

As delivered

**Statement by Honourable Karl Samuda
Minister for Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Jamaica
to the 40th Session of the FAO Conference
Rome, Italy (3-8 July 2017)**

Wednesday, 5 July 2017

Mr Chairman

- I congratulate you on your election to preside over the 40th Session of the FAO Conference.
- I commend the Director-General and the FAO secretariat for the invaluable contribution to agricultural development and food security.
- I thank the Government of Italy for the gracious hospitality that has been extended to us.
- Mr Chairman, coming as we do from a Small Island Developing State of Jamaica, the home of Bob Marley and Usain Bolt, Jamaica welcomes the focus on climate change, agriculture and food security at this 40th Session.
- We recognize the urgent need to address Climate Change and its impact on all areas of life and all sectors of the economy.
- In Jamaica, renewal of growth in agriculture is making a significant contribution to national development. At the same time we are facing challenges posed by climate change and the recognition of the need to build the resilience of the agricultural sector is a priority for us in Jamaica.
- Indeed, since I assumed office in 2016, the sector has been affected by a prolonged drought, continuing from 2015 to 2016. Then, since October 2016, we have been impacted by excessive rainfall, particularly in April of this year, causing crop losses of approximately one billion Jamaican dollars. For us therefore climate change is not a fiction, but a reality we live with daily.
- For many countries, especially Small Island Developing States - prolonged droughts, frequent intense rainfall, flooding and hurricanes are a common feature of our agricultural and national realities.
- Jamaica is therefore moving to build resilience through the following initiatives:

- expanding areas with access to irrigation; currently only 8 percent or some 12,500 hectares of approximately 187,800 irrigable hectares of land in Jamaica is irrigated;
 - by increasing our efforts to establish agricultural insurance schemes and
 - by implementing more drought-resistant measures such as water harvesting and storage.
- Furthermore, we are incorporating climate change adaptation strategies and methods in every aspect of agricultural planning and production.
 - We cannot succeed in addressing the challenges of climate change without global action, we therefore urge FAO to continue its valuable efforts in this area.

Food Security

- Mr Chairman, agriculture contributes 7 percent to Gross Domestic Product, employs 20 percent of our labour force and provides food security for Jamaica.
- It is a critical plank of Government's growth agenda and a centrepiece of our rural development strategy. Against this background, we are pleased that the sector recorded 13 percent growth last year.
- As a matter of strategic policy, in Jamaica, the portfolios of agriculture and fisheries are combined with those of industry and commerce in order to move the sector further along the value chain and foster greater agro-industrial growth.
- In recent years we created the capacity for the sector to make increased contributions to national food security and self-sufficiency.
- We have therefore developed strategies to support increased production of food items for which we enjoy competitive advantage. Our National (Irish) Potato Production Programme, has resulted in a 90 percent self-sufficiency rate, an increase over the 39 percent rate of 2008.
- Building on this success, we are pursuing an Onion Production Programme, with the goal of increasing local production to 70 percent of demand, from the 12 percent achieved in 2015.
- Already we have attained self-sufficiency in the production of eggs, poultry meat and pork. This has been achieved through deliberate Government policy support, extension services and incentivizing farmers, especially in the wake of natural disasters.

- This resulted in a 13 percent decline in the food import bill, since 2013 when our food import bill was at its peak.
- While we are encouraged by the progress I have mentioned, continued support from FAO and other partners, especially FAO “*in country*” presence, is of great importance.
- Finally, Mr Chairman, let me recognize the important role of the Conference in shaping a global agenda for agriculture, aligned with the sustainable development goals set in Agenda 2030.
- You can be assured of Jamaica’s continued support in the achievement of these goals and we will work very closely with FAO in the years ahead.
- I thank you.