

**Statement by Honourable Roger Clarke  
Minister of Agriculture & Fisheries, Jamaica  
To the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Conference  
Rome, Italy  
15-22 June, 2013**

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**Salutations**

It is my pleasure today, to greet you all on behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica. Let me also acknowledge the continued dedication and commitment of the FAO in your efforts to conscientiously address the issues of world hunger and malnutrition. Permit me to congratulate you for once again organising a conference like this to keep us focussed on the challenges and opportunities we share as a family of nations.

Today, we recall that, against the background of world recession and steep increases in global food prices in 2008, issues related to world food insecurity reached crisis proportions. Today, we are gathered in this forum happy that consequent fears of spiralling hunger and malnutrition have in fact abated. We, however, remain cognisant of the fact that although there has been some progress in reducing hunger and malnutrition in the world, global progress in reducing hunger has in fact slowed since 2007. It would appear therefore, that world food insecurity is not just a cyclical occurrence, but may be an indication of structural parameters which impact some regions more significantly than others and constrain their efforts to attain food sufficiency.

The truth is that the number of hungry and malnourished people on our planet remains intolerably high and so the global community must continue to vigorously pursue all strategies and initiatives to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to reduce chronic hunger by a fast approaching 2015.

Mr Chairman,

Countries like Jamaica that are net food importing countries cannot afford to place food security on the back burner; we now have to re-orient our production systems to address food import substitution. Against this background, **Jamaica is proud to report that on the 1st May, 2013, the Cabinet approved the Jamaican Food and Nutrition Security Policy** which seeks to achieve the following goals in the domain of food security:

- Ensure that a sufficient quantity of nutritious food of appropriate quality is available to all people in Jamaica, through increased domestic production and a sustainable level of imports.
- Ensure that all individuals in Jamaica have access to adequate resources to acquire appropriate foods for a nutritious diet.
- Ensure that all individuals in Jamaica reach a state of nutritional well-being through food choices and consumption that reflect Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs).
- Ensure that all people in Jamaica have access to adequate, safe and nutritious food at all times, are not at risk of losing access to it due to external economic shocks and natural hazards, and consume foods that reflect their physiological needs.

Based on the aforementioned goals, it should be noted that the policy is anchored to four main pillars, namely, food availability, food access, food utilization and the stability of food supplies. In a nutshell, the aim is to increase the population's access to wholesome and affordable food.

It is our firm belief that in order to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition as reflected in the FAO Strategic Objective, we must provide the enabling policy framework and environment.

It is therefore in that regard that Jamaica intends, further, **to enact a Food Security Law** to ensure the domestic production of a minimum threshold of a selected basket of foods for which there is production capability and national comparative advantage to meet domestic food, nutrition and health goals.

This law will be supported by appropriate production and trade policies to increase production and productivity of the domestic agriculture and agro-processing sectors and protect local industries from unfair external competition.

We wholeheartedly subscribe to the expressed view of the FAO that raising nutrition levels include enhanced production, marketing and consumption of local vegetables and staple crops such as locally grown yams, sweet potatoes and cassava.

In light of the economic challenges, a high debt burden and consequent arrangements with the International Monetary Fund, we anticipate that the more vulnerable in our society will be faced with food security issues. Where there is challenge, however, there is opportunity and so Jamaica believes that our high and unsustainable food import bill provides a significant opportunity for import substitution.

We totally embrace the concept of zero tolerance for world hunger and recall the drive, supported by Director-General, Graziano da Silva in his then capacity as head of the regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean for a "Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative".

In closing, Jamaica underscores our commitment to totally eradicating hunger by 2025, and welcomes the focus and initiatives of the FAO in pursuing our shared goal of a hunger free world.

I thank you.