

**Statement delivered by  
His Excellency Floyd Green  
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining of Jamaica  
on the occasion of the  
43rd Session of the FAO Conference (July 1-7, 2023)  
5 July 2023**

Chairperson,

Delegates,

Jamaica, the land of wood and water, is pleased to be participating at the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference.

As a Small Island Developing State, climate resilience and adaptation strategies are essential for the agricultural sector amid increased intensity and frequency of natural disasters, which have had a major negative impact on production.

Agriculture plays a crucial role in the development of Jamaica, contributing 8 percent to the GDP and 15.54 percent of our employment.

Our focus, therefore Chairperson, is now on transforming the agricultural sector bearing in mind the Four Betters. Our focus is on food and nutrition security, poverty reduction, improved livelihood, reduced dependence on imports, increased use of climate smart technologies, mitigating loss and damage from natural disasters, value chain development, export, expansion and of course alignment with the SDGs, particularly SDGs 1, 2, 12 and 14, as well as infrastructure development.

In this regard, the Conference's thematic focus is strategic, timely and all embracing, especially in light of the impact of climate change on our food systems.

The development of infrastructure, policy and international cooperation to successfully harness the value of water is fundamental to Jamaica's thrust to pursue improved agricultural productivity as a key driver for economic growth.

Chairperson, Jamaica has identified approximately 200 000 ha of irrigable lands for the development of irrigation conveyance and water support systems.

So far, we have been successful in developing and operationalizing 31 446.63 ha which represents 15 percent of our overall target. This has been accomplished through several infrastructure projects within our agro-economic zones, Agro-parks and production zones.

We are in the process of implementing two of our larger irrigation projects to date. The Essex Valley Agricultural Development Project and the Southern Plains Agricultural Development Project (SPAD), with a projected spend of over USD 64 million.

The projects aim at developing a state-of-the-art supply chain constituting the installation of pressurized irrigation systems, improve irrigation, drainage, and farm roads and flood control systems covering 1 605 ha of land. They are expected to impact over 3 000 persons.

An additional six projects, comprising 6 126 ha are currently in the pre-project development stage to include various surveys such as cadastral. This includes the very important Pedro Plain Agricultural Development Project, which is expected to take water from our Black River, our longest river, to over 4 103 ha in the bread basket parish of St. Elizabeth at a projected cost of USD 200 million.

Jamaica continues to work with our local, bilateral and multilateral partners in seeking to buildout our remaining irrigable lands in the short to medium term.

We are growing local supply chains, value chains and claiming market share in export markets. This is being done in an environment where women, youth and people with disability are integrated into the strategic focus to improve our water security.

Chairperson, Jamaica is serious in reducing our carbon footprint, and is very deliberate in promoting carbon sequestering. In this regard, Jamaica is on a path to fully integrate renewable from solar into our irrigation pumping systems.

So far, we have designed and implemented photovoltaic systems at several of our pumping sites and have been seeing a reduction in our cost of operation and a similar reduction in our carbon footprint.

Chairperson, the unfortunate reality however is that we the small island developing states who contribute the least to this climate crisis are suffering the most yet still benefiting the least from the funds earmarked for climate action. FAO must lead in changing this reality. It is the smallholder farmer, in Jamaica, in Samoa, in Barbados, in Seychelles, in Maldives, who are less able to source water and ill equipped to adjust to intense bouts of torrential rainfall and flooding. We know this, every one sitting here knows this, and we reiterate it in our speeches across multiple conferences, yet we gather with our 2030 goals slipping from our grasp. As the Great Song writer Roberta Nesta Marley said “in the abundance of water, the fool is thirsty”.

It is time for action, action at scale that can provide sustainable reform to our agri-food systems. Helping to provide irrigation infrastructure especially in light of the El Nino phenomenon, working on biodiversity conservation across the Caribbean, working with our artisan fishers to up skill and retool, working with financiers to design an appropriate parametric insurance system, to create a system where our small holder youth and women can access financing to transform their own agri-food systems. It can be done, it must be done.

In closing, Chairperson, Jamaica joins other delegations in offering our congratulations to Director-General Qu Dongyu on his re-election. We believe that he will create lasting change and we support his thrust to use the FAO as a vehicle to drive global food and nutrition security, agricultural productivity, improved livelihood of producers, resilience in the sector, and to contribute to addressing the impacts of climate change while ensuring the management of our water resources not only for ourselves but the world at large and for our generations to come.

I thank you.