

**Statement delivered by**  
**His Excellency Floy Green**  
**Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries of Jamaica**  
**on the occasion of the**  
**42nd Session of the FAO Conference (14-18 June 2021)**  
**15 June 2021**

*Thank you very much Chair,  
Director-General Dr. Qu Dongyu,  
Secretary General and other distinguished members of the FAO Team, including Crispim Moreira our  
Country Manager,  
Excellencies and Colleague Ministers,  
Observers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen*

If there was any doubt across our collective minds about the critical need for us to eradicate poverty and end hunger in all forms, then this pandemic, I am sure, would have removed that doubt. If there was any lingering debate about the essential nature of Agriculture and Fisheries and our agri-food systems in achieving those goals, then this pandemic has removed the necessity of that debate. If there were any remaining questions about the fundamental nature of the FAO, to galvanize the world to transform its approach to food systems, food security and importantly our food heroes, then this pandemic has allowed all those questions to be answered.

Director-General, it is against this backdrop that I commend your leadership, especially during a time like this. Your reforms have been visionary and at the same time practical, leading to the structural change across FAO such as the establishment of a Chief-Economist and a Chief Scientist, and importantly providing a permanent seat at the table for youth and women. More importantly, however, your changes to make the FAO country offices more engaging and integral are bearing fruit and are helping us to transform our own food systems locally and across the region through technical assistance and as such, especially in this difficult time, we are grateful.

Where is our reality? The pandemic has had a more severe impact on small island developing States pushing us further away from the SDGs and calling for the urgent need for us here, members of the FAO, to move from international policy and strategy to on-the-ground action. The time for action is now.

As we discuss the state of food, it is worth noting that in my own island home, despite the challenges of the pandemic we were able to record a 1.2 percent growth in our food production last year. However, with the fall out of the worldwide tourism industry, our farmers lost their main markets and we have seen firsthand the shortcomings of our logistics network and our cold chain networks, leading to significant loss and wastage, and potential food insecurity. The Government had to directly intervene through a USD 2 million programme to buy excess agricultural produce and redistribute it to the vulnerable. The need for the FAO and our development partners to help Small Island Developing States establish appropriate storage and cold chain logistics is a priority.

There is however, Director-General, another greater threat to our food security. The majority of our Small Island Developing States depend on the importation of inputs to drive their own agricultural sector,

especially our livestock industry with critical imports of animal feed. The significant rise in costs have put those sectors at risk. It is critical that FAO take action in helping Small Island Developing States to research appropriate alternate feed stock from local sources that can enable a sustainable and resilient food system, especially in relation to the livestock sector.

This has to be a part of the renewed drive by the FAO to ensure that developing countries are on the cutting edge of region specific research.

Nationally, colleagues, we have embarked on crafting a “New Face of Food” and as such continue to take important steps to ensure the incorporation of youth and women upon the clear recognition that they are critical to rural transformation and the establishment of viable food systems. Through policy we have mandated a percentage of benefits and land that are reserved for youth and women in our drive to create better lives. Specialty programmes, such as our “Advocate Council” to provide youth input in shaping agricultural policy, and our “Rural Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Programme”, which provides direct training and mentorship and grants to help our youth, is helping us to build a more inclusive sector. There is, however, a reality. The financial systems of Small Island Developing States are often not developed enough to support agricultural enterprise, especially led by youth and women. The studies are clear. The FAO, as it moves from strategy to action, has to utilize its significant reach and network of our developmental partners and the private sector to mobilize resources that can help youth, especially across Latin America and the Caribbean, to embark on a career in agriculture.

Yesterday, our Guest Speaker at the McDougall Memorial Lecture, Bill Gates, rightly noted that those who contribute the least to our changing climate are impacted the most. The agri-food systems in our Small Island Developing States are at greatest risk, especially those in the Caribbean and the Pacific. Extended periods of drought and periods of intensive rainfall have been destroying gains that our farmers have been making. Access to and adoption of climate-smart technology is the answer, with the need for our food heroes to be able to practice more precision-based agriculture and protected agriculture with significant focus on soil regeneration and water conservation. As a Government we continue to expand our irrigation networks and enhance our training of our farmers regarding more strategic use of inputs and new technologies.

The most effective technologies, concepts of big data and the world’s finest innovations still remain largely out of the reach of rural farmers. As we engage in these discussions and prepare for the UN Food Systems Summit, we must leverage the world’s major technology companies to provide appropriate climate-smart technologies to assist the developing world if our food systems are to be sustainable.

*Chair,  
Director-General and  
Colleagues,*

As I close, now more than ever, every Small Island Developing State cannot be adjudged on their income levels with no reference to the increased threats that are faced by climate change. The Hand-in-Hand initiative is an excellent one and should be expanded to incorporate more of Latin America and the Caribbean. The pandemic has shown us that we cannot succeed without global action. Jamaica is committed to playing our part in achieving our Sustainable Development Goals and to working with FAO to build back better, creating a more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food system that focuses on better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life, which importantly leaves no-one behind.

Thank you.