



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS***

ON

***AGENDA ITEM 24: AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT,
FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION***

**IN THE SECOND COMMITTEE
OF THE 74TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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FINAL TEXT

Mr. Chairman,

Jamaica aligns itself with the statements delivered by the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Guyana on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and Belize on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

Jamaica has long recognized the contribution of agriculture to sustainable development at the national, regional and global levels. We also recognize that a robust enabling framework is critical for the transformation of our agriculture sector, in order to prepare it to effectively confront systemic challenges at all levels. It is against this background that I deliver these brief remarks.

Our agriculture sector represents a key driver of economic growth and development and remains the backbone of the rural economy. It is also an important contributor to GDP, employment, foreign exchange earnings, rural life, environmental sustainability and food security.

Conversely, there are a number of challenges that we face domestically which include:

- The need for farmers to have long-term, profitable market access;
- For young entrepreneurs to receive appropriate financing for the establishment of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs); and
- The need to make more affordable the cost of inputs, such as seedlings.

We must also curb the over-reliance on imported agricultural products, especially those that can be grown locally. The imbalance in agricultural trade is evident when one considers that Jamaica's food import bill in 2018 was over US\$ 900 million, whilst our export of agricultural products was a mere US\$217 million. This is unacceptable in a country so fertile and it poses a serious risk for our efforts to achieve national food security.

The vulnerability of the agriculture sector to external shocks, in particular the impact of climate change, remains a persistent challenge. In the last 25 years, Jamaica's agricultural sector has suffered direct losses in excess of J\$30 billion from hurricane damage alone. In addition to the long-term impacts on our economic and social development, disasters also increase our external imbalances, as more debt is incurred to finance unplanned post-disaster expenditures. We must, therefore, speed-up our efforts to build community and national level resilience to disasters.

Mr. Chairman,

We are cognizant of the vulnerability of the food industry to the impact of unpredictable weather patterns, and have sought to incorporate climate-smart policies to secure the future of our food supply. Over the past three decades, we have experienced increased floods, tropical storms, landslides, prolonged drought and hurricanes. In order to mitigate these challenges we are implementing programmes geared towards sustainable food production and have instituted measures to better manage our water resources.

The adoption of sustainable farming practices and the planting of crops that can withstand erratic weather conditions will enable the agriculture sector to provide greater and more consistent levels of support for the economy. We

have introduced climate resilient practices into agriculture, fisheries, agro-processing and farm extension services into targeted communities.

Another example of these initiatives includes the Community-Based Climate Resilience (CBCR) project, which targets farming communities. This project is designed to increase the sustainability of our fishing industry by facilitating community based climate resilience among targeted fishing and fish farming communities.

Mr. Chairman,

We recognize the valuable contribution of forest cover to healthy ecosystems, fostering good soil, increased rainfall and better air quality. This recognition extends to fruit trees, which provide a healthy alternative food source as well as environmental benefits. In addition to increasing forest cover, we have committed to planting 5 million fruit trees over a five year period.

We are also supporting a range of traditional and emerging industries including bamboo, cannabis, Sea Island cotton, hemp, castor bean, coconut, along with orchard crops such as mangoes. Bamboo, for instance, has the potential to replace plastic and polystyrene containers, thereby reducing the pollution challenge bespoiling our oceans.

Mr. Chairman,

We are committed to ensuring that the people of Jamaica have access to a constant and nutritious supply of food. In this regard, we will:

- Continue to encourage the production of local food through the “Eat What You Grow Campaign”;

- Address the nutritional and health needs of our school children, through our national School Feeding Programme, which is based on local nutritious and indigenous ingredients; and
- Promote investments in agro-parks and agro-economic zones;
- Maximize the number of improved and scientifically validated technologies, to increase quantity, quality and value of small farmer production output;
- Expand and modernize the use of idle lands for increased economic activity; and

Mr. Chairman,

Jamaica's national agriculture development strategy foresees the transformation of agriculture into a market driven, technologically enabled sector that creates strong linkages with other sectors while revitalizing rural communities.

Mr. Chairman,

Jamaica remains committed and stands ready to work with our partners in ensuring that the 'future of food' is nutrition-driven, efficient, safe, respectful of planetary boundaries, stable and resilient.

Thank you.