\$1,395,000,000
CAPITAL ‘A’	\$ 180,000,000
CAPITAL ‘B’	\$ 431,090,000

I WILL NOT GO INTO THE DETAILS OF HOW THESE FUNDS WILL BE SPENT MR. SPEAKER, AS THIS INFORMATION HAS ALREADY BEEN ANNOUNCED IN THIS HOUSE. I CAN ASSURE YOU THOUGH, THAT ALTHOUGH INADEQUATE TO FUND ALL THE THINGS WE WOULD LIKE TO DO, WE WILL MAKE THE BEST USE OF THE ALLOCATION. AT THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, WE DON’T LIKE THE EMBARRASSMENT OF BEING QUESTIONED BEFORE THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE, SO THE PROPER CONTROLS HAVE BEEN PUT IN PLACE TO ENSURE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT.

### **PERFORMANCE OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR**

AS I SAID IN MY OPENING REMARKS, MR. SPEAKER, THE PERIOD 2004/2005 WAS ARGUABLY THE MOST CHALLENGING FOR THE AGRICULTURAL

SECTOR IN RECENT MEMORY. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT HURRICANE IVAN ALONE DID DAMAGE ESTIMATED AT OVER J\$6.5 BILLION. IT IS THEREFORE, NOT SURPRISING THAT DURING THE 2004 CALENDAR YEAR, REAL GDP IN AGRICULTURE DECLINED BY 10.4%, COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS YEAR. THIS IS ACCORDING TO DATA RELEASED BY THE PLANNING INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA.

EXPORT PRODUCTION DECLINED BY 5.5%, WHILE MEAT AND POULTRY PRODUCTION DECLINED BY 1.8%

BUT IT WAS NOT ALL A DOWNWARD SLIDE MR. SPEAKER, AS THE FISHING SUB-SECTOR RECORDED AN OVERALL INCREASE OF 13.2%, COMPARED WITH THE CORRESPONDING PERIOD IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR. THE INTERESTING FACT TO NOTE IS THAT DESPITE THE MANY CHALLENGES THE SECTOR CONTINUES TO HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY, AS REVEALED IN EXPORT EARNINGS FROM AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES FOR THE 2005 CALENDAR YEAR, WHICH AMOUNTED TO US\$147 MILLION, NOT INCLUDING SUGAR. WHEN THE EXPORT VALUE OF SUGAR OF US\$98,139 MILLION IS ADDED, THE TOTAL EXPORT VALUE INCREASES TO US\$245,139 MILLION.

THIS IS A CLEAR INDICATION, MR. SPEAKER, THAT IN SPITE OF THE MASSIVE CHALLENGES, OUR POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES OVERALL, ARE SHOWING THE UNMISTAKABLE SIGNS OF SUSTAINABLE GROWTH.

MR. SPEAKER, THERE ARE THREE AREAS RELATED TO THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR WHICH, CONTINUE TO BE THE CAUSE OF CONCERN AMONGST CERTAIN STAKEHOLDERS. THESE ARE RESEARCH, MARKETING AND AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION. I WOULD, THEREFORE, LIKE TO FOCUS ON THESE AREAS MR. SPEAKER, AND TO SHARE WITH THE HOUSE AND NATION, SOME OF THE WORK THAT IS BEING DONE AND WHICH IS UNDERPINNING THE REVITALIZATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR.

#### **AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH**

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, MR. SPEAKER, IS NOT AN OVERNIGHT THING. IT CAN TAKE FOR EXAMPLE, AS MUCH AS 15 YEARS TO DEVELOP A NEW SUGAR CANE OR BANANA VARIETY THAT IS HIGH YIELDING, DISEASE RESISTANT AND POSSESSES THE DESIRABLE QUALITIES OF SOIL AND CLIMATIC ADAPTABILITY. YOU DON'T JUST DRIVE PAST A RESEARCH STATION LIKE BODLES AND SEE THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH JUMPING OUT AT YOU. IT IS A SLOW, PAINSTAKING ACTIVITY THAT REQUIRES PATIENCE, DEDICATION, COMMITMENT AND OFTENTIMES, MR. SPEAKER, SACRIFICE.

THOSE ARE THE QUALITIES THAT DROVE PEOPLE LIKE DR, T. P. LECKY AND THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO WORKED WITH HIM TO DEVELOP THE FOUR CATTLE BREEDS OF WHICH WE ARE SO PROUD; AND OTHERS LIKE

SAM MOTTA, IN THE INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF OUR PASTURE GRASSES. THOSE SAME QUALITIES, MR. SPEAKER, ARE BEING DISPLAYED IN A VARIETY OF WAYS, BY OUR PRESENT CROP OF RESEARCHERS, AND THEY ARE QUIETLY DEVELOPING NEW AND IMPROVED VARIETIES AND CULTIVARS OF PEPPERS, PUMPKINS, TOMATOES AND PAPAYAS, TO NAME A FEW, THAT CAN BE SEEN IN OUR MARKETS, SUPERMARKETS AND GREEN GROCERIES. NOT ONLY ARE THEY SUPERIOR IN TASTE AND APPEARANCE TO ANYTHING THAT WE HAVE HAD BEFORE, MR. SPEAKER, BUT THEY CAN COMPETE WITH THE BEST FROM ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD.

INDEED MR. SPEAKER, OUR SCIENTISTS AT BODLES HAVE STANDARDIZED THE FLAVOUR, SHAPE AND COLOUR OF THE MUCH SOUGHT AFTER SCOTCH BONNET PEPPER, THROUGH A LONG PROCESS OF SELECTION AND IMPROVED BREEDING TECHNIQUES. AS THE DEMAND FOR THIS PEPPER INCREASES AMONG LOCAL AGRO-PROCESSORS AND IN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETPLACE, WE ARE STEPPING UP THE RESEARCH, USING CROSS-BREEDING AND BIOTECHNOLOGY TO DEVELOP VARIETIES WITH INCREASED TOLERANCE TO VIRAL DISEASES.

TO CITE ANOTHER EXAMPLE, THE CREATION OF OUR “BODLES GLOBE” PUMPKIN UNDERSCORES THE FACT THAT OUR RESEARCH IS MARKET-DRIVEN. THIS VARIETY WAS DEVELOPED OUT OF THE NEED TO SATISFY

OUR EXPORT MARKET CONSUMERS, WHO WHILE FAVOURING THE SUPPLY TEXTURE AND SHAPE OF OUR PUMPKIN, REJECTED ITS LACK OF UNIFORMITY IN SHAPE AND SIZE. NOW THAT THESE IRREGULARITIES HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED, EXPORTERS HAVE BEEN REPORTING RENEWED INTEREST IN THE PRODUCT, TOGETHER WITH INCREASED SALES TO THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN.

MR. SPEAKER, IN MY PRESENTATION LAST YEAR, I HIGHLIGHTED OUR NEW TOMATO VARIETIES DEVELOPED IN COLLABORATION WITH ANSA SEED COMPANY, IN CALIFORNIA, ST JAGO FARM SUPPLIES AND OUR SCIENTISTS AT BODLES.

MANY PERSONS WHO SEE OUR “TROPICAL GLORY” ON THE SUPERMARKET SHELVES, ARE LIKELY TO BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTED. BUT I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT ITS FLAWLESS APPEARANCE, FIRMNESS AND EXCELLENT SHELF-LIFE, ARE NOT THE RESULT OF CHEMICAL ENHANCEMENT AS PRACTISED ELSEWHERE, BUT OF ARDUOUS RESEARCH TRIALS CARRIED OUT OVER A FOUR -YEAR PERIOD.

THESE ARE THE NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS WHICH WERE DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AMSA SEED COMPANY, ST. JAGO FARM SUPPLIES AND OUR LOCAL SCIENTISTS AT BODLES.

IN ADDITION, I WOULD LIKE TO STRESS THAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF THIS RESEARCH PROGRAMME, WHICH WAS TO DEVELOP A RESISTANT VARIETY TO THE TOMATO LEAF CURL VIRUS, COMMONLY KNOWN TO FARMERS – MANY OF WHOSE FIELDS IT HAS DECIMATED, AS THE “JERRY CURL” VIRUS. I AM, THEREFORE, VERY PLEASED TO REPORT THAT THE LABORATORY TESTS AND FIELD TRIALS HAVING BEEN COMPLETED, WE HAVE TAKEN THE NEXT STEP, WHICH IS TO MAKE SEEDS OF THIS RESISTANT VARIETY AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC ON A COMMERCIAL BASIS, THROUGH OUR RESEARCH PARTNER - ST. JAGO FARM SUPPLIES.

MR. SPEAKER, THE WORLD-WIDE TREND TOWARDS A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HAS SPURRED THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BOOMING NUTRACEUTICALS INDUSTRY AND WE IN JAMAICA, BLESSED AS WE ARE WITH A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF NUTRACEUTICALS AND MEDICINAL HERBS, MUST TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION TOGETHER WITH RADA IS CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN A SURVEY TO ASCERTAIN THE VOLUME OF SELECTED HERBS BEING PRODUCED AND THE AREAS IN WHICH THEY ARE GROWN WHILE WE HAVE GENERAL INFORMATION ON PIMENTO, GINGER AND SORREL PRODUCTION, INFORMATION ON FEVER GRASS, ROSEMARY, TURMERIC, KOLA NUT AND SARSPARILLA IS SKIMPY AT BEST.

THE MINISTRY WILL FURTHER FOCUS ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ON-STATION AND ON-FARM DEMONSTRATION/RESEARCH PLOTS, WHICH WILL PROVIDE YIELD DATA AND FACILITATE THE TRAINING OF FARMERS IN THE PRODUCTION OF THE VARIOUS CROPS. IN ADDITION, THE MINISTRY WILL MAINTAIN COLLECTIONS OF THE MOST PROMISING PLANTING MATERIAL AND WILL ASSIST IN ITS THE MULTIPLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION TO INTERESTED FARMERS. THE PROJECT WILL ALSO FACILITATE THE USE OF TISSUE CULTURE FOR THE MASS PROPAGATION OF PLANTING MATERIAL.

THE MINISTRY HAS ALSO EMBARKED ON THE PRODUCTION OF EXOTIC TREE CROPS - RASPBERRY, STRAWBERRY AND LYCHEE – AT OUR TOP MOUNTAIN RESEARCH STATION. THE FRUIT TREE CROP NURSERY HAS ALSO BEEN EXPANDING THE PRODUCTION OF DWARF JUNE PLUM AND CASHEW, ALONG WITH 12 OTHER FRUIT TREES.

MR. SPEAKER, THE RESEARCH CARRIED OUT AT BODLES AND AT THE OTHER RESEARCH FACILITIES, IS NOT ONLY CONFINED TO CROPS, BUT IT ALSO EXTENDS TO THE LIVESTOCK SUB-SECTOR. I AM PARTICULARLY PROUD OF THE IMPROVEMENT IN THE SIZE AND QUALITIES OF OUR LOCAL GOATS, WHICH HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED AS A RESULT OF CROSS-BREEDING WITH IMPORTED BOERS, THE ALPINES AND NUBIANS. THERE HAS BEEN A QUIET REVOLUTION, MR. SPEAKER,

IN THE AREA OF GOAT BREEDING WHEN I SEE THE NEW-LOOK JAMAICAN GOAT I FEEL PROUD. DEVELOPMENT OF THIS BREED HAS RESULTED IN A SIGNIFICANT, REDUCTION IN KID MORTALITY RATES AND AN IMPROVEMENT IN DRESSED WEIGHT – FROM 35 TO 45 PERCENT, THEREBY INCREASING FARMERS’ INCOMES FROM THE SALE OF GOATS.

I MUST, THEREFORE, PAUSE HERE MR. SPEAKER, TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE WORK OF THE TEAM OF LIVESTOCK EXPERTS ON THE SHEEP AND GOAT PROJECT FROM MY OWN MINISTRY, AND FROM THE CARIBBEAN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (CARDI), AS WELL AS THE MEMBERS OF THE JAMAICA GOAT BREEDERS’ SOCIETY. THE LONG YEARS OF DETERMINED AND DEDICATED WORK HAVE BEGUN TO PAY RICH DIVIDENDS, AND FOR THAT, THEY DESERVE OUR COMMENDATION.

OUR PIG ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME, MR. SPEAKER, WHICH IS BEING IMPLEMENTED IN COLLABORATION WITH OUR AGRICULTURAL SERVICES PROJECT (ASSP) AND NEWPORT MILLS, IS AIMED AT REDUCING THE COST OF PORK PRODUCTION THROUGH THE SUPPLY OF IMPROVED GENETIC STOCK, IS ANOTHER AREA OF GREAT SATISFACTION, AS WE BEGIN TO WITNESS THE ADVANCES THAT WILL ENABLE OUR PIG FARMERS TO MAKE SUBSTANTIAL PROFITS AND ALSO CONSUMERS TO ENJOY BETTER QUALITY AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE. THIS IMPROVED

GENETIC STOCK IS NOW AVAILABLE TO FARMERS ISLAND-WIDE AND WILL SHORTLY BE AVAILABLE FOR EXPORT TO THE CARIBBEAN.

YOU SEE, MR. SPEAKER, WE ARE EVER MINDFUL OF OUR MANDATE OF FEEDING THE NATION, IMPLICIT IN WHICH IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PROTECTING THE CONSUMER FROM INFERIOR PRODUCTS AND EXORBITANT PRICES. DURING THE CURRENT YEAR THE MINISTRY WILL REDOUBLE ITS EFFORTS TO PRODUCE AND UTILIZE A RANGE OF FORAGES AND AGRICULTURAL BY-PRODUCTS FOR LIVESTOCK FEED. I MIGHT ALSO POINT OUT THAT TRIALS ARE NOW BEING CARRIED OUT TO ASSESS THE POTENTIAL OF MULBERRY, WHICH SEEMS VERY PROMISING AS A SOURCE OF PROTEIN FOR GOATS AND SHEEP.

I HAVE IN THE LAST COUPLE OF EXAMPLES, MR. SPEAKER, MENTIONED MY MINISTRY'S COLLABORATION WITH TWO OTHER ENTITIES IN THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT WORK THAT WE DO. THIS COLLABORATION IS NOT COINCIDENTAL, MR. SPEAKER, BUT A DELIBERATE AND PRACTICAL APPROACH ADOPTED TO CARRY OUT A MOST VITAL FUNCTION. AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH LIKE ANY OTHER FORM OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, IS A COSTLY AND TIME-CONSUMING PURSUIT, REQUIRING VAST RESOURCES FOR FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, MATERIAL AND EXPERTISE.

NOTWITHSTANDING THIS, IT IS VITAL, BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP PACE WITH THE COMPETITION IN THIS AGE OF RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT. IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BORROW, BEG OR PURCHASE THE INNOVATIONS OF OTHERS, MR. SPEAKER, BECAUSE ULTIMATELY, WE STILL HAVE TO ADAPT THEM TO OUR UNIQUE CONDITIONS. WE HAVE TO TAKE THEM INTO THE FIELD TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE APPROPRIATE FOR OUR SOIL TYPES, OUR TEMPERATURES AND OUR RAINFALL PATTERNS. WE HAVE TO TEST THEM FOR THEIR SUSCEPTIBILITY TO OUR PESTS AND DISEASES. SOMETIMES, MR. SPEAKER THEY JUST DON'T WORK AND ON TOP OF IT ALL, THEY COME AT A CONSIDERABLE AND MOUNTING PRICE.

IN THE LONG RUN WE HAVE MORE TO GAIN BY CONDUCTING OUR OWN RESEARCH AND WE SHOULD NOT BE TIMID IN OUR APPROACH BECAUSE WE ARE BLESSED WITH A GREAT DEAL OF TALENT AND EXPERTISE IN THE MINISTRY. WHERE WE HAVE A DEFICIENCY, MR. SPEAKER, IS NOT IN OUR HUMAN, BUT RATHER IN OUR FINANCIAL RESOURCES.

A LOOK AT THE BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR RESEARCH WILL SHOW THAT EVEN WITH THE AMOUNT OF \$129.6 MILLION, A SLIGHT INCREASE OVER LAST YEAR'S PROVISION, WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ADDRESS EVEN A HALF OF WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, IF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IS TO BE TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT

WE HAVE BEEN COLLABORATING WITH A NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS: THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES, CARDI, THE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH COUNCIL, AS WELL AS INTERNATIONAL PRIVATE SECTOR AGENCIES.

I HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED JOINT ACTIVITY WITH CARDI AND NEWPORT MILLS. WE ALSO WORK CLOSELY, MR. SPEAKER, WITH THE INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE, (IICA), AND THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) OF THE UNITED NATIONS ON A NUMBER OF RESEARCH PROJECTS. AND THIS AMOUNTS TO SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN AGRICULTURE. IN ADDITION, A LARGE PORTION OF THE RESEARCH CARRIED OUT IN THE SECTOR IS DONE BY THE COMMODITY ORGANIZATIONS, ESPECIALLY THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR MAJOR EXPORT CROPS.

THE SUGAR INDUSTRY RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SIRI), A SUBSIDIARY OF THE SUGAR INDUSTRY AUTHORITY, DOES RESEARCH IN SUGAR CANE AGRONOMY AND FACTORY TECHNOLOGY AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BREEDING AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEW CANE VARIETIES TO IMPROVE AND REPLENISH THE MATERIAL AVAILABLE TO THE INDUSTRY.

THE COCONUT INDUSTRY BOARD'S RESEARCH DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS ALL THE INVESTIGATION ON COCONUT DISEASES, AND HAS HAD OUTSTANDING SUCCESS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF VARIETIES-RESISTANT TO LETHAL YELLOWING. IT CONTINUES THE VERY IMPORTANT WORK IN SEARCHING FOR A CURE FOR LETHAL YELLOWING. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THIS EFFORT WILL BE ASSISTED THIS YEAR BY THE COMMENCEMENT OF A PROJECT FUNDED BY THE COMMON FUND FOR COMMODITIES WHICH WILL SEE EXPANDED WORK ON THE LETHAL YELLOWING DISEASE.

THE BOARD HAS ALSO BEEN INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING A RANGE OF NEW PRODUCTS.

BANANA RESEARCH IS ALSO CONDUCTED BY THE BANANA BOARD'S RESEARCH DEPARTMENT, WITH ASSISTANCE FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION'S BANANA SUPPORT PROGRAMME. CITRUS RESEARCH IS CARRIED OUT IN COLLABORATION WITH THE INDUSTRY, WITH THE MAIN EMPHASIS NOW ON DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO STOP THE SPREAD OF THE TRISTEZA VIRUS. THE COFFEE INDUSTRY BOARD IS ENGAGED IN RESEARCH INTO BIOLOGICAL CONTROL METHODS THE PESTS THAT ATTACK IT ESPECIALLY THE COFFEE BERRY BORER AND THIS IS DONE IN COLLABORATION WITH CARDI.

MR. SPEAKER, I HAVE SPENT QUITE A BIT OF THE TIME AVAILABLE TO ME TO HIGHLIGHT SOME OF THE CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF WORK THAT IS CARRIED OUT IN THE FIELD OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND I HOPE THAT THIS WILL DISPEL SOME OF THE MIS-INFORMATION OR IN SOME INSTANCES LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE CRITICAL WORK BEING CARRIED OUT IN THIS AREA.

### **MARKETING**

THE SECOND AREA WHICH HAS RAISED CONTINUED CONCERN IS THAT OF MARKETING. MR. SPEAKER, LET ME SAY THIS UP FRONT. THERE IS NO MARKETING PROBLEM FOR JAMAICAN AGRICULTURAL CROPS.

ALL OF OUR EXPORT CROPS HAVE A READY MARKET MR. SPEAKER. IF ANYTHING WE SOMETIMES HAVE A PROBLEM MEETING THE DEMAND BECAUSE OF ONE SETBACK OR THE OTHER. WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH SUGAR TO SELL TO THE MARKETS THAT WANT IT – AT LEAST FOR NOW. BUT I WILL COME BACK TO THAT MR. SPEAKER. THE SAME THING APPLIES TO OUR BANANAS, OUR COFFEE, OUR COCOA, OUR PIMENTO AND OUR ACKEE.

OUR NON-TRADITIONAL EXPORTS ARE DOING WELL ALSO, WHETHER IT IS YAM, PUMPKIN, PAPAYA, DASHEEN, OR HOT PEPPERS. WHENEVER THERE IS A PROBLEM OF DISPOSAL, MR. SPEAKER, IT IS SELDOM ONE OF

MARKETING BUT RATHER OF TECHNICALITIES SUCH AS LEVELS OF PESTICIDE RESIDUES OR A CONCERN OVER THE POSSIBLE TRANSFER OF PESTS OR DISEASES. WHENEVER THESE EVENTUALITIES OCCUR OUR SCIENTISTS ARE QUICKLY ON THE BALL AND INVARIABLY THEY FIND THE SOLUTION IN DUE COURSE.

ADMITTEDLY, THERE ARE A FEW OCCASIONS, MR. SPEAKER, WHEN WE HEAR ABOUT A GLUT OF A VEGETABLE SUCH AS TOMATO OR CUCUMBER IN CERTAIN DISTRICTS. SUCH A SITUATION AROSE IN EARLY DECEMBER OF 2004 WITH TOMATOES MR. SPEAKER. CRITICISMS OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE'S UNPREPAREDNESS TO FIND MARKETS FOR THIS MASSIVE PRODUCTION BEGAN TO FLY ALL OVER THE PLACE.

'WHAT HAPPEN TO OUR MARKET INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM?'

'WHERE IS THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM?'

MR. SPEAKER, THIS TOOK PLACE LESS THAN THREE MONTHS AFTER HURRICANE IVAN WHICH TOTALLY WIPED OUT OUR FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. IN SITUATIONS SUCH AS THESE FARMERS DON'T WAIT AROUND TO GET HELP FROM ANYONE. THEY SET ABOUT PUTTING IN A CROP THEY HOPE TO REAP QUICKLY WHILE THEY PREPARE FOR THEIR CORE BUSINESS. MANY PERSONS SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE HURRICANE TO CASH IN ON THE EXPECTED GOOD PRICES IN LIGHT OF THE SHORTAGES. TOO MANY PERSONS, MR.

SPEAKER, INCLUDING BACKYARD GARDENERS, CHOSE TO PLANT TOMATOES WITHOUT ANY REFERENCE TO THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE. THE RESULTING OVER-SUPPLY, WHICH INCIDENTALLY DIDN'T EXTEND BEYOND TWO WEEKS, WAS INEVITABLE.

WHILE THE MINISTRY AND RADA HAVE ASSISTED FARMERS IN THE MARKETING OF CERTAIN CROPS UNDER THE DOMESTIC FOOD CROPS PROJECT, THIS IS DONE BY FIRST IDENTIFYING THE MARKETS AND COORDINATING THE PRODUCTION TO MEET THE DEMAND. OUR MARKET INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM IS DESIGNED TO RECEIVE INFORMATION FROM FARMERS ON THE TYPES OF CROPS THEY PLAN TO PLANT, THE TIMING, AND THE ACREAGES. WHEN FARMERS SHARE THAT KIND OF INFORMATION WITH US WE ARE IN A BETTER POSITION TO ADVISE THEM ON THE VOLUMES THAT ARE REQUIRED, THE AVAILABLE MARKETS AND THE PRICE THEY ARE LIKELY TO RECEIVE.

THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE HAS LONG REMOVED ITSELF FROM DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE BUSINESS OF MARKETING OF FARMERS CROPS AND HAS LEFT IT TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR WHERE IT RIGHTLY BELONGS. IT IS FOR THAT REASON WE HAVE SUPPORTED THE JAMAICA AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY'S DRIVE TO SET UP A CENTRAL MARKETING COMPANY AND HAS PROVIDED IT WITH SEED MONEY AND THE USE OF COLD STORAGE FACILITIES WHERE THEY EXIST IN SELECTED PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. OUR ROLE THEREFORE IS ONE OF FACILITATING THE

PROCESS BY IDENTIFYING THE MARKETS BOTH LOCAL AND EXPORT, COORDINATING THE PRODUCTION AND LINKING BUYER AND PRODUCER. THAT IS THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THE AGRI-BUSINESS INFORMATION SYSTEM (ABIS) WAS SET UP WITHIN RADA. I HAVE PROVIDED INFORMATION ON THAT SYSTEM IN PREVIOUS YEARS, MR. SPEAKER AND WILL THEREFORE NOT GO OVER IT EXCEPT TO SAY THAT ITS DEVELOPMENT CONTINUES TO KEEP PACE WITH THE ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY. AT THIS STAGE, I CAN ONLY ASK THAT OUR FARMERS COOPERATE AND PROVIDE THE INFORMATION THAT IS NECESSARY IF THE SYSTEM IS TO PERFORM EFFECTIVELY AND IMPORTANTLY, TO THEIR ADVANTAGE.

#### **RADA**

I MOVE ON NOW, MR. SPEAKER TO THE NEXT AREA OF CONCERN – EXTENSION

BY AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IS MEANT THE PROVISION OF TRAINING AND ADVICE TO FARMERS OUT IN THE FIELD AS OPPOSED TO TRAINING IN A FORMAL SCHOOL SYSTEM. THIS IS EXECUTED BY THE EXTENSION OFFICERS OF THE RURAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (RADA) WHICH SINCE ITS INCEPTION A LITTLE OVER A DECADE AGO, MR. SPEAKER, HAS BECOME A HOUSEHOLD NAME THROUGHOUT THE LENGTH AND BREATH OF JAMAICA. THE TRANSFER OF IMPROVED AND

ADAPTABLE TECHNOLOGY TO FARMERS IS THE MAJOR COMPONENT OF THE AUTHORITY'S EXTENSION DELIVERY PROGRAMME.

IN RECENT TIMES BECAUSE OF SEVERE LIMITATIONS TO THE AVAILABLE FINANCIAL RESOURCES THE EXTENSION STAFF HAS HAD TO BE REDUCED TO A MINIMUM. THIS MAY HAVE GIVEN THE IMPRESSION TO SOME THAT IT MEANT A REDUCTION OF SERVICE TO THE FARMERS. ON THE CONTRARY, MR. SPEAKER, IT HAS RESULTED IN A MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE FORCE AS MORE INNOVATIVE METHODS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO THE BUSINESS OF SERVICE DELIVERY.

IN THE PAST MUCH RELIANCE WAS PLACED ON FLIP CHARTS AND ORAL DELIVERY IN THE TRANSFER OF EXTENSION MESSAGES. THOSE METHODS HAD THEIR DAY MR. SPEAKER, BUT TODAY THEY LACK APPEAL, RESTRICT COVERAGE AND, QUITE FRANKLY, FAIL TO STIMULATE AND SUSTAIN FARMER INTEREST. WITH THE KIND ASSISTANCE OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING PROGRAMME RADA IS NOW EQUIPPED WITH VIDEO CAMERAS, VCR'S AND DIGITAL EDITING MACHINES WHICH HAVE ALLOWED IT TO EXPAND ITS COVERAGE AND VISIBILITY AND TO IMPROVE ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN TRANSMITTING TECHNOLOGY PACKAGES AND OTHER MESSAGES TO FARMER GROUPS AND OTHER MASS AUDIENCES.

SOME 22 TRAINING VIDEOS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED ON SUBJECT AREAS SUCH AS GOAT HOUSING AND SELECTION, APICULTURE, INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT, PAPAYA, RING SPOT DISEASE, BANANA CLEAN SEEDING, HOT PEPPER, TOMATO, THYME, TURMERIC AND MINISSETT YAM PRODUCTION. WE ARE MAKING SURE MR. SPEAKER THAT THE FARMER IS NOT LEFT BEHIND IN THIS AGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT.

MR. SPEAKER, THE MONTH OF MAY BLESSED US WITH A LOT OF RAIN THUS BRINGING TO AN END A VERY LONG AND SEVERE DROUGHT. UNFORTUNATELY THE ALMOST DAILY SHOWERS HAVE CAUSED FLOODING IN SOME AREAS CAUSING SERIOUS LOSSES TO SOME FARMERS.

THE DATA COMING OUT OF THE PIOJ HAS SHOWN THAT THE SECTOR DECLINED BY 26% PER CENT IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE CALENDAR YEAR 2005 AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THAT DROUGHT (PLUS THE LINGERING EFFECTS OF IVAN). THE SITUATION HOWEVER, COULD HAVE BEEN EVEN WORSE WERE IT NOT FOR THE MINI DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEM THAT RADA AND THE WIDER MINISTRY HAVE ASSISTED MANY FARMERS IN ESTABLISHING. IT IS ONLY A START MR. SPEAKER BUT WE INTEND TO EXPAND THIS SCHEME THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY SO THAT THE DEPENDENCE OF OUR FARMERS ON RAINFED AGRICULTURE WILL BE REDUCED.

THIS MINI DRIP SYSTEM OF WHICH I SPEAK IS A GRAVITY FED IRRIGATION SYSTEM WHICH IS IDEAL FOR AREAS WITH LIMITED WATER SOURCES, IS RELATIVELY INEXPENSIVE AND IS EASY TO INSTALL AND MANAGE. IT IS PARTICULARLY USEFUL TO THOSE FARMERS WHO ARE PRODUCING FOR PRE-ARRANGED AND ASSURED MARKETS SUCH AS HOTELS, SUPERMARKETS AND PROCESSORS AS IT MAKES THEM BETTER ABLE TO MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF DROUGHT, MAINTAIN PRODUCTION CONSISTENCY, GROW A WIDER RANGE OF CROPS AND START CROP ESTABLISHMENT EARLIER THAN USUAL. SOME HAVE MANAGED TO INCREASE THEIR CROPPING CYCLES FROM ONE TO THREE CROPS PER YEAR AND HAVE RECORDED OVER 30% INCREASE IN MARKETABLE YIELD.

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MOST OF THE ASSISTANCE IN TERMS OF INSTALLATIONS HAS SO FAR GONE TO FARMERS IN THE MAIN VEGETABLE GROWING AREAS OF ST. THOMAS, CLARENDON, ST. JAMES, WESTMORELAND, ST. ELIZABETH, ST. ANN, ST. MARY, ST. ANDREW AND HANOVER. THE GOOD THING ABOUT THIS PROJECT MR. SPEAKER IS THE BIG DIFFERENCE IT HAS MADE NOT ONLY TO THE CONSISTENCY OF SUPPLY OF LOCAL VEGETABLES BUT TO THEIR IMPROVED QUALITY AND APPEARANCE. YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED MR. SPEAKER, THAT THERE IS HARDLY ANY COMPLAINT FROM FARMERS THESE DAYS ABOUT UNFAIR COMPETITION FROM IMPORTED

VEGETABLES. IT'S BEEN A HARD FIGHT MR. SPEAKER, BUT WE'RE GETTING THERE.

FUNDS FOR THIS INITIATIVE HAVE COME FROM THE DOMESTIC FOOD CROP AND MARKETING PROJECT, THE AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES PROJECT (ASSP), THE EASTERN JAMAICA AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT PROJECT, THE JAPANESE EMBASSY, THE RIDGE TO REEF PROJECT AND THE JAMAICA BAUXITE INSTITUTE.

HUNDREDS OF ADDITIONAL FARMERS WILL RECEIVE SIMILAR ASSISTANCE DURING THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR WHEN AT LEAST TWO PROJECTS WITH STRONG IRRIGATION COMPONENTS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED. THESE ARE THE FAO/GOVERNMENT OF ITALY, CARICOM FOOD SECURITY PROJECT AND THE USAID FUNDED JAMAICA BUSINESS RECOVERY PROGRAMME.

RADA IS CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN FARMER REGISTRATION ACROSS THE ISLAND AS IT SEEKS TO REPLACE THE OUTDATED REGISTER CURRENTLY IN USE. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THIS BE DONE MR. SPEAKER AS IT IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE ANTI-PRAEDIAL LARCENY PROGRAMME BEING SPEARHEADED BY THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND THE JAMAICA AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY. UNDER THIS PROGRAMME EACH FARMER WILL BE REQUIRED TO ISSUE A RECEIPT WHEN SELLING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE. THE RECEIPT BOOK TO BE ISSUED BY THE JAS WILL BEAR A

NUMBER UNIQUELY IDENTIFYING EACH FARMER. THIS WILL BE A COMPUTER GENERATED NUMBER FROM THE REGISTER DATABASE AND AS SUCH FARMERS, WHO DO NOT REGISTER, WILL BE UNABLE TO OBTAIN RECEIPT BOOKS.

THE OBJECTIVE AS YOU KNOW, MR. SPEAKER, IS THAT THE RECEIPTS WILL BE TRACEABLE BACK TO THE ISSUING FARMER AND WILL ALLOW THE POLICE TO INVESTIGATE AND DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT GOODS IN THE POSSESSION OF MIDDLEMEN, TRADERS, HIGGLERS OR OTHER HANDLERS WERE LEGALLY ACQUIRED. IN THIS WAY EACH FARMER WILL BE PLAYING HIS OR HER PART IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THIS SCOURGE THAT IS PRAEDIAL LARCENY. MR. SPEAKER, WE HAVE TRIED MANY MEASURES IN THE PAST WITHOUT SUCCESS. THIS ONE WE BELIEVE IS THE ONE THAT WILL FINALLY ALLOW US TO PUT AWAY THAT NOTORIOUS 'TWO FOOT PUSS'.

ANOTHER RADA ACTIVITY I WOULD LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT, MR. SPEAKER, IS THE SOCIAL SERVICES/HOME ECONOMICS UNIT. AN IMPORTANT GOAL OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IS THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE ECONOMIC WELL BEING OF WOMEN IN RURAL JAMAICA. TO THIS END, THE PROMOTION OF MICRO-ENTERPRISES IN AGRO-PROCESSING IS SEEN AS A MEANS OF INCREASED PRODUCTION, EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME GENERATION FOR RURAL WOMEN. MR. SPEAKER, HUNDREDS OF

WOMEN OF VARYING AGES IN RURAL JAMAICA ARE BEING EXPOSED TO A WIDE RANGE OF FOOD PRESERVATION SKILLS, WHICH WILL ENABLE THEM TO MANAGE FOOD PROCESSING ACTIVITIES PROFITABLY.

FOR TOO LONG, MR. SPEAKER, WE HAVE ALLOWED MUCH OF OUR FRUITS AND STAPLES TO GO TO WASTE WHILE WE ARE WILLING TO PURCHASE SIMILAR AND OFTENTIMES INFERIOR OFFERINGS FROM ELSEWHERE, BECAUSE THEY ARE NICELY PREPARED AND ATTRACTIVELY PACKAGED. IT IS THE RECOGNITION OF THAT NEED FOR DIVERSITY IN OUR CROPS THAT PROMPTED THE UNIT TO DEVELOP AND PROMOTE SEVERAL VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS SUCH AS CHIPS, BAMMIES, FRUIT SYRUPS, FRUIT PUREE, CASSAVA PANCAKE MIX, PICKLES, JAMS AND JELLIES AND CONFECTIONARIES, TO NAME A FEW. THE SOCIAL SERVICES/HOME ECONOMICS UNIT OF RADA WILL CONTINUE ITS EXPERIMENTATION WITH PRIMARY FOODS AND IT DESERVES OUR COMMENDATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

#### **AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES PROJECT**

MR. SPEAKER, FOUR YEARS AGO ON THE BASIS OF A LOAN FROM THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (IDB), THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE EMBARKED ON A PROJECT, THE PURPOSE OF WHICH WAS

TO ENHANCE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF JAMAICAN AGRICULTURE IN THE DOMESTIC AND GLOBAL MARKETS. THIS WAS THE AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES PROJECT (ASSP) WHICH WOULD RUN FOR FOUR YEARS AT A TOTAL COST OF US\$31.5 MILLION. THE IDB LOAN AMOUNT WOULD BE COMPLEMENTED BY A CONTRIBUTION OF US\$8.6 MILLION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA, WITH THE BALANCE OF THE FUNDS COMING FROM THE PROJECT BENEFICIARIES.

I MUST TELL YOU MR. SPEAKER, THAT I AM IMMENSELY PLEASED WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS PROJECT, AS IT MOVES INTO A SECOND PHASE WHICH HAS BEEN APPROVED BECAUSE OF ITS OUTSTANDING SUCCESS. IN MY PRESENTATION LAST YEAR I GAVE A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SOME OF THE PROJECTS THAT IT HAD ASSISTED THE MINISTRY IN GETTING STARTED, UNDER ONE OF ITS THREE COMPONENTS. I DON'T INTEND TO GO OVER THE DETAILS OF THAT REPORT; BUT I WOULD LIKE TO SPEND A FEW MINUTES UPDATING THE HOUSE ON THE PROGRESS MADE AND IN LOOKING AT THE OTHER TWO COMPONENTS.

THE THREE COMPONENTS ARE:

1. STRENGTHENING THE DELIVERY OF AGRICULTURE SUPPORT SERVICES;
2. STRENGTHENING AND CONSOLIDATING AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY SYSTEMS; AS WELL AS

### 3. FINANCING SELECTED ACTIVITIES IN HIGH-PAYOFF PROJECTS.

**COMPONENT 1** OF THE PROJECT IS DESIGNED TO DEVELOP THE CRITICAL CAPACITY FOR DELIVERY OF EFFICIENT, RELEVANT AND COST-EFFECTIVE AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES INCLUDING AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION, RESEARCH, MARKETING AND THE PROVISION OF STRATEGIC INFORMATION TO PRODUCERS (MEANING FARMERS AND FOOD PROCESSORS) AND EXPORTERS.

A TEAM OF AGRI-BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS BASED AT OUR BODLES RESEARCH STATION'S HEAD OFFICE AND THE RADA OFFICE IN MANDEVILLE, HAVE WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE STAKEHOLDERS TO ASSIST THEM TO IMPROVE THEIR COMPETITIVENESS. OF THE FORTY FIVE (45) APPLICATIONS FOR DELIVERY OF AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES, 38 HAVE BEEN APPROVED AND SATISFACTORILY COMPLETED.

THE TYPES OF SERVICES PROVIDED INCLUDE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTWORK FOR PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL; STRATEGIC AND BUSINESS PLANS; PROJECT PROPOSALS AND FEASIBILITY STUDIES; MARKET SURVEYS; ANALYTICAL SERVICES; HAZARD ANALYSIS CRITICAL CONTROL POINTS (HACCP), AUDITS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLANS. THESE SERVICES WERE PROVIDED AT A COST OF J\$33.3 MILLION.

A RECENT SURVEY CONDUCTED TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF THE DELIVERY OF THESE SERVICES REVEALED THAT:

- 73% OF THE BENEFICIARIES HAVE COMMENCED UTILIZING THE SERVICE PROVIDED, OR IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE; AND
- THAT THE RESULTS OF MARKET STUDIES ENABLED SOME COMPANIES TO INCREASE LEVELS OF PRODUCTION AND TO IMPROVE ON EXISTING MARKET ARRANGEMENTS. THERE WERE ALSO REPORTS OF COMPANIES BEING ABLE TO CAPITALIZE ON NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITIES AND TO LAUNCH NEW PRODUCTS, BASED ON THE SERVICES RECEIVED.

ANOTHER INTERVENTION UNDER COMPONENT 1 WAS THE IMPROVEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH STATIONS AND THE TRAINING OF TECHNICAL PERSONNEL. IN THIS RESPECT, SOME J\$31 MILLION HAS ALREADY BEEN SPENT ON CIVIL WORKS RELATED TO THE REFURBISHING OF OFFICE BUILDINGS, LABORATORIES, HOUSING FOR ANIMALS, AND IRRIGATION SYSTEMS, AS WELL AS ON PROCURING NEW OFFICE, LABORATORY AND FARM EQUIPMENT FOR THE BODLES AND MONTPELIER RESEARCH STATIONS.

IN ADDITION, MR. SPEAKER, THE ASSP HAS MADE BUDGETARY PROVISION FOR WORK TO COMMENCE DURING THE CURRENT YEAR, AT THE MINISTRY'S MAIN RESEARCH STATION, AT BODLES ON THE FOLLOWING:

- DESIGN, SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF IRRIGATION SYSTEM AT A COST OF US\$234,416
- RENOVATION OF PIGGERY –US\$197,312;
- RENOVATION OF THE DAIRY BARN – US\$20,000;
- RENOVATION OF THE ANIMAL NUTRITION LABORATORY US\$100,000;
- AND
- RENOVATION OF THE ABATTOIR –US\$50,000.

DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW, THE ASSP ALSO PROVIDED SPONSORSHIP FOR POST GRADUATE TRAINING FOR MEMBERS OF THE MINISTRY'S STAFF.

MR. SPEAKER, THE RECEPTIVENESS OF FARMERS IN ADOPTING IMPROVED TECHNOLOGIES IS A CRITICAL ASPECT OF ENHANCING COMPETITIVENESS AND, AS SUCH, THE ASSP HAS INITIATED AN INTENSIVE PROGRAMME OF FARMER TRAINING. THE FOCUS HAS BEEN ON GROUPS THAT ARE IMPLEMENTING, OR WILL IMPLEMENT ASSP PRODUCTIVE PROJECTS. IN THIS REGARD, THE TRAINING HAS FOCUSED ON GROUP DYNAMICS, LEADERSHIP SKILLS, CROP PRODUCTION, PEST AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT, DEVELOPING COSTS OF PRODUCTION, POST-HARVEST

HANDLING, PRINCIPLES OF IRRIGATION AND OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF SMALL EQUIPMENT. 287 PRODUCERS WERE TRAINED DURING 2004/2005.

**COMPONENT 2** DEALS WITH THE STRENGTHENING OF AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY SYSTEMS. MR. SPEAKER, THERE IS HARDLY A YEAR THAT WE DON'T SUFFER FROM THE THREAT OF, OR THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW PEST OR DISEASE THAT, IF NOT ADDRESSED WITH VIGOUR AND DETERMINATION, COULD WIPE OUT A CROP, ANIMAL SPECIES OR, INDEED, AN ENTIRE INDUSTRY. IN RECENT TIMES SIR, WE'VE HAD TO CONTEND WITH THE CITRUS TRISTEZA VIRUS, THE BLACK SIGATOKA AND THE MOKO DISEASES OF BANANA, THE AMERICAN FOUL BROOD DISEASE AND THE VAROA MITE OF BEES, AND JUST A MATTER OF DAYS AGO WE WERE INFORMED ABOUT THE DETECTION OF CANKER DISEASE, IN FLORIDA AND THE BAHAMAS WHICH WERE TOLD, IS OF CITRUS EVEN MORE DEVASTATING TO CITRUS THAN TRISTEZA.

THE PLANT HEALTH SURVEILLANCE AND PEST RESPONSE SYSTEM (PHS&PRS) PROJECT, AN INITIATIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, IS A MODERN DATA-BASED SYSTEM, DESIGNED FOR PROACTIVE SURVEILLANCE OF PEST AND DISEASE INCIDENCE IN JAMAICA. IT IS A COLLABORATIVE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM FOR IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO THREATS, OR ACTUAL INCURSIONS OF DANGEROUS

PLANT PESTS, IN EITHER A ROUTINE OR EMERGENCY MODE. IT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED BY RADA, AS WELL AS BY THE MINISTRY'S RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION AND PLANT QUARANTINE/PRODUCE INSPECTION UNIT. THE SYSTEM IS EXPECTED TO ENCOMPASS THE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR ENTITIES IN THE COUNTRY THAT ARE INVOLVED IN PEST AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT OF CROPS. FOURTEEN OFFICERS WERE TRAINED IN THE PLANT HEALTH SURVEILLANCE AND PEST RESPONSE SYSTEM DATABASE IN FEBRUARY 2005, AS PART OF OUR EFFORTS TO FULLY IMPLEMENT THIS NEW INITIATIVE.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS SYSTEM IS VERY IMPORTANT, MR. SPEAKER AS IT WILL ASSIST JAMAICA TO COMPETE EFFECTIVELY IN THE NEW RULE-BASED ENVIRONMENT CREATED BY THE WTO AND OTHER AGREEMENTS. ADHERENCE TO RULES AND STANDARDS AND QUICK ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON THE INCIDENCE OF PESTS AND DISEASES LOCALLY, REGIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY HAVE BECOME OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE IN SUSTAINING TRADE IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE. WE HAVE, THEREFORE, DONE WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE.

WHILE WE MUST DO EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF UNDESIRABLE AGENTS, WE ALSO HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY, MR. SPEAKER, TO OUR TRADING PARTNERS AND THE REST OF THE WORLD TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE EXPORTATION OF PESTS AND DISEASES FROM OUR SHORES. THE PLANT QUARANTINE/PRODUCE INSPECTION UNIT IS THE BODY THAT HAS THE

DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CERTIFICATION AND INSPECTION OF THE IMPORTATION AND EXPORTATION OF PLANTS, PLANT PARTS, SEEDS, FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.

THE ASSP HAS FACILITATED A CONSULTANCY TO ENHANCE THE METHODOLOGIES FOR PLANT IMPORT/EXPORT CERTIFICATION AND INSPECTION. THE CONSULTANT HAS DEVELOPED OPERATION AND PROCEDURAL MANUALS COVERING AREAS SUCH AS:

- INSPECTION PROCEDURES;
- SAMPLING METHODS;
- TREATMENTS (FOR DISINFECTANTS);
- BASIC PEST RISK ASSESSMENT; AND
- RECORD KEEPING.

THESE MANUALS WILL PROVIDE A DOCUMENTED GUIDE FOR THE OFFICERS OF THE UNIT IN THEIR DAILY ACTIVITIES AND WILL GO A FAR WAY IN ENSURING THAT NO HARMFUL EXOTIC PEST IS INTRODUCED AND BECOME ESTABLISHED IN THE COUNTRY, BY WAY OF IMPORTED AGRICULTURAL MATERIAL. THEY WILL ALSO ENSURE THAT ONLY THE HIGHEST QUALITY, PEST- FREE PRODUCE IS IMPORTED INTO, OR EXPORTED FROM JAMAICA. THESE METHODOLOGIES, MR. SPEAKER, ARE COMPLIANT WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES SUCH AS THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY AGREEMENT

(WTO/SPS) AND THE INTERNATIONAL PLANT PROTECTION CONVENTION (IPPC).

IN ADDITION TO ALL THAT, MR. SPEAKER, A PLANT HEALTH COORDINATING COMMITTEE (PHCC) WAS FORMED IN 2004. THE PHCC HAS NOT ONLY BROUGHT TOGETHER THE MAJOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR ENTITIES INVOLVED IN THE BUSINESS OF PLANT HEALTH IN THE COUNTRY BUT IT HAS ALSO STARTED THE WORK OF DEVELOPING A PLANT HEALTH POLICY FOR JAMAICA.

IN THE CASE OF THE ANIMAL HEALTH SUB-COMPONENT, MR. SPEAKER, A NATIONAL LIVESTOCK IDENTIFICATION PROGRAMME HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED. MORE ATTENTION IS BEING GIVEN TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF CATTLE BECAUSE OF OUTBREAKS OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (BSE), OR MAD COW DISEASE, WORLD-WIDE. IN RESPONSE TO SUCH THREATS, THE ASSP INITIATED THE ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION CONSULTANCY TO WORK ON ESTABLISHING ADEQUATE SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS.

WORKING WITH THE VETERINARY SERVICES DIVISION OF THE MINISTRY THE CONSULTANT HAS:

- ASSISTED IN THE DRAFTING OF APPROPRIATE LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS AIMED AT FACILITATING A NATIONAL ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM; AND

- HAS IDENTIFIED THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND INFRASTRUCTURAL REQUIREMENTS NECESSARY FOR THE PROPOSED SYSTEM TO FUNCTION.

IT IS EXPECTED THAT A PILOT PROJECT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED BY SEPTEMBER, 2005.

UNDER THE FOOD SAFETY SUB-COMPONENT, A DRAFT FOOD SAFETY POLICY, CONCEPT PAPER AND BUSINESS PLAN HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND A NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE POLICY WAS HELD IN OCTOBER 2004. THE POLICY PROVIDES THE MANDATE FOR PURSUING STRATEGIES IN INFORMATION GATHERING AND ANALYSIS, RISK ASSESSMENT, CREATION OF A NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY MOVEMENT, CERTIFICATION OF PRODUCTS, SYSTEMS AND PERSONNEL, LINKAGES WITH NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BODIES, AND FOR PROVIDING TECHNICAL SERVICES, AS WELL AS PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT AND INITIATIVES. A NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE BY THE CONSULTANT RELATING TO PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SECRETARIAT AND THE ENACTMENT OF APPROPRIATE LEGISLATION.

THE ASSP HAS ALSO DEVELOPED A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE MINISTRIES OF AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND HEALTH, AIMED AT COORDINATING THE AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD SAFETY ACTIVITIES WITHIN THOSE ENTITIES.

**COMPONENT 3** OF THE ASSP DEALS WITH THE FINANCING OF HIGH PAY-OFF PRODUCTIVE PROJECTS. WORKING CLOSELY WITH A NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS AND CONSULTANTS, THE ASSP PROVIDES TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PROJECTS WHICH MUST BE MARKET-DRIVEN. IN OTHER WORDS, MR. SPEAKER, PROSPECTIVE BENEFICIARIES MUST HAVE A CLEAR AND BINDING MARKETING ARRANGEMENT WITH BUYERS.

TO DATE, 18 PRODUCTIVE PROJECTS HAVE BEEN APPROVED AND ARE AT VARIOUS STAGES OF IMPLEMENTATION. THE TOTAL COST OF THESE PROJECTS IS JUST OVER \$275 MILLION. A TOTAL OF 567 FARMERS ARE DIRECT BENEFICIARIES, WHILE SOME 2,555 PERSONS WILL BE EMPLOYED.

THE PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- THE PIG IMPROVEMENT PROJECT;
- TILAPIA EXPANSION PROJECT;
- GREEN ADVENTURES ESCALLION PROJECT;
- ALL ISLAND BEE FARMERS ASSOCIATION HONEY MARKETING AND EXPANSION PROJECT;
- SPRINGFIELD GROWERS' ASSOCIATION LTD. PROJECT; AND
- HOUNSLOW CROP PRODUCTION PROJECT; JUST TO NAME A FEW

IN ADDITION MR. SPEAKER, THE ASSP HAS IDENTIFIED AND DESIGNED THREE PRODUCTIVE PROJECTS FOR LANDS AT AMITY HALL PROPERTY IN

ST. CATHERINE. A TOTAL OF 120 HECTARES OF LAND WILL BE DEVELOPED FOR:

- HAY PRODUCTION 40 HECTARES
- CONDIMENT PRODUCTION 40 HECTARES
- VEGETABLE PRODUCTION 40 HECTARES.

THIS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME WILL COST J\$46 MILLION OF WHICH THE ASSP WILL CONTRIBUTE J\$31 MILLION. 51 FARMERS WILL BENEFIT FROM THIS PROJECT, WHICH WILL PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT FOR 235 WORKERS.

#### **EASTERN JAMAICA AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT PROJECT (EJASP)**

LIKE THE ASSP, EJASP, OVER ITS FIVE YEARS IN OPERATION HAS PERFORMED WITH IMPRESSIVE RESULTS. FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE TUNE OF EU6.9 MILLION (J\$276 M) AND THE GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA FOR J\$44 M, ITS PRIMARY OBJECTIVES ARE EMPLOYMENT CREATION, POVERTY REDUCTION, SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND THE REDUCTION OF RURAL TO URBAN DRIFT. THE PROJECT IS BEING IMPLEMENTED IN PORTLAND, ST. THOMAS, ST. ANDREW AND ST. MARY AND HAS ESTABLISHED SOME 80 PROJECTS, 70 OF WHICH HAVE BEEN COMPLETED.

AREAS COVERED INCLUDE: GOAT PRODUCTION, BEEKEEPING, PINEAPPLE PRODUCTION, GINGER CULTIVATION, COFFEE AND COCOA REHABILITATION, MANGO TOP WORKING, GRAPE PRODUCTION, SMALL-

SCALE DAIRY, SMALL-SCALE IRRIGATION, AGRO-PROCESSING AND A MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEM. THE EJASP IS SCHEDULED TO COME TO AN END IN DECEMBER, BUT MONITORING AND GUIDANCE OF THE ON-GOING SUB-PROJECTS WILL BE UNDERTAKEN BY RADA. AN EXIT STRATEGY WILL BE PREPARED BY THE PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS THE EXPECTED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VARIOUS INTEREST GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS, IN ENSURING THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF THESE SUB-PROJECTS AND FARMERS' GROUPS.

## **THE COMMODITIES**

**SUGAR..... (HMA WILL PROVIDE SPEAKING NOTES)**

**BANANAS.**

MR. SPEAKER, IN MY PRESENTATION LAST YEAR I WAS EXTREMELY UPBEAT ABOUT THE BANANA INDUSTRY, NOT SO MUCH BECAUSE OF INCREASES IN EXPORT TONNAGE AND EARNINGS, BUT MOSTLY BECAUSE OF THE VIBRANCY IN THE INDUSTRY, OCCASIONED BY THE GROWTH IN THE MANUFACTURE OF CHIPS AND THE INCREASE IN LOCAL CONSUMPTION. THIS YEAR, MR. SPEAKER, MY ENTHUSIASM HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT DULLED AS A RESULT OF HURRICANE IVAN'S DEVASTATION OF THE INDUSTRY. NEVERTHELESS, I AM BEGINNING TO FEEL A LITTLE BETTER, AS JUST LAST MONTH THE FIRST SHIPMENT OF FRUITS TO THE EXPORT MARKET WAS MADE. LOCALLY, CONSUMERS ARE AGAIN ACCESSING ONE OF THEIR FAVOURITE FRESH FRUIT AND SOME STAKEHOLDERS IN AGRO-PROCESSING INDUSTRY ARE PROJECTING AN INCREASE IN THEIR PRODUCTION AND EXPORTS IN YEAR 2006.

HIGH PRAISE MUST BE GIVEN TO THE FARMERS OF THIS COUNTRY MR. SPEAKER, FOR THEIR RESILIENCE AND DETERMINATION IN BRINGING THE INDUSTRY BACK AFTER EIGHT SHORT MONTHS. THANKS SHOULD GO ALSO TO THE EUROPEAN UNION'S BANANA IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME WHICH DIVERTED SOME OF THE FUNDS, ON THE REQUEST OF THE BANANA EXPORT COMPANY (BECO) TO ASSIST IN THIS RECOVERY PROCESS. BUT THE INDUSTRY, THOUGH CONFIDENT, STILL CONTINUES TO FACE MAJOR CHALLENGES. FIRSTLY, IN THE IMMINENT HURRICANE SEASON WHICH IS

REPORTED WILL BE A VERY ACTIVE ONE, AND SECONDLY, IN THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE EU TARIFF ONLY REGIME, SCHEDULED TO COME INTO EFFECT JANUARY 1, 2006.

THE PROPOSED TARIFF OF 230 EUROS PER TONNE BY THE EU IS 45 EUROS LESS THAN REQUESTED BY THE ACP STATES, BUT THE CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES, WHICH WERE SUCCESSFUL IN FORCING THE EU TO CHANGE ITS BANANA REGIME, ARE PRESSING FOR A TARIFF OF NO HIGHER THAN 75 EUROS PER TONNE. THIS MATTER HAS NOW BEEN REFERRED TO THE WTO FOR ARBITRATION, AS THE PARTIES ARE UNABLE TO REACH A CONSENSUS. TARIFF RATES BELOW THE PROPOSED 230 EUROS PER TONNE COULD SPELL DISASTER FOR THE EXPORT, TRADE WITH ATTENDANT PROBLEMS FOR THE LOCAL TRADE THROUGH OVER SUPPLY AND DEPRESSED PRICES.

NEVERTHELESS, MR. SPEAKER, THE PLAYERS IN THE INDUSTRY ARE STILL HOPEFUL THAT THEIR LOBBY WILL BE SUCCESSFUL AND THEY ARE CONFIDENT THAT GIVEN A REASONABLE TIME, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO IMPROVE MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY TO SUSTAIN A VIABLE INDUSTRY.

## **FORESTRY**

MR. SPEAKER, THE INTEGRITY OF OUR ISLAND'S FOREST RESOURCES IMPACTS THE LIVES OF ALL JAMAICANS ON A DAILY BASIS BY PROTECTING AND CONSERVING THE PRIMARY RESOURCES OF WATER, SOIL, BIOLOGICAL

DIVERSITY AND AIR QUALITY. THE PRODUCTIVENESS OF OUR TIMBER PLANTATIONS CONTRIBUTES TO THE NATION'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELL BEING; AND THE BEAUTY OF OUR FORESTS GIVE JAMAICA AN AMBIENCE UNIQUE AMONG CARIBBEAN TOURIST DESTINATIONS.

THROUGH ITS VARIOUS PROGRAMMES, THE FORESTRY DEPARTMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE ACTIVELY MANAGES OUR COUNTRY'S FOREST RESOURCES TO ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND AESTHETIC FUNCTIONS. ON SEPTEMBER 10 AND 11, 2004, HURRICANE IVAN CAUSED DAMAGE TO APPROXIMATELY 780 HECTARES OF FORESTS IN JAMAICA, WITH SOME STRUCTURAL DAMAGE TO THE NURSERIES AND FOREST ROADS. THE DAMAGE TO TREES OCCURRED MAINLY IN THE PLANTATIONS, ACROSS THE ISLAND, WITH LITTLE DAMAGE IN THE NATURAL FORESTS. THE USAID THROUGH THE RIDGE TO REEF WATERSHED PROJECT PROVIDED THE FORESTRY DEPARTMENT WITH JA\$2.013M TO REPAIR THE NURSERIES, COLLECT SEEDS AND PRODUCE APPROXIMATELY 100,000 SEEDLINGS. WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL FOR THIS ASSISTANCE MR. SPEAKER, WHICH HAS SO POSITIVELY IMPACTED THE RECOVERY PROCESS.

MR. SPEAKER, TIME DOES NOT ALLOW ME TO OUTLINE, ALL OF THE EXCITING DEVELOPMENTS TAKING PLACE IN THE FORESTRY DEPARTMENT SO I WILL USE THE OPPORTUNITY OF PROVIDING A BRIEF UPDATE ON SOME OF THE PROJECTS BEING IMPLEMENTED BY THE FOREST DEPARTMENT.

**TREES FOR TOMORROW PROJECT:**

MANY OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS MADE BY THE DEPARTMENT ARE DUE, IN LARGE PART MR. SPEAKER, TO THE FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT PROVIDED UNDER THE TREES FOR TOMORROW PROJECT. THE CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY-FUNDED INITIATIVE IS CURRENTLY IN YEAR 7 OF ITS SUPPORT FOR THE FORESTRY DEPARTMENT. REGARDED AS ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS, IT HAS GREATLY ENHANCED THE PROFESSIONALISM AND CAPACITY OF THE FORESTRY DEPARTMENT AS WELL AS INCREASING ITS VISIBILITY NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY. THE PROJECT, WHICH HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO FINANCIAL YEAR 2005/2006, WAS ENDOWED WITH A TOTAL BUDGET OF CA\$12.0 MILLION.

**FAO NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMME FACILITY:**

A PROPOSAL PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY THE FORESTRY DEPARTMENT REQUESTING SUPPORT UNDER THE FAO'S NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMME FACILITY WAS ACCEPTED BY THE FAO COMMITTEE SET UP TO REVIEW PROPOSALS.

A 3-YEAR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FACILITY WILL PROVIDE J\$18 MILLION IN FUNDING TO SUPPORT ACTIVITIES THAT WILL FURTHER THE ADVANCEMENT OF JAMAICA'S NATIONAL FOREST MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION PLAN. IN THE COMING MONTHS, THE DEPARTMENT WILL

LAUNCH THE PROCESS THAT WILL LEAD TO THE PROVISION OF FACILITY GRANTS TO STAKEHOLDERS – GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS (NGO) ACTIVE IN THE FOREST SECTOR.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FOREST FUND**

SINCE CABINET GAVE APPROVAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL FOREST MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION FUND (“FOREST FUND”) IN JANUARY 2002, THE FORESTRY DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN INVESTIGATING THE VARIOUS MODES OF OPERATION USED BY OTHER NATIONAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS. A CONSULTANCY WAS COMMISSIONED IN 2003 TO DEVELOP ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES FOR THE OPERATION OF THE FOREST FUND AND DRAFT CONSTITUTIVE DOCUMENTS AND AN OPERATIONS MANUAL HAVE BEEN PREPARED.

A BANK ACCOUNT HAS BEEN OPENED TO RECEIVE CONTRIBUTIONS INTO THE FOREST FUND, AND, TO DATE, PROCEEDS FROM THE SALES OF THE MANUAL OF DENDROLOGY – JAMAICA (COPIES OF WHICH I DISTRIBUTED TO MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE LAST YEAR) ARE BEING DEPOSITED IN THE FOREST FUND’S ACCOUNT.

## **INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

ALTHOUGH JAMAICA IS A SMALL COUNTRY, OUR INFLUENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE IS NOT TO BE UNDERESTIMATED. OUR PRODUCTS ARE WELL-KNOWN AND HIGHLY REGARDED AND MORE OFTEN THAN NOT COMMAND THE HIGHEST PRICES. WE HAVE ALSO BEEN FORTUNATE TO HAVE NEGOTIATED TRADING ARRANGEMENTS THAT HAVE PLACED US AT AN ADVANTAGE OVER MANY OF OUR COMPETITORS - ARRANGEMENTS WITHOUT WHICH OUR INDUSTRIES COULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED; AT LEAST NOT AT THE LEVELS OF OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY THAT OBTAINS, WITH THE ADVENT OF FREE TRADE, THIS SITUATION IS CHANGING WITH THE RESULT THAT THOSE HARD WON AGREEMENTS SUCH AS OUR NON-RECIPROCAL PREFERENTIAL TRADE ARRANGEMENTS, WITH TRADITIONAL TRADING PARTNERS, ARE NOW AT STAKE.

IT IS OBVIOUS THEREFORE, MR. SPEAKER, THAT DEVELOPMENTS AT THE LEVEL OF THE WTO, THE FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS, THE ACP/EU NEGOTIATIONS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND ECONOMY CONTINUE TO HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND FOR THAT REASON MUST BE CAREFULLY FACTORED INTO THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE SECTOR.

THE WTO/DOHA ROUND OF TRADE NEGOTIATIONS ON AGRICULTURE HAS BEEN FORGING AHEAD WITH MODERATE PROGRESS, DESPITE THE

PROTRACTED AND DIFFICULT NATURE OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS. IN JULY 2004, A FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT WAS CONCLUDED AND EFFORTS ARE NOW BEING MADE TO REACH AN AGREEMENT ON THE GENERAL RULES BY JULY 2005, SO THAT THEY CAN BE ADOPTED BY THE MINISTERS AT THEIR MEETING IN HONG KONG, SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER 2005.

THE JULY ACCORD PROVIDES FOR THE CONTINUATION OF A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF SUBSIDIES WITHIN CERTAIN AREAS WHICH MAINLY BENEFIT THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES THAT CAN AFFORD THEM. A PROVISION HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN MADE FOR AN END DATE, TO BE DETERMINED, FOR ALL FORMS OF EXPORT SUBSIDIES. DESPITE THIS, DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, LIKE THE US AND EU, WILL STILL HAVE THE ABILITY TO CONFIDENTLY SHIFT AROUND THEIR VARIOUS SUBSIDY PROGRAMMES TO “ALLOWABLE” CATEGORIES AND, THEREBY, CONTINUE THEIR MAJOR FARM SUPPORT PROGRAMMES.

THE MARKET ACCESS ISSUES IN THE NEGOTIATIONS ON AGRICULTURE ARE OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE JAMAICA, MR. SPEAKER, AS THIS IS WHERE PROVISION WILL BE MADE FOR THE FURTHER REDUCTION OF TARIFFS IN BOTH OUR DOMESTIC AND EXPORT MARKETS. THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES WILL BE ABLE TO DESIGNATE SENSITIVE PRODUCTS, AS HAS BEEN RECOMMENDED BY THE EU, JAPAN AND SWITZERLAND. IT IS EXPECTED THAT UNDER THIS LIST OF PRODUCTS, THE EU COULD PERMIT HIGHER TARIFFS ON BANANAS AND SUGAR, FOR EXAMPLE, AND THEREBY

MAINTAIN SOME PREFERENCE FOR ACP PRODUCERS. THIS IS PERHAPS THE ONLY WAY THAT TRADE PREFERENCES WILL BE PRESERVED FOR A LIMITED PERIOD.

FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES LIKE JAMAICA, MR. SPEAKER, THERE IS A PROVISION FOR DESIGNATING AN APPROPRIATE NUMBER OF PRODUCTS AS “SPECIAL PRODUCTS”, TO BE SUBJECT TO MORE FLEXIBLE TREATMENT ON THE GROUNDS OF FOOD SECURITY, LIVELIHOOD SECURITY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS. FURTHER SPECIFICATION AND TREATMENT OF THESE PRODUCTS ARE NOW BEING NEGOTIATED AS ARE THE DETAILS OF A SPECIAL SAFEGUARD MEASURE.

IN THE CASE OF THE FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS, MR. SPEAKER, THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BEEN INACTIVE SINCE THE MIAMI SUMMIT IN 2003, WHEN A NEW VISION WAS CREATED. SINCE THEN THE MAIN PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES, THE US AND BRAZIL, HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO AGREE TO A SATISFACTORY WAY FORWARD. IN THE MEANTIME THE US HAS BEEN CONCLUDING FTA AGREEMENTS WITH SEVERAL STRATEGIC LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, EG. CENTRAL AMERICA, THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND THE ANDEAN GROUP.

## **CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND ECONOMY (CSME)**

EARLIER THIS YEAR, MR. SPEAKER, JAMAICA ALONG WITH BARBADOS AND TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, COMMENCED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CSME. THE REVISED TREATY OF CHAGUARAMAS, WHICH PROVIDES THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CSME, OUTLINES THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN PROTOCOL V, THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF WHICH IS THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE REGION'S AGRICULTURAL SECTOR THROUGH:

- 1) DIVERSIFICATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION
- 2) INTENSIFICATION OF AGRO-INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
- 3) EXPANSION OF AGRI-BUSINESS
- 4) PLACING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION ON A MARKET-ORIENTED, COMPETITIVE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND BASIS
- 5) IMPROVED INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT, AS WELL AS FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

THIS PROTOCOL IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE FOR THE COMMUNITY, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT A NUMBER OF CARICOM ECONOMIES ARE AGRICULTURE-DEPENDENT. THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS IDENTIFIED IN THIS PROTOCOL, MR. SPEAKER, TAKES ON ADDED URGENCY IN THE FACE OF THE MANY THREATS FROM NATURAL DISASTERS THE ACTIONS AND INITIATIVES OF OUR MAJOR TRADING PARTNERS AND THE VOLATILITY OF WORLD PRICES FOR PRIMARY COMMODITIES.

MR. SPEAKER, THE CARICOM MARKET FOR JAMAICAN PRODUCTS HAS SIGNIFICANT SCOPE FOR DEVELOPMENT, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE REGION IS A NET IMPORTER OF FOOD AND HAS A SIZEABLE TOURIST POPULATION. THE FREE MOVEMENT OF GOODS, CAPITAL AND LABOUR WITHIN THE REGION, TOGETHER WITH THE RIGHT TO ESTABLISH BUSINESS ANYWHERE WITHIN THE SINGLE MARKET, PROVIDE WORTHWHILE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENTS AND TRADE IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND OUR JAMAICAN FARMERS AND AGRO-PROCESSORS ARE BEING ENCOURAGED TO EXPLOIT THEM. MR. SPEAKER, OF ALL THE TRADE AND ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS TO WHICH JAMAICA IS A PARTY, ONLY THE CSME PROVIDES FOR THIS DEPTH OF INTEGRATION AND FOR THE CORRESPONDING BENEFITS.

THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE CSME ARRANGEMENTS FOR AGRICULTURE ARE:

- IMPROVED INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES;
- FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION;
- EFFICIENT CULTIVATION AND PRODUCTION OF TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL PRIMARY AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS;
- INCREASED PRODUCTION AND DIVERSIFICATION OF PROCESSED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS;
- ENLARGED SHARE OF WORLD MARKETS FOR PRIMARY AND PROCESSED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS; AND

- EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF THE REGION'S NATURAL RESOURCES, INCLUDING ITS FORESTS AND THE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONES.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME (RTP) HAS MET WITH SOME DIFFICULTIES OVER THE YEARS, MR. SPEAKER, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREAS OF RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL AND IN ADEQUATE LEVELS OF INVESTMENT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. IN JAMAICA, THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE HAS SOUGHT TO INCORPORATE IN ITS ANNUAL BUDGET AND CORPORATE PLANS, THE PRIORITY AREAS IDENTIFIED IN THE RTP, SUCH AS PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION, MARKETING, HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, THE GENERAL THRUST TO MAKE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION MORE EFFICIENT, AS WELL AS INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING TO FACILITATE INCREASED TRADE IN AGRI-FOOD COMMODITIES.

### **THE WAY FORWARD**

MR. SPEAKER, THE FOREGOING WAS A VERY BRIEF REVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR FOR THE PREVIOUS YEAR. I DID NOT SPEAK ON SEVERAL SUBJECT AREAS, IN THE INTEREST OF TIME, BUT I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY NOW, TO SHARE WITH YOU MY VISION OF THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE SECTOR, AS OUTLINED IN OUR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – 2005 -2028.

## **THE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

IN ORDER TO BE EFFICIENT AND COMPETITIVE, TODAY'S AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION MUST TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE CHANGES DEMANDED BY OUR GLOBAL TRADING PARTNERS, AS WELL AS LOCAL CONSUMER DEMAND. TO THIS END MR. SPEAKER, THE MINISTRY HAS EMBARKED UPON A THREE-YEAR *AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY*, DESIGNED TO FACILITATE EFFICIENT RESEARCH-BASED, MARKET-LED PRODUCTION WITHIN THE SECTOR. ALTHOUGH IN ITS EARLY PHASE OF IMPLEMENTATION, IT HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO SET THE STAGE FOR THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS.

GIVEN THE IMPERATIVES FOR THE CREATION OF A GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE SECTOR, THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF THE AREAS ON WHICH THE STRATEGY IS FOCUSED:

- INCREASED PRODUCTION AND PRODUCT EXPANSION;
- INCREASED LAND ACCESS;
- INCREASED YOUTH INVOLVEMENT;
- IMPROVED ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL CREDIT;
- IMPROVED MARKETING;
- EXPANDED EXTENSION SERVICES;
- RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT; AND
- IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE.

## **INCREASED PRODUCTION AND PRODUCT EXPANSION**

RECOGNIZING THE KEY ROLE THAT PRODUCT EXPANSION MUST PLAY IN ENABLING US TO REALIZE OUR GOAL OF FULLY TRANSFORMING THE SECTOR IN THE MEDIUM TO LONG-TERM, THE STRATEGY, WILL ADDRESS:

- THE INCREASED PRODUCTION OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES, WHICH HAVE A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN BOTH THE DOMESTIC AND EXPORT MARKETS, AND WHICH JAMAICAN FARMERS CAN PRODUCE COMPETITIVELY.

WE WILL BE WORKING TOWARDS ACHIEVING THIS OBJECTIVE IN THE FOLLOWING TARGETED SUB-PROJECTS, FOR IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION, FOR WHICH FUNDING IS ALREADY IN PLACE:

- **HYDROPONICS AND ORGANIC FARMING:** THE MARKET FOR CERTIFIED ORGANICALLY GROWN PRODUCE ALONE IS REPORTEDLY US\$25-BILLION. WE ARE, THEREFORE, PROPOSING AN INCREASE IN PRODUCTION OF 10 TO 50 ACRES OVER THREE (3) YEARS.
- **IN THE LUCRATIVE SMALL RUMINANT SUB-SECTOR,** JAMAICA IS REPORTEDLY SUPPLYING APPROXIMATELY 10 TO 15 PERCENT OF LOCAL DEMAND. WITH THE UPGRADING OF OUR RESEARCH

CAPACITY AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE GENETIC STOCK THROUGH APPLIED RESEARCH, WITH FARMER INVOLVEMENT, WE ARE TARGETING A 30% PER ANNUM INCREASE IN THE SHORT-TERM.

- **APICULTURE:** JAMAICA HAS THE HIGHEST RECORDED NUMBER OF REGISTERED BEE-KEEPERS IN THE ENGLISH- SPEAKING CARIBBEAN, AND WITH THE INCREASING DEMAND FOR HONEY AS PART OF THE TREND TOWARDS *HEALTHIER LIFESTYLES*, AS WELL AS THE OPENING UP OF NEW LOCAL AND OVERSEAS MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES, AS A RESULT OF THE CAPACITY-BUILDING \$15-MILLION INTERVENTION, FUNDED BY THE MINISTRY'S AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES PROJECT AND THE GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA - THE STRATEGY PROPOSES CONTINUED INFRASTRUCTURAL UPGRADING, WHICH WILL INCLUDE THE PRODUCTION OF QUALITY BEES TO IMPROVE THE BREEDING STOCK IN THE SHORT-TERM.
- **FISHERIES:** MR. SPEAKER, YOU WILL RECALL THAT IN MY INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS ON THE SECTOR'S 2004 PERFORMANCE, THE DATA FROM THE PLANNING INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA HAD REVEALED THAT THE ONLY SUB-SECTOR, WHICH HAD RECORDED AN INCREASE IN PRODUCTION WAS *FISHERIES*, DESPITE THE ONSLAUGHT OF BOTH HURRICANES IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE YEAR. WE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE HAVE CONTINUED

TO HIGHLIGHT THIS INDUSTRY AS BEING CRITICAL TO THE LIVELIHOODS OF OVER 100,000 JAMAICANS. AS SUCH, WE HAVE ALLOCATED \$15 MILLION UNDER THE *STRATEGY*, FOR CAPACITY BUILDING, TO INCLUDE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN AQUACULTURE AND MARINE FISHERY.

- **EXPORT CROPS:** RECALLING THAT JAMAICA'S AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS (INCLUDING SUGAR) FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2004 WAS VALUED AT US\$245,139 MILLION, DESPITE THE ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS, AND HAVING REGARD TO THE FACT THAT THE ACCELERATED DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXPORT SECTOR MUST BE AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF THE MODERNIZATION PROCESS, THE *STRATEGY* PROPOSES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO EXPORTERS AND CAPACITY-BUILDING, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS.
  
- **FOOD CROPS:** AS PART OF THE STRATEGY'S TARGETED DEVELOPMENT, WE ARE PROPOSING AN INCREASE OF BETWEEN 60-70% IN ACREAGE OF FOOD CROP PRODUCTION, OVER THE THREE-YEAR PERIOD, WHICH WILL COST AN ESTIMATED \$250 MILLION.

THE CROPS, INCLUDING CONDIMENTS, LEGUMES AND SELECT VEGETABLES WERE CHOSEN BASED ON DEMAND BY THE AGRO-PROCESSING AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRIES, AS WELL AS FOR THEIR EXPORT POTENTIAL.

## **LAND ACCESS**

AS THE SECTOR'S COMPETITIVENESS IS LARGELY DEPENDENT ON THE EFFECTIVE DISTRIBUTION AND UTILIZATION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND, OUR AIM IS TO BRING AT LEAST 20,000 ACRES (8,094 HECTARES) OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LAND INTO PRODUCTION. TO THIS END, THE STRATEGY IS FOCUSED ON:

- IDENTIFYING GOVERNMENT LAND FOR DISTRIBUTION TO FARMERS UNDER SCHEMES FOR PLANNED SETTLEMENT AND COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION;
- IDENTIFYING IDLE LAND AND ACTIVATING THE *IDLE LAND ORDERS ACT* TO ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF UNDER-UTILIZED AGRICULTURAL LAND; AND
- UPGRADING OUR SOIL FERTILITY AND LAND MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES.
- FOCUS WILL ALSO BE PLACED ON IMPROVING THE MECHANISMS FOR ENSURING ADHERENCE TO ZONING STANDARDS, REGARDING THE USE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND; AND

- DEVELOPING FARMS OF 10 ACRES (4 HECTARES) OR MORE, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON '*MOTHER FARMS*', AS WELL AS CONTRACT AND INDUSTRIAL FARMING MODELS.

**A PRELIMINARY SURVEY HAS ALREADY IDENTIFIED SOME 1,244**

**HECTARES OF AVAILABLE LAND ON THE FOLLOWING PROPERTIES:**

- **GILNOCK IN ST. ELIZABETH – 467 HECTARES;**
- **DARLEY AND SPRING GARDEN IN PORTLAND – 296 HECTARES;**
- **EAST POTOSI IN ST. THOMAS – 172 HECTARES; AND**
- **HARTLANDS IN ST. CATHERINE – 309 HECTARES.**

*PROJECTS IDENTIFIED UNDER THE LAND DISTRIBUTION AND UTILIZATION POLICY ARE ESTIMATED TO COST \$82.5 MILLION OVER THE THREE-YEAR PERIOD 2005-2008. OF THIS SUM, APPROXIMATELY 75% WILL BE ALLOCATED TO FARM DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.*

#### **INCREASED INVOLVEMENT OF YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE**

I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT HERE, THAT THE DISTRIBUTION AND SETTLEMENT OF FARM LAND WILL BE LINKED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE *YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE PROGRAMME*, THROUGH WHICH MY MINISTRY WILL ALSO BE WORKING TO GUARANTEE THE FUTURE OF FARMING IN THIS COUNTRY.

**THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THIS COMPONENT OF THE STRATEGY ARE:**

- TO PROMOTE THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN FARMING;
- TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS IN THE AGE GROUP 18–30 YEARS, WHO HAVE RECEIVED PRACTICAL ORIENTATION OR FORMAL TRAINING IN AGRICULTURE;
- TO STEM THE RURAL-URBAN DRIFT; AND
- TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG GRADUATES FROM TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS TO VIEW FARMING AS A VIABLE BUSINESS.

IN ADDITION TO COLLABORATING WITH THE JAMAICA 4-H CLUBS, THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE AND LOCAL AGRICULTURAL TRAINING INSTITUTIONS, THE MINISTRY IS WORKING THROUGH ITS *AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES PROJECT (ASSP)*, TO PROVIDE JAMAICAN YOUTH WITH APPROPRIATE TRAINING AND POST-TRAINING SUPPORT TO ENTER THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE.

WE HAVE ALREADY IDENTIFIED FOUR MAJOR PROJECTS TARGETING YOUNG FARMERS, TWO OF WHICH HAVE BEGUN TO SHOW PHENOMENAL RESULTS, AND I WANT TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO HIGHLIGHT THEM TODAY, AS BEACONS OF HOPE FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE SECTOR:

***THE \$15.6 MILLION SPRINGFIELD FARMS – VEGETABLE PRODUCTION AND MARKETING PROJECT IN ST. THOMAS***

WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF PRODUCING VEGETABLES AND NON-TRADITIONAL CROPS FOR DOMESTIC AND EXPORT MARKETS, THE SPRINGFIELD PROJECT WAS IMPLEMENTED IN OCTOBER 2004; AND TO DATE HAS PRODUCED *120,000 TONNES OF PREMIUM QUALITY* CROPS, *VALUED AT \$1.2 MILLION*.

MR. SPEAKER, I WISH TO HOLD UP THIS GROUP OF 31 YOUNG FARMERS, CULTIVATING 150 ACRES OF LEASED LAND, AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE KIND OF GROUP WE ARE TARGETING FOR EFFICIENT, COMPETITIVE PRODUCTION IN THE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY.

THEY ARE MEETING THEIR PRODUCTION TARGETS IN ORDER TO SATISFY THEIR MARKETING CONTRACTS, AND AS SUCH THEY ARE IN A POSITION TO REPAY THEIR LOANS AND MAKE A PROFIT. BECAUSE THEY ARE BUSINESS ORIENTED, THEY ARE BUILDING ON THE OPPORTUNITY AFFORDED THEM BY THE MINISTRY, AND THEY ARE AN INSPIRATION TO THEIR PEERS.

#### **THE HOUNSLOW CROP PRODUCTION PROJECT**

ANOTHER SUCH INITIATIVE, OF WHICH THE MINISTRY IS JUSTLY PROUD, IS THE HOUNSLOW PRODUCTION PROJECT, IMPLEMENTED IN

OCTOBER 1, 2004. THIS GROUP HAS REAPED 34,000 LBS OF PRODUCE, VALUED AT \$600,000 IN THE SIX-MONTH PERIOD.

THIS GROUP BEGAN WORKING ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE. THEY SOURCED THEIR LOAN FINANCING FROM MIDA, AND WITH ASSISTANCE FROM THE ASSP, THEY ARE TURNING A PROFIT AND MEETING AND SURPASSING THEIR PRODUCTION TARGETS. AGAIN, I STRESS, THEY REPRESENT THE TYPE OF FARMERS THE MINISTRY IS SEEKING TO ENLIST FOR THE AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY TO WORK.

#### **MORE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES IN THE PIPELINE**

- ***THE \$22 MILLION AMITY HALL YOUTH PROJECT*** IN ST. CATHERINE AIMS TO PUT APPROXIMATELY 80 HECTARES, OR 200 ACRES OF GOVERNMENT-OWNED LAND INTO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION BY SEPTEMBER OF THIS YEAR, UTILIZING THE SKILL OF YOUNG FARMERS.
  
- THE MINISTRY IS ALSO SPEARHEADING A ***SMALL RUMINANT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT*** IN AMITY HALL, WHICH IS NOW IN THE IMPLEMENTATION STAGE. THIS PROJECT WILL INVOLVE 22 YOUNG FARMERS WITH TERTIARY AGRICULTURAL TRAINING, AND IS

BEING FUNDED IN PART BY THE ASSP, TO THE TUNE OF \$16.6 MILLION.

I AM HAPPY TO BE ABLE TO REPORT THAT TO DATE, OUR AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES PROJECT – THE ASSP, HAS APPROVED 18 PRODUCTIVE PROJECTS ASSISTING FARMERS’ GROUPS ISLANDWIDE, TO THE TUNE OF J\$190 MILLION.

**IMPROVED ACCESS TO CREDIT -**

WHILE MANY FARMERS INDEED HAVE BENEFITED FROM ASSP SUPPORT, THE MINISTRY IS AWARE THAT THE LACK OF ACCESS TO CREDIT, IS ONE OF THE MAJOR CHALLENGES TO PEOPLE WHO WANT TO GO INTO FARMING. THEREFORE IN DRAFTING THE AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY, IT WAS IDENTIFIED AS ONE OF THE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN.

AS SUCH, WE PROPOSE TO COLLABORATE WITH THE PLANNING INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA, TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF IDENTIFYING SOURCES OF LOW-COST FUNDING FOR SELECT PROJECTS. IN ADDITION, WORKING THROUGH RADA AND OUR EXTERNALLY FUNDED PROJECTS, WE WILL CONTINUE TO BROKER CROP LIEN FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS ON BEHALF OF FARMERS WITH FORMALIZED MARKETING CONTRACTS, AS HAS BEEN DONE IN THE CASE OF SOME OF THE RADA HOTEL SMALL FARMERS’ PROJECTS, AND THE ASSP-FUNDED SPRING FIELD AND HOUNSLOW PROJECTS.

## **IMPROVED MARKETING**

MARKET-DRIVEN PRODUCTION IS YET ANOTHER AREA THAT IS CRITICAL TO EFFICIENCY AND COMPETITIVENESS WITHIN THE SECTOR, AND IT IS ONE, WHICH THE STRATEGY ADDRESSES. THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSED MARKETING THRUST ARE:

- TARGETING OF PRODUCTION TO MARKET DEMAND;
- PROMOTING OF BUYER-SELLER PARTNERSHIPS; AND
- UPGRADING OF MARKETING FACILITIES ISLAND-WIDE.

**THE PROPOSED MARKETING PROGRAMME IS EXPECTED TO COST APPROXIMATELY \$272.5 MILLION** OVER THE THREE-YEAR PERIOD, INCLUSIVE OF PRIVATE SECTOR INPUTS. UNDER THE MARKETING COMPONENT, THE SCOPE FOR THE EXPANSION OF COMMODITY INSURANCE WILL ALSO BE EXPLORED, AS THIS WILL ENCOURAGE INVESTMENTS IN AGRICULTURE BY HELPING TO REDUCE RISK AND THE ASSOCIATED COSTS. THE MINISTRY WILL EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF MINIMUM LEVELS OF INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR FARMERS, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE DEVELOPMENT BANK OF JAMAICA AND COMMODITY ORGANISATIONS. IN ADDITION, WE ARE ALSO SEEKING EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE IN THIS REGARD.

## **EXPANDED EXTENSION SERVICES**

IN SUPPORT OF THE ABOVE COMPONENTS, THE AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY PROPOSES AN INCREASE IN RADA'S CAPACITY TO PROVIDE EXTENSION SERVICES TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY, PRODUCTIVITY AND

COMPETITIVENESS OF FARMERS. SPECIAL PROJECTS WILL INCLUDE ON-FARM WATER MANAGEMENT, INCREASED FARMER TRAINING, LAND HUSBANDRY, MARKETING EXTENSION, CROP CARE AND THE COMPLETED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGRI-BUSINESS INFORMATION SYSTEM (ABIS). **THE ESTIMATED COST OF THIS COMPONENT OVER THE THREE-YEAR PERIOD, IS \$202.7 MILLION.**

### **RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY**

THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION WILL CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON ITS CORE ACTIVITIES BY CONDUCTING INVESTIGATIONS IN:

- CROP AND PLANT PROTECTION; AND
- LIVESTOCK IMPROVEMENT.

HOWEVER, RESEARCH PROJECTS WILL BE GIVEN PRIORITY, BASED ON THEIR POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE TO COMPETITIVE PRODUCTION. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT **THE PROJECTS TO BE TARGETED ARE ESTIMATED TO COST \$65 MILLION** OVER THE THREE-YEAR PERIOD.

## **IMPROVEMENT TO INFRASTRUCTURE**

THE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY WILL BE SUPPORTED BY:

- A TARGETED RURAL ROAD REHABILITATION AND MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME; AND
- IRRIGATION WORKS WILL BE EXTENDED AND MAINTAINED, IN KEEPING WITH THE NATIONAL IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

PROJECTS IDENTIFIED UNDER THE INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, WILL BE FUNDED BY THE MINISTRIES OF AGRICULTURE, WORKS AND WATER, AND ARE ESTIMATED TO COST \$378 MILLION. **THE IRRIGATION COMPONENT WILL COST APPROXIMATELY \$426 MILLION.**

MR. SPEAKER, THESE ARE SOME OF OUR PROPOSALS FOR THE REPOSITIONING OF THE SECTOR.

## **CONCLUSION**

MR. SPEAKER, I HAVE OUTLINED TO THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE AND THE NATION THE STEPS WE HAVE TAKEN TO SECURE THE FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY OF AGRICULTURE IN JAMAICA BY CONTINUING TO BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION WE HAVE LAID OVER THE YEARS.

WE HAVE PUT IN PLACE AN EFFECTIVE RESEARCH SYSTEM AND OUR SCIENTISTS ARE FOCUSED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AND SUPERIOR

CROP AND LIVESTOCK BREEDS WHICH CAN GIVE US A COMPETITIVE EDGE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY.

WE HAVE REVAMPED OUR EXTENSION SERVICES AND WE ARE STRENGTHENING ITS CAPACITY TO MORE EFFICIENTLY TRANSFER TECHNOLOGY FROM OUR LABORATORIES TO THE FARM, RESULTING IN RENEWED ENTHUSIASM AMONGST OUR FARMERS OF ALL SIZES.

THROUGH OUR FLAGSHIP INITIATIVE, THE AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES PROJECT, WE ARE REACHING OUT TO THE PULSE OF THE FARMING COMMUNITY, BY STRENGTHENING THE DELIVERY OF CRITICAL SUPPORT SERVICES IN THE AREAS OF MARKET, RESEARCH, TRAINING, BUSINESS PLAN DEVELOPMENT, PACKAGING AND LABELING DESIGN - TO NAME A FEW. WE ARE ALSO COLLABORATING WITH FARMERS IN THE TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY AND FUNDING OF PRODUCTIVE PROJECTS WHICH HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CHANGE THE FACE OF JAMAICAN AGRICULTURE.

SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS REMAIN ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGES FACING THE SECTOR MR. SPEAKER. CONSEQUENTLY, WE ARE GIVING TOP PRIORITY TO ASSISTING FARMERS TO INSTALL THE MINI-DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEM WHICH WILL ALLOW THEM TO MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF THE DROUGHT, MAINTAIN PRODUCTION CONSISTENCY, AND IMPORTANTLY TO

MEET THEIR COMMITMENTS WHEN PRE-ARRANGED MARKET CONTRACTS EXIST.

WE HAVE ASSISTED THE JAMAICA AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY (JAS) IN ITS MARKETING INITIATIVE BY PROVIDING FUNDING AS WELL AS THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR THE START OF A PILOT PROJECT. THIS INITIATIVE BY THE JAS CONSTITUTES AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE WIDER MARKETING INITIATIVE BEING PURSUED BY THE MINISTRY.

WE ARE ALSO TAKING THE NECESSARY STEPS MR. SPEAKER, TO STRENGTHEN OUR AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY SYSTEMS.

WE HAVE DEVELOPED A PLANT HEALTH SURVEILLANCE AND PEST RESPONSE SYSTEM (PHS & PRS) PROJECT, EQUIPPED WITH A MODERN DATA-BASE DESIGNED FOR PROACTIVE SURVEILLANCE OF PEST AND DISEASE INCIDENCE IN JAMAICA. AS I INDICATED EARLIER MR. SPEAKER, IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS SYSTEM IS VERY IMPORTANT AS IT WILL ASSIST JAMAICA TO COMPLETE EFFECTIVELY IN THE NEW RULE-BASED ENVIRONMENT CREATED BY THE WTO AND OTHER AGREEMENTS.

IN TERMS OF OUR INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS, WE CONTINUE TO MONITOR CLOSELY, DEVELOPMENTS AT THE LEVEL OF THE WTO, THE FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS (FTAA), THE ACP/EU NEGOTIATIONS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND ECONOMY. THESE

ALL HAVE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND IS THEREFORE HIGH ON OUR AGENDA.

WE ARE MINDFUL MR. SPEAKER THAT TO BE EFFICIENT AND SUCCESSFUL, OUR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE CHANGES DEMANDED BY OUR GLOBAL TRADING PARTNERS, AS WELL AS LOCAL CONSUMER DEMAND. TO THIS END, WE HAVE EMBARKED UPON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A THREE YEAR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND ALTHOUGH AT AN EARLY STAGE, IT HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO SET THE STAGE FOR THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS. THE STRATEGY IS ADDRESSING KEY COMPONENTS INCLUDING INCREASED PRODUCTION AND PRODUCTION EXPANSION; INCREASED LAND ACCESS; INCREASED YOUTH INVESTMENT, IMPROVED ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL CREDIT, IMPROVED MARKETING, EXPANDED EXTENSION SERVICES AND IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE.

THE FOUNDATION WE HAVE LAID MR. SPEAKER, IS SOLID AND THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY WILL ENSURE A SECURE FUTURE FOR OUR AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND ALL ITS STAKEHOLDERS. THIS WILL NOT BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT CHALLENGES MR. SPEAKER BUT WE ARE DETERMINED TO COMPLETE THE TASK OF THE DYNAMIC TRANSFORMATION OF THE SECTOR. WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE FARMERS, OUR PARTNERS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE INTERNATIONAL

AGENCIES THAT HAVE PROVIDED SO MUCH SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE IN THE PAST, AND WITH GOD'S HELP AND THE COLLECTIVE WILL OF ALL, WE WILL SUCCEED.

THANK YOU, MR. SPEAKER.