



Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Mining
SECTORAL PRESENTATION 2026
By the Honourable Floyd O. Green, MP
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining
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Theme: Growing Forward: The Blueprint for a Better Future

Introductory Remarks

Madam Speaker, Isaiah 40:31 says, “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

Madam Speaker, I stand here today by the grace of God and His continued mercy. I remain grateful for His guidance, His covering and the strength He provides.

I also thank the many Jamaicans across this country who have lifted me up in prayer, especially after Hurricane Melissa. I am forever grateful.

To my wife Kerida and my son Nathaniel, thank you for your grounding, your patience and your love

Madam Speaker, I have served during the periods of COVID-19, Hurricane Beryl and Hurricane Melissa, and in those moments, I have had a front-row view of the leadership of The Most Honourable Andrew Holness. He was made for times like these and has proven himself to be an astute, effective, caring and action-oriented leader. I remain grateful for the confidence he has placed in me to lead these sectors as we move from resilience to reconstruction and continue **Growing Forward**.

To my Cabinet colleagues and fellow Members of Parliament, thank you for your continued support and encouragement.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate your firm and even-handed approach to this Honourable House.

To my ever-present State Minister, my guide and friend, Franklin Witter; my extremely hardworking Permanent Secretary, Dermon Spence; and the dedicated team across the Ministry and its agencies, thank you.

Madam Speaker, I stand here because of the people of South West St. Elizabeth. I have never left their side, and I never will. In the Constituency Debates this year, I will outline our rebuilding trajectory and the path forward for the people I serve.

Madam Speaker, the truth is, the world is going through a very uncertain period right now. Every evening when we turn on the news, we are seeing conflict, war, disruptions to trade routes and growing instability across major economies. And while those conflicts may seem far from Jamaica, the effects eventually reach all of us here at home.

Growing Forward is more than sharing our recovery journey after Hurricane Melissa, it's about ensuring systems of resilience and adaptation are ingrained in the ecosystem of our sectors, so that we are not only forward planning for the changing climate and global insecurities but that we are implementing the actions that can truly lead to transformation. It is about ensuring that the youth in Bog Hole, Annotto Bay or Pennants can see a future in Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining.

That is why, Madam Speaker, we have not been sitting and waiting for problems to arrive at our doorstep. Over the last several months, we have been meeting with our farmers, producers, distributors, regional partners and international agencies to strengthen our preparedness,

secure supply arrangements and identify practical measures to protect production and support our people through this period.

We are confident that if we are able to develop our production systems to truly feed ourselves in times of rain, drought or war; if we can capitalise on the blue economy and reduce our importation of seafood, if we can develop new industries of mining and move from primary to value-added production, our people would thrive, our rural communities would do better and, our country, Jamaica the land we all love would fulfil her true potential.

Today I present to this Honourable House: Growing Forward: The Blueprint for a Better Future.

National Agricultural Development Plan

Madam Speaker, a little over a year ago the Prime Minister directed that we develop a 10-year agricultural plan for Jamaica. While the Ministry has always had mid-term strategic plans, a broad-based more holistic developmental plan that would span multiple terms and chart the transformational direction of Agriculture was needed. It is a viewpoint that we, at the Ministry, had shared and luckily,

had started some groundwork towards. It was also a view that the Opposition, through their former Spokesperson, had shared in this very House, and a recommendation that has been featured multiple times in editorials of both the Gleaner and the Jamaica Observer. Members, I am pleased to announce that with the help of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), we have completed the draft 10-year National Agricultural Development Plan.

The Plan focuses on four main thematic areas which include Resilient, Sustainable & Efficient Production Systems; Competitive & Innovative Agri-Businesses & Value Chains, three, Efficient Agricultural Trade and four: Food Security & Nutrition. It also focuses on a number of cross-cutting themes including Research, Innovation and Technology, Enhanced Agricultural Workforce, Youth, Gender and Praedial Larceny.

Today I am making the draft public for feedback and suggestions before finalisation. I am sharing a copy via email with you our Parliamentarians and we are posting the draft on our website at www.moa.gov.jm, so that every agricultural stakeholder can provide feedback before we finalise the plan. Comments and suggestions can be submitted via email at nadp@moa.gov.jm.

We will also be hosting a validation workshop for our critical stakeholders to provide input for the finalisation of this vital plan on May 21, 2026.

Madam Speaker, it is our intention to have a 10-year agricultural development plan for Jamaica tabled for approval by the second quarter of this financial year.

This plan will be the blueprint for a better Jamaica.
Growing Forward!

Agriculture

Where We Are: Food Security and Nutrition [Thematic Area 4]

Members, as we seek to finalise our National Agricultural Development Plan, I will use today's presentation to outline some of where we are, the work we have already been undertaking to set the foundation for the plan and some of the main initiatives for this year.

In 2025, Jamaica's domestic crop sector produced 811,244 tonnes, representing a 5.7% increase over 2024 and the second highest level of output on record. This performance is particularly significant when considered against the

impact of Hurricane Melissa, which reduced the fourth quarter' s output by 22.1%.

In other words, a year after Hurricane Beryl our Agriculture sector had rebounded so strongly that even with the impact of Melissa we hit our second highest production numbers ever. This is a testament to the hard work and resilience of our farmers but also to the fact that this Government has been building a more resilient Agriculture sector through strategic investments over the last 10 years.

This resilience was significantly tested by Hurricane Melissa. Hurricane Melissa now stands on record as the most catastrophic weather event in the history of Jamaica' s Agriculture sector resulting in J\$36.12 billion in damages. The World Bank later estimated the overall impact and its multiplier effects to the sector to be over J\$60 billion.

We have earnestly set about on our recovery:

- Within a week we were able to restore 75% of our irrigation customers through back up power generation, and over 90% within a month providing water to our

customers for 4 months free of cost, an investment of approximately 30 million dollars.

- Providing free Land Preparation through RADA and Agro Investment, preparing 2,300 hectares at a value of J\$80 million
- Providing direct support to specific crop lines including seeds, fertilizer, chemicals:

\$150 million for fruits and vegetables

\$120 million towards traditional crops such as coffee, cocoa and spices

\$100 million for banana and plantain

\$100 million was provided towards yam recovery

\$50 million for other crops such as sweet potatoes,

dasheen, papaya and cassava,

\$40 million for hot peppers

\$39 million for Apiculture providing 5, 590 bags of bee sugar and transportation support.

Madam Speaker, in addition to field crops, we have also provided support to the tune of J\$150 million for livestock production, to include broilers, pigs and small ruminants. We have also provided another J\$150 million for protected agriculture for the rehabilitation and construction of over 500,000 square feet of production and nursery houses, which we are presently distributing. This was further supported by approximately J\$150 million for tools and equipment distributed under the Ministry' s recovery programme.

Madam Speaker, we have seen the results. Some expected that 6 months after Hurricane Melissa, Jamaica' s agricultural sector would have still been in shortage with high prices being the order of the day. This has not been our reality from as early as January, 3 months after Hurricane Melissa we saw the tremendous bounce back of local vegetable production. Our markets have been awash with some of the finest produce, with the Bank of Jamaica assessing *“that the direct impact of Hurricane Melissa on inflation was less severe than initially anticipated [due to] A faster-than-*

expected improvement in agricultural supplies” Our vegetable lines hit their highest ever production numbers in the 1st quarter of 2026, doing 12 percent better than the first quarter of 2025.

The response of the agricultural sector to Hurricane Melissa reflects a true story of quick recovery, significant resilience and continued growth, even in the face of adversities, and our farmers must be acknowledged.

This does not mean that all is well, or that we are out of the proverbial woods or that all our farmers have received support. That is not the case, we still have more work to be done to recover from Hurricane Melissa, as there are crop lines which, based on the extent of the damage, require more long-term support.

Additionally, the recovery effort has been compounded by global realities. Across the world, food systems are under increasing pressure. Global conflicts have impacted the agricultural sector, resulting in supply chain disruptions, and rising input costs, especially fertilizer, agrochemicals and fuel. This continues to shape how nations

produce, distribute and access food. Jamaica is not insulated from these realities.

It is within this context that we must confront the simple truth that now more than ever, we must build an agricultural sector that is resilient, productive and increasingly self-sufficient

National Production and Productivity Programme

Madam Speaker, central to this effort is the strengthening of agricultural production through targeted investment and structured support to farmers. Under the National Production and Productivity Programme, a total of J\$1.2 billion is allocated to drive production for this financial year. Often, there is talk of a fund for agriculture, but one of the things this Government has successfully been able to do, is to institutionalise the funding for agriculture. As such, there has been significant increase programme funding from about J\$400 million in 2019 to \$J1 billion in 2021. This Government has maintained those levels, spending over 5 billion in the last 5 years directly on driving production. This is separate from our capital spend of funds to drive

recovery. Therefore, the increase numbers and resilience that we report are not by chance.

Hurricane Melissa Recovery Phase 2

Phase one of our Hurricane Melissa Recovery Programme has gone extremely well, but we appreciate that some areas require longer term intervention and some farmers have not yet received any support. To this end, Phase 2 will seek to expand support in the areas needed, including additional support for our livestock farmers, our yam farmers, our coffee farmers. We will also be exploring a voucher system to provide direct support to those who were impacted but are yet to receive any support. The initial Phase 2 recovery programme is costed at J\$250 million, which we hope the Ministry of Finance will directly support. Until then, we will continue to finance the intervention.

Backyard Gardening Programme

As we continue on our drive to strengthen Food Security, the Ministry will continue to implement our Backyard Garden programme. This year, we will target the distribution of

5,000 kits, alongside targeted interventions for aeroponic towers.

National Fruit Tree Crop Programme

Hurricane Melissa wiped out thousands of fruit trees, especially across the hardest hit parishes. Under the National Fruit Tree Crop Programme we have redoubled our efforts to establish 3,000 acres of orchard crops by 2035, with a focus on ackee, breadfruit, mango, coconut and avocado.

Last financial year, with the support of Trees That Feed, we have introduced three improved avocado varieties: Hass, Carla and Semil 34. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that this game changing initiative is expected to support year-round production of avocado in Jamaica. This will play a significant role in strengthening domestic supply, export potential as well as import substitution.

We will continue our citrus redevelopment programme as we seek to revive our citrus industry. We are also making strides with the Wambugu Apple which could serve as a replacement for the popular American apple.

I have tasked Don McGlashan and Locksley Waite to work with the Forestry Department, our seed certification unit and nurseries to rapidly expand our planting material base and start a drive this year to ensure that every household has at least one fruit tree.

Seed and Nursery Certification Unit

Madam Speaker, no serious steps can be made towards Food Security unless there is focus on your planting material, especially in this changing climate.

To this end, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that under the Plant Quarantine/Produce Inspection Branch, on May 1, 2026 we opened the Seed and Nursery Certification Unit at the Bodles Research Station in St. Catherine. This new Unit will ensure the quality, genetic purity, and phytosanitary integrity of seeds and nursery stock used across the country. It will also allow us to ramp up the production of seeds but importantly in keeping with international standards.

Livestock Development

Livestock development is central to reducing import dependency, stabilising domestic protein supply, strengthening rural incomes, and expanding agro-processing opportunities.

I am pleased to announce that we are in the final stages of the development of a National Livestock Policy. It is expected to reach Green Paper by the end of Quarter Two of this financial year.

The policy is expected to:

- Modernise breeding and genetic improvement systems
- Strengthen animal health, veterinary services, and biosecurity
- Improve feed security and local feed production capacity
- Promote climate-resilient livestock housing and management practices

- Enhance food safety, traceability, and quality standards
- Support value-added processing in meat and dairy production

This Policy will provide the framework to reposition the livestock subsector as a modern, competitive, and resilient pillar of Jamaican agriculture.

While we conclude the policy framework, our work to strengthen the livestock sector continues.

Through the Ministry's Veterinary Services, Jamaica has acquired and installed four critical pieces of state-of-the-art equipment valuing over J\$75.3 million, which will allow us to revitalise and bolster the nation's livestock genetic bank at the Bodles Research Station and support farmers in expanding their livestock herds through artificial insemination and embryo transfer technologies. These include a Fill and Seal Machine and Apparatus for semen collection and processing and a Cryogenic Manufacturing Plant for the production of liquid nitrogen used in the freezing and storage of semen.

To add to that, Madam Speaker, the Jamaica Dairy Development Board will be commencing Phase Two of the Genetic Improvement Programme which includes genetic infusion strategies like the importation of animals, semen and embryos from the United States. While the work continues on the Jamaica Hope, we will be seeking to import 200 heads of high yielding dairy cows to ensure we have access to the best quality genetics.

On the small ruminants side, the Ministry continues to strengthen the genetic mix of local herds. To facilitate this, Madam Speaker, under the Ministry's National Small Ruminant Development Programme, we continue the rapid multiplication and expansion of our small ruminant herd across the country with the importation of 255 goats and 152 artificial inseminations for the 2025/2026 financial year. Another 1000 goats are set to be imported this year as we push to ramp up our herd numbers and reduce imports

Resilient, Sustainable and Efficient Production Systems (Thematic Area 1)

Climate Resilient Production Systems

Drought Mitigation and Water Security

Madam Speaker, the report from the Meteorological Service of Jamaica has projected that Jamaica will experience drier conditions and elevated heat levels with the possibility of a protracted drought.

In this financial year, RADA will intensify our drought mitigation strategy. This will include embarking on a J\$145 million mini water catchment pond construction programme targeting major agricultural production zones across some of the parishes most susceptible to drought, including St. Elizabeth, Manchester, Clarendon, St. Mary, Westmoreland, Trelawny and St. Ann.

Madam Speaker, a total of J\$140 million was spent on heavy equipment. These units will now be strategically deployed

across targeted farming communities to execute our mini water catchment programme.

Additional measures to mitigate drought will include the:

- Trucking of water in collaboration with the National Irrigation Commission and private operators. To augment this, the NIC is bolstering its fleet by the addition of two water trucks later this year.
- Rehabilitation of existing catchment ponds/community tanks
- Provision of plastic and grass mulch solutions aimed at improving moisture retention and preserving soil conditions during prolonged dry spells
- Provision of drip irrigation systems and water tanks.

Madam Speaker, these interventions are being rolled out now, before the onset of full drought and form part of a wider national effort to strengthen resilience and ensure that even in difficult climate conditions, our farmers can continue feeding this country.

Madam Speaker, the truth is that even the land of wood and water must be prudent in managing our natural resources.

The biggest question now is: where will water come from in the future?

It is for that reason, Madam Speaker, that I am pleased to announce that the National Irrigation Commission (NIC) is strengthening the exploration of non-traditional water sources, including the use of saline and grey water-based technologies, as part of Jamaica's long-term water resilience strategy.

The NIC is also in the process of procuring advanced aquifer assessment and monitoring technologies for all pre-investment sites. This, Madam Speaker, will enable us to assess aquifer levels for the monitoring and management of abstraction rates to support conservation efforts. The commission will also be undertaking a comprehensive review and update of the nation's National Irrigation Development Master Plan, enabling us to design smarter investment interventions for our irrigation sector.

The NIC is embarking on the further buildout of irrigation infrastructure across the country to the tune of 6,000 hectares, bringing arable lands under irrigation across the country closer to 25%. This is inclusive of the Pedro Plain Irrigation Expansion project which will be 4,100 hectares along with 4 smaller projects, approximating 2,000 hectares. The overall cost of these projects is around J\$29 billion.

Madam Speaker, I can assure the Farmers of Essex Valley that we will be there turning on your irrigation supply before the end of 2026. Amity Hall - Bridge Pen, by the fourth quarter of this financial year which is in 2027.

Growing Forward with Agro-Parks

Madam Speaker, in 2025 we marked a significant step in strengthening Jamaica's agricultural investment landscape by transforming over 700 acres of former sugarcane lands into irrigated, productive farmland for diversified agriculture through the Parnassus Agro Park. The initiative has been providing farmers and investors with access to modern irrigation infrastructure and business support services, enabling year-round production and improved productivity.

Even beyond this project, the agro-park agenda is a top priority for this Ministry. Last year, in my presentation, I announced an Agro-Park for each parish. Today, I am happy to update you that we have identified potential locations for all additional parishes and in advanced preparation for the following:

- St. Mary - New Pen (Well already done and pressurised irrigation system being designed)
- Portland - Low Leyton (Production zone with design work being done for river management and training, storage and road network)
- St. Ann - Hinds Town and Lydford (designs advanced, groundbreaking for Lydford this year)

We are conducting our early-stage feasibility studies in:

- Westmoreland - Frome
- Hanover - Orange Bay and Spring Valley
- St. James - Montpelier
- Trelawny - Ettingdon and Long Pond

Madam Speaker, we have also embarked on an Agro-Park Redevelopment Programme to improve the infrastructure at our existing agro-parks. This is inclusive of the Ebony Park Greenhouse Rehabilitation Project, which will rehabilitate three greenhouses at the Ebony Park Agro Park. The project will restore protected production capacity, increase ginger and turmeric output, improve crop quality, and strengthen climate-resilient agricultural production systems.

Protected Agriculture

Madam Speaker, as we grow forward in building resilience, protected agriculture is a fundamental part of our strategy. Today I inform the nation that we are embarking on the largest outlay of protected agriculture structures in our history.

This Government is spending over 800 million dollars, constructing 95 Greenhouses across 4 parishes before the end of this calendar year:

Mcho, Clarendon – 40 greenhouses

Lancaster in South Manchester – 10 greenhouses

Water Valley, St Ann – 20 greenhouses

Damhead in St Catherine – 10 greenhouses

Black Stone Edge St Ann – 15 green houses

In Content, Manchester we are transforming our greenhouse cluster into protected agriculture production zones complete with storage facility and new farm road.

Under the Green Climate Fund’ s Adapt Jamaica Project, we are seeking to design and build greenhouses that can withstand category 5 hurricanes, seeking to spend over 1.5 billion dollars over the next 5 years on protected agriculture. This is a major step in bolstering climate

resilience, while boosting production and strengthening food security.

Organic Production Systems/Organic Agriculture

Madam Speaker, the uncertainty in today's world commands that we search for more local inputs and prioritize the growing systems which focus on local methodologies and healthier more sustainable outcomes. Organic Farming is a major part of the solution.

Through the Jamaica Soil Regeneration and Fertility Improvement Project, the Ministry has provided a 50 million grant to the organic sector. Last year alone, over 1,380 persons were trained, and since the start of the project in 2024, a total of 2,345 persons have been trained in the 11 soil and water management strategies across all fourteen parishes. The project is now slated to move into its final phase, focusing on conducting research trials using soil and water management strategies to increase organic crop production and overall soil health.

We are now developing a National Organic Agriculture Policy which will establish the framework to consistently support this sector.

This includes:

- Certification systems aligned with international standards
- Capacity building for farmers and extension officers
- Market development strategies

As a part of this drive, we are in consultation with the private sector to facilitate the production of local organic fertilizer. This initiative will not only cushion farmers from rising input costs, but also support more sustainable agricultural practices, reduce organic waste and improve soil health across the sector.

Post Harvest and Food waste Management

Madam Speaker, that is why as we Grow Forward, we have to address some of the age-old challenges facing our sector.

Post-harvest losses continue to affect farmer income and food availability.

The Ministry is employing a holistic strategy to not only address this problem season to season, but to transform the ecosystem.

Increased Storage

Madam Speaker, we have already commissioned the J\$9.8 billion Essex Valley Agro-Processing Facility, which provides storage, aggregation and processing capacity equivalent to approximately 22 (40ft) containers of produce.

Madam Speaker, at Kirkvine, significant progress has already been made, with the facility now approximately 78% complete. This J\$100 million facility is now on track for completion by the end of this month.

At Coleyville, rehabilitation of the existing facility, with a capacity of approximately 2,635 cubic metres, at a

cost of over J\$300 million, is now underway. This rehabilitation work is expected to end the first quarter of 2027.

The Flagaman Cold Storage Facility under the CARICOM Agri-Boost Project was established last year and will be put into operation by the end of this month.

I am pleased to announce that this year we will be establishing three semi-industrial onion dryers across our main onion areas in St Thomas, St Catherine and Clarendon. We have earmarked 80 million for this activity.

Competitive & Innovative Agri-Businesses & Value Chains (Thematic Area 2)

Madam Speaker, we are focused on building competitive and innovative agri-businesses and value chains, because the future of agriculture in Jamaica must move beyond primary production alone. It must be about enterprise. It must be about value. And it must be about positioning agriculture as a viable and profitable business. We have been doing this and so, I am pleased to announce, Madam Speaker, that

investor confidence remains strong, with our first ever Jamaica Agri-Business Investment Forum held in 2025 generating a potential investment pipeline in excess of J\$4 billion. This includes proposals for investments in pork and spice processing, aquaculture development and export logistics infrastructure.

Caribbean Broilers just announced a \$1 billion investment in Agriculture over the next 12 months to strengthen egg and pork supply

Walkers Wood is expanding their production capacity threefold and investing in the Parnassus Agro Park.

And the female-run Believe Farms, that started with a dream, have moved from 5 to 22 acres of production and are now doing the Aunt Sueidi line of sweet potato chips.

At every level, investment is happening.

Madam Speaker, for the sector to grow, our farmers must have access to the financing and risk protection necessary to invest with confidence.

Insurance

In 2021, the Ministry engaged the private sector around appropriate insurance protection for our agriculture sector from weather-related peril. Weather Protect by GK Insurance was born, a parametric insurance scheme which guards against extreme wind, rain or drought. 5 years later, hundreds of farmers have benefited. In fact, in Hurricane Melissa 134 farmers benefited and were able to get their payout weeks after the Hurricane, including 30 members of the Jamaica Network of Rural Women who approached the insurance on a communal basis. The truth is that “hundreds” needs to be “thousands”. These extreme weather events are part of our every-year reality and as such, insuring crops against these perils not only makes our farmers more bankable but also gives them the security to recover faster. Today I am pleased to announce that as we Grow Forward, the Government will be providing J\$50 million to provide insurance coverage for 5000 farmers, prioritising our agro-parks, youth and women on a first-come, first-served basis. Weather Protect

has been revised and will now offer all year coverage, with new triggers and higher payouts.

Agro-processing

The Ministry will continue to facilitate agro-processors through direct engagement with our farmers to enter into firm contractual arrangements to supply agro-processors with their needs. Additionally, the build out of agro-processing facilities like that in Essex Valley will allow the Government to engage private sector partners to establish or expand their agro-processing production.

Madam Speaker, RADA has to play a more active role, we will be revamping the RADA Incubators starting with St James and St. Elizabeth where we provide a space with more suitable equipment for small agro-processors to engage in recipe formulation, small-scale production and start to build scale. The RADA Agri-Mart will also provide an outlet to sell these products.

Additionally, the RADA home economics unit will be seeking to engage our fast-food companies and agro-processors with recipes that they have developed utilising local produce for commercialisation. We will be also engaging with the Ministry of Education to develop a slate of products for distribution, utilising excess agricultural produce.

Efficient Agricultural Trade and Marketing Systems [Thematic area 3]

Madam Speaker, production and value chains must be supported by strong systems of trade and marketing.

Strengthening Agricultural Marketing and Distribution Systems

To this end, Madam Speaker, under our broader push to modernise agricultural marketing systems, I am happy to announce that RADA has developed and embarked on Phase One of the National Agricultural Monitoring and Management System (NAMMS) to collect, analyse and use data across the sector. This digital platform centralises crop production

data, giving us real-time visibility into what is being planted, where it is located and how it is progressing through each stage of the crop cycle. This is a predictive, AI-driven tool that will enable better forecasting of supply, respond to disruption and provide farmers with timely information.

So, Madam Speaker, while NAMMS deals with the production side of things, the Ministry's National Agribusiness Logistics Map (NALM) focuses on marketing and distribution. These systems form part of a wider move to bolster the Jamaica Agricultural Marketing Information System (JAMIS), which has been modernised to provide real-time market data, accessible information for farmers and buyers, and improved price transparency.

These allow all stakeholders to operate with better information, and better information leads to better decisions.

Madam Speaker, we are introducing a new digital tool that will place timely, reliable agricultural data directly into

the hands of Members of this Honourable House, strengthening our ability to make informed decisions on behalf of our constituencies. This platform, the Parliamentary Agricultural Data Explorer (PADE) provides real-time visibility into agricultural activity at the constituency level, allowing you to see what is being produced, where it is happening, and how it is evolving over time.

Members, while the Prime Minister and I, as Minister of Agriculture, will have access to all constituency data, each of you will have your own unique login credentials that will allow you to see what's happening in your individual constituencies.

Importantly, the system also includes a dedicated module focused on farm road infrastructure, giving you clear information on agricultural access roads, including their location, length, the number of farmers they serve, and the types of agricultural activity they support. This will allow for more strategic planning, better prioritisation of infrastructure investments, selection of farm roads, faster

identification of issues affecting farmers and rural communities as well as bolster accountability.

Madam Speaker, this is to ensure that our Members of Parliament are equipped with the tools at their fingertips to lead with precision, respond with speed, and that decisions are grounded in accurate, up-to-date information.

Madam Speaker, strong collaboration with the hotel sector, through our ALEX Platform, has facilitated over J\$452 million of local produce being supplied. Through the collective marketing efforts across the Ministry and agencies, 3.2 million kilograms of farm produce, valued at approximately J\$912 million, have reached markets, benefiting 3,395 farmers for the 2025/2026 financial year. Additionally, Madam Speaker, a total of 30 farmers' markets were held at strategic locations islandwide. To date, 46,374 kilograms of assorted crops have moved through these markets, valued at J\$44,389,182, benefiting over 230 farmers.

Madam Speaker, one of the things our farmers continue to tell us is that they need more reliable spaces to sell their produce and connect directly with consumers. Too often, farmers work hard for months only to struggle to find a stable market at the end of the production cycle. That is why, during this financial year, we will be expanding the Ministry's Farmers' Market initiative through RADA and JAS into additional locations, including Negril, Portland and Portmore. This will also see more frequent execution of our monthly farmer's market held at the Ministry's mainfield to serve residents of Kingston & St. Andrew.

We have seen the strong response to these markets wherever they are introduced because customers appreciate the convenience, the reasonable prices and the opportunity to buy fresh Jamaican produce directly from the people who grow it. For our farmers, it creates a more dependable outlet for their produce and allows them to earn more from their labour. These markets, Madam Speaker, are creating real economic activity within communities while strengthening the

connection between Jamaicans and locally grown food. This is how we are *Growing Forward*.

Madam Speaker, in 2025, the Ministry executed two nationally significant market intelligence studies:

Firstly, with support from the Ministry of Tourism, we completed the Hospitality Demand Study in December 2025. Through this study we acquired evidence-based data and information to align domestic production with tourism and hospitality sector food requirements and to identify import substitution opportunities. This, Madam Speaker, will boost increased supplies of our local produce in the hospitality industry and will support the Hotels' Recognition and Rewards Programme which the Ministry announced last year. Madam Speaker, a committee has been established to develop the framework for a term of reference and criteria for selection of awardees.

Secondly, the National Fish Demand Study was completed in March 2026 to map consumer preferences, purchasing patterns, and market trends for fish and fish products. This study, Madam Speaker, will guide investments in aquaculture, cold

chain infrastructure, and production planning, ensuring that the fisheries sector produces to meet consumer demand.

Madam Speaker, following Hurricane Melissa, we have had to resort to external markets for some of our staple food items to ease the burden and ensure adequate supply. However, we are serious about reducing our food import bill and supporting local agriculture. As such, I am happy to announce that we will embark on a series of market studies to support import substitution. This includes:

- An assessment of opportunities for liquid and powdered egg production for the domestic and manufacturing sectors.
- A study of consumptive demand for ackee for local and export markets.
- An analysis of all food products imported to identify additional opportunities suitable for import substitution.

Trade Facilitation and Export Development

Import Substitution

Madam Speaker, Jamaica's food import bill continues to place significant pressure on foreign exchange and the cost of living. While Jamaica has been able to achieve self-sufficiency in poultry, pork, eggs and most of our vegetable lines (outside of a natural disaster) our consumption of grain and wheat and the increase in import of animal feed plus fish and mutton, still make Jamaica very susceptible to global inflation and supply chain shocks. As a part of our 10-year development plan we will be expanding our import substitution drive.

But Madam Speaker, we are not starting from scratch. Through programmes led by the Ministry, we have already made important progress in reducing import reliance in several areas. The Onion Development Programme has significantly expanded local onion production, our Irish potato programme continues to support greater local supply, and investments in poultry, pork and protected agriculture have helped strengthen domestic production over the years. We will ventilate this more but suffice to

say we will be taking policy and programmatic steps seeking to:

- ◆ Increase local production of components of our Animal feed regime
- ◆ Increase our aquaculture footprint and reduce fish importation
- ◆ Increase small ruminant population and Reduce mutton importation.

Export Expansion

Madam Speaker, trade remains a critical component of agricultural growth, and we have taken steps to strengthen trade facilitation systems.

The Trade Portal, which was launched in April 2025, has already served over 6,000 users, providing access to market opportunities, trade protocols and investment information.

This platform simplifies access to export information and supports exporters at every stage of the process.

Madam Speaker, in this financial year our trade portal will receive major improvements. The portal will be updated with a gateway that will further unlock international marketing opportunities for Jamaican export-ready firms, which will be able to list products and services, provide website links/catalogues, and contact information for the regional and international business community and will provide seamless linkages between importers and exporters of agricultural goods, promoted to a global audience and the diaspora.

In addition, the Ministry has conducted seven export clinics, reaching over 600 individuals.

These clinics provide practical guidance to our exporters on export market requirements and financing options to ensure that exporters are equipped with the knowledge needed to access international markets.

Madam Speaker, as we continue to strengthen our capacity to engage with our international trade organisations, in partnership with the World Trade Organisation, we

conducted four training sessions covering agricultural trade, market access, trade in services, and negotiation techniques, to boost the overall capacity of 120 trade officials to better provide trade-related services to our stakeholders.

On the policy side, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to share that the Cabinet has approved the development of the Trade Traceability Policy, and we intend to complete the Green Paper in this financial year. The policy is designed as a proactive instrument to boost the competitiveness of Jamaica's agricultural exports by providing a farm-to-foreign traceability system for Jamaican products.

Madam Speaker, Jamaica continues to be recognised both internationally and regionally as a leader in the agricultural space. Madam Speaker, I wish to announce that the 20th Anniversary of the Caribbean Week of Agriculture will be held in Jamaica from September 27 to October 2. We expect to host a minimum of over 500 distinguished ladies

and gentlemen, to include Ministers of Agriculture from across the region and representatives of regional and international organisations like the FAO, IICA, CARDI, CAHFSA, CRFM, CARICOM Secretariat, among others. Madam Speaker, it will be held under the theme “The New F.A.C.E. of Caribbean Food Systems - Transformation and Resilience.” For nearly 20 years the Caribbean Week of Agriculture has served as the premier regional forum for technical advancement and high-level policy collaboration for the development of the Caribbean’s agricultural sector. As such, we are confident that this staging will be pivotal in advancing agricultural development and unlocking investment opportunities in Jamaica and the wider region through the leveraging of critical regional and international partnerships in support of the CARICOM 25 by 2025+5 Initiative.

Farm Road Rehabilitation

Madam Speaker, the Ministry understands that for our farmers, reliable road infrastructure is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

Under the Farm Road Rehabilitation Programme, we have made significant strides in strengthening this foundation. For the 2025/2026 financial year, the Ministry has allocated \$900 million which has resulted in the rehabilitation of 52 roads totalling 28 kilometres across 25 constituencies impacting thousands of farmers.

Madam Speaker, it is not enough to just build. We must build for longevity and functionality. As such, as part of our innovative rehabilitation method, the Ministry has undertaken a model that demonstrates resilience and cost-effectiveness in areas most vulnerable to environmental challenges. Thus far, I am happy to announce that we have successfully completed as a pilot, one kilometre of uni-layer soil and concrete road in rural St. Andrew. This has performed excellently thus far, withstanding the impact of

Hurricane Melissa, and will consequently be the first of many.

Madam Speaker, for the 2026/2027 period, using this method, we will be commencing rehabilitation of six highly vulnerable roads across four farming communities. But our work does not stop here. Under the Farm Road Rehabilitation Programme, we are targeting the rehabilitation of 60 roads across agricultural production zones.

Madam Speaker, in addition to the regular farm road programme mentioned, an additional \$800 million was expended on the repairs and rehabilitation of 39 farm roads under Hurricane Melissa recovery. So in total, in one financial year, this Government has done 81 farm roads. That is how you *Grow Forward!*

Research, Innovation and Technology

The forward programme for 2026 – 2027 represents one of the most extensive infrastructure pipelines ever undertaken across Jamaica's agricultural research system with the total budget spanning more than 40 individual projects.

For the upcoming financial year, planned priorities valued at \$950 million will include major works such as:

- Continuation of the construction of a new piggery; commencement of the Construction of Dairy workers' houses and the upgrading two (2) existing small ruminant houses at Bodles Research Station
- Completion of emergency repairs to Administrative Building and major improvement of Fencing at Montpelier Research Station
- Commencement of the Construction of new goat house at Hounslow Research Station
- Commencement of repairs to internal farm road network and establishment of nursery with irrigation, for in situ conservation of exotic plants fruits trees at the Orange River Research Station
- Procurement of Multiple pieces of Farm equipment for Bodles & Orange River Research Stations

Madam Speaker, as labour becomes more challenging for our small farmers, we are quickly moving to put more equipment at the fingertips of our farmers. In fact, Members, we are providing more equipment for RADA in one year than the other side when they were Government provided in 18 years. Last year, between our Hills to Ocean project, our own budget and our recovery budget we have provided:

- 10 rubber wheel tractors
- 18 walk-behind tractors

- 26 soil augurs
- 4 Sprayer Drones
- 3 surveillance drones

These will be placed in the RADA Rental Programme which is being bolstered by reserving an allocation for maintenance

Youth and Agricultural Education

Madam Speaker, in my last Sectoral Presentation, I announced the development of the National Youth in Agriculture Policy. I am happy to announce today that I am tabling the policy as a Green Paper. We have also concluded national public consultations with a wide variety of stakeholders that will inform the finalisation of the policy which will be advanced as a White Paper within Quarter Two of this financial year.

Madam Speaker, the policy will:

- Expand technical and entrepreneurial training
- Provide structured pathways to land and financing
- Promote youth-led climate-smart agriculture
- Improve access to insurance and risk management tools

- Institutionalise youth participation in policy decision-making

We are not merely preparing young people to farm. We are preparing them to build resilient agricultural enterprises in an era of uncertainty.

Through the Jamaica 4-H Clubs, over 38,000 youth have been engaged across the island, supported by more than 156,000 training opportunities, equipping the next generation with the skills required to succeed in modern agriculture.

Programmes such as the Rural Youth Economic Empowerment Programme (RYEEP) continue to provide targeted support to young agri-entrepreneurs, including training, mentorship, and business development support. Additionally, national initiatives such as the Agribusiness Pitch Competition are helping to connect youth to industry experts, as well as providing agri-business training, business mentorship, enterprise incubation, and access to market and financing.

Madam Speaker, our youth represent the new frontier in persons engaged in agriculture, and it would be remiss of us not to recognize and support the demonstration of interest of Jamaica's youth in the agriculture space. Madam Speaker, in the last two years, we have seen a significant increase in youth farmer registrations. In fact, 1 in every 5 registration is a youth farmer; totalling nearly 4000 new registrants, to include persons with disabilities.

Madam Speaker, our work has paid off, and we are seeing an influx of youth in the areas of crops and livestock production, as well as protected agriculture. Youth now occupy up from 25% of lands under the Agro-Park Programme. In fact, for the 2025/2026 financial year, 200 acres of land was provided to youth, representing 34% of all lands that were available for lease during that period, outperforming our target of 20%.

Madam Speaker, working with our schools, colleges and universities, the Ministry has committed funds supporting research, extension education and the transitioning of youth into the agricultural workforce.

SCHOLARSHIPS: TOP CSEC STUDENTS

Madam Speaker, in our bid to target and retain the best minds in agriculture, we are continuing to support the tertiary studies of the top male and female students in agricultural science across all parishes, as well as facilitating scholarships for agricultural teacher education development.

Our overall budget to support youth engagement and integration for this fiscal year through our targeted programmes has increased to approximately J\$100 million.

CASE AS A UNIVERSITY

Madam Speaker, for generations, CASE has helped to shape the agricultural sector through the thousands of graduates who have gone on to become farmers, extension officers,

teachers, researchers, agri-entrepreneurs and leaders within the industry. In many rural communities across Jamaica, CASE has long represented opportunity, upward mobility and a direct pathway into national development.

It is because of this, Madam Speaker, that the Ministry continues to stand firmly behind this institution. Since 2024, we have increased our overall support to CASE amounting to approximately J\$80 million annually, of which up to J\$30 million in direct cash injection towards the institution's continued development and transformation agenda. Because when we invest in CASE, we are investing in the future scientists, researchers, entrepreneurs and agricultural leaders who will help Jamaica feed itself, strengthen rural development and become more competitive in a modern global economy.

With such contribution to Jamaica's national development, Madam Speaker, the Ministry strongly supports that the College of Agriculture, Science and Education (CASE) be rapidly transformed into a premier university for agriculture and applied sciences. It is a vision that is

already being actively pursued through targeted investments, strategic partnerships and major infrastructure development.

These investments include direct support to strengthen the institution's practical training and research capacity through the build out of a state-of-the-art broiler chicken house, a modern piggery, goat barn and tissue culture laboratory built with support from OFANA.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that having tasked CASE to assist in providing a solution for the current problems we are having with the shortage of layer pullets in the sector, they have agreed and will be embarking on a research-based development of a modern, semi-automated layer facility at the institution, alongside plans for the establishment of a hatchery. These will contribute to stabilising local layer production while expanding hands-on training and research opportunities for students.

Importantly, with the assistance of the Ministry, CASE has already entered into a partnership with the Tuskegee

University College of Veterinary Medicine in the United States, creating new pathways for Jamaican students to access advanced veterinary training. Under this programme, students will complete their initial years of study at CASE before transitioning to Tuskegee to complete their degrees in veterinary-related fields. Madam Speaker, six students have already been registered under this arrangement.

Madam Speaker, these are the kinds of strategic interventions that will redefine the future of agricultural education in Jamaica. Working closely with CASE's parent ministry, the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information, and the leadership of the institution, we intend to continue building on these investments and partnerships over the next five to seven years as we position CASE to become a premier regional centre for agricultural training, research, innovation and food security leadership.

Current Development in Sugar Industry

Madam Speaker, I am aware of the concerns, discussions and anxieties currently affecting sections of the sugar industry, particularly surrounding operations at Pan

Caribbean Sugar Company Limited and matters raised by cane farmers regarding crop closure and outstanding harvesting of cane. The Sugar Industry Authority has been actively engaging stakeholders and conducting its review into the matter, while maintaining ongoing regulatory oversight.

At the same time, Madam Speaker, I wish to appeal for calm across the industry. We fully understand the frustration and uncertainty being experienced by farmers, workers and stakeholders, many of whom continue to recover from the impact of Hurricane Melissa and an already difficult production period. This Ministry, along with the Ministries of Health, Industry, and their agencies remain committed to protecting the long-term viability and stability of the sugar industry and ensuring that all concerns are addressed responsibly and transparently.

To that end, Madam Speaker, the Ministry will be continuing our ongoing meetings with key industry stakeholders, including the Sugar Industry Authority, factory representatives and farmer groups, to facilitate dialogue, review the issues raised, and determine the appropriate path forward in the best interest of the industry and the thousands of Jamaicans who depend on it.

PRAEDIAL LARCENY

Last year, we committed that the police would be establishing the Agricultural Protection Branch to enhance

this Government's fight against agricultural theft. So said. So done.

In June of last year, the Branch started out with 65 police officers across multiple divisions. Now, the branch has 115 officers and has already started to make a real impact in the fight against praedial larceny.

We moved from 115 arrests in 2024 to 642 arrests last year, a whopping 458%. In 2024, 30 vehicles were seized, last year 162 vehicles were seized, and the best statistic is that we have moved from 18 convictions to 145. This is a testament to the increased boots on the ground, better case preparation and increased surveillance.

Fisheries

Madam Speaker, fisheries remain a critical pillar of Jamaica's food security and economic development. Our fisherfolk are among the most resilient, operating at the frontline of climate vulnerability, while continuing to supply our nation with seafood. First, I must commend our fishers for taking heed to the Ministry's warnings and returning to shore ahead of Hurricane Melissa.

Nevertheless, they suffered damages to the tune of J \$5.7 billion across the fisheries sector impacting over 4,000 fishers. Over 3,200 vessels were damaged, which is approximately 45% of the national fleet; and that is not all. Our fisheries infrastructure was also severely ravaged, with damages totalling J \$2.7 billion.

Yet, despite these setbacks, our fisherfolk have demonstrated remarkable resilience. With the support of the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) and the Ministry, many were back at sea within weeks of the hurricane's passage. This determination speaks to their strength and their unyielding spirit of resilience.

Now, as we move beyond immediate recovery, our focus is firmly on rebuilding a stronger, more modern fisheries sector, anchored in innovation, sustainability and increased productivity.

Thematic Area One: Resilient, Sustainable and Efficient Production Systems

Climate Resilient Production Systems

Madam Speaker, to ensure the future of our fisheries sector, we must prioritise aquaculture. Already, we are moving decisively to modernise our Tilapia fry production capacity. Madam Speaker, we are on the cusp of realising the promised 5 million fry per annum capacity from the Recirculating Aquaculture System (RAS) despite some construction setbacks and challenges compounded by Hurricane Melissa. This system will be completed by the end of this financial year with remaining funding of J\$237 million. It will bring our national capacity to 13 million fry per annum, contributing an additional 2,000 MT of fish per annum, thereby tripling the contribution of the aquaculture subsector to GDP.

Madam Speaker, this near J\$700 million investment is a strategic imperative. Expanding our aquaculture sector will increase local seafood production, reduce our reliance on imports, create meaningful economic opportunities, and directly support our national food security strategy.

Sustainable and Resilient Blue Food Production Systems

Madam Speaker, for too long, we have spoken of potential. Today, we are speaking of production. I am pleased to announce the commercial operationalisation of the *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* hatchery, our freshwater prawn facility at the NFA' s site in Twickenham Park. In the last financial year alone, we produced over 386,000 post-larvae. Of these, more than 147,000 have been sold to 12 commercial and 32 backyard fish farmers. This has already yielded, so far, over 1,000 pounds of processed freshwater prawns.

This financial year, we project that the industry will produce nearly 4,000 pounds of prawns, adding nearly J\$5 million to the value of the fisheries subsector.

Madam Speaker, recall the NFA' s collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) to implement cage culture production technology at our research facility at Bowden, St. Thomas; the first of its kind in the English-Speaking Caribbean. Given the success of this pilot, Jamaica can now announce that we have demonstrated

our capacity to implement and manage this technology, which we will now seek to commercialise.

Madam Speaker, we continue to make progress with our strategic flagship conservation programme for the development and management of fish sanctuaries across Jamaica. These are designated areas where specific regulations and restrictions are implemented to protect biodiversity, preserve critical habitats, and support the recovery of fish stocks. These sanctuaries now safeguard over 11,000 hectares of critical marine habitat.

Madam Speaker, we are at an advanced stage in declaring Alligator Pond and Salt Marsh as our two newest fish sanctuaries, expanding our national coverage to 12,250 hectares in this fiscal year. This will bolster and strengthen Jamaica's capacity to protect biodiversity, build climate resilience, and support Jamaica's commitment to the Global Biodiversity Framework target of conserving 30% of our marine space by 2030.

Madam Speaker, the untapped blue economy continues to present vast opportunities for contribution to our GDP. Accordingly, the ministry and the NFA are continuing to take the necessary steps to advance the development of our underutilised pelagic fisheries, increase our oyster production, as well as sea moss and ornamental fish farming. Despite the setbacks caused by the devastating effects of Hurricanes Beryl and Melissa, the NFA continues to have success.

- **Sea moss** - In the last three financial years, the NFA has trained over 200 fishers in sea moss husbandry in seven targeted parishes. The NFA anticipates that commercial sea moss production will increase at least three-fold from 1400 kg in 2025 to 5000 kg by 2027.
- **Pelagic Fishing** - Since 2023, over 320 fishers have been trained in pelagic fishing techniques, to include Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) and Longline technologies across nine targeted communities islandwide. From this training, several of our fishers have successfully secured market access with our

hoteliers. Our next step is to scale up this blue economy opportunity by establishing the necessary infrastructure and support systems across all nine targeted communities. This will position them to secure consistent market opportunities with our hotel partners, while continuing to strengthen their capacity to meet demand and expand within these markets.

- **Oysters** - Madam Speaker, prior to the passage of Hurricane Melissa, two community groups in Westmoreland, and Hanover, were fully operational, with eight racks holding over 4,500 dozen oysters ready for harvest. These assets were subsequently damaged or destroyed. Since then, the ministry through the NFA has allocated J\$1.2 million in targeted assistance to rebuild oyster farms and restore critical oyster spat collection systems, directly benefiting 48 oyster farmers.

- **Ornamental Fish Farming** - Madam Speaker, under the Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience (PPCR), the NFA

supported ornamental fish farmers through the provision of solar systems, water harvesting tanks, aquariums, pumps and aerators. Following the impact of Hurricane Melissa, they were further provided with additional input support to include shade cloths, feed, and technical assistance as a way of strengthening resilience. The NFA continues to support our ornamental fish farmers, building their capacity and providing direct input support to the tune of J\$2 million as a part of our post Hurricane Melissa efforts. The completed Quarantine and Export Centre, valued at J\$23 million at the NFA's Twickenham Park Facility, meets international standards and now stands ready to support the quarantine, packaging and export of ornamental fish to markets in North America.

Madam Speaker, these are just some of the initiatives we have implemented to maximise on the opportunities within the blue economy.

Post Harvest and Food Waste Loss Management

Madam Speaker, one of the ways in which we have been rebuilding the fisheries sector is through a J\$6.6-million-dollar post-harvest training programme, led by the NFA and sponsored by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Aimed at enhancing the quality, value, and marketability of Jamaica's fishery products, approximately 90 fishers across 6 fishing beaches were engaged in this post-harvest training. From this, our fishers are now able to minimise post-harvest loss, maintain food safety, and improve earnings especially as we rebuild following the passage of Hurricane Melissa.

In this fiscal year, we will expand the training programme to reach 200 fishers. In addition, we will implement a "train the trainers" initiative, including 20 NFA staff to ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme. Madam Speaker, the objective is to strengthen food safety

standards across our fisheries sector, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Thematic Area One: Fisheries Entrepreneurship Business Development and Facilitation

Madam Speaker, we must also ensure that our fisherfolk are properly equipped, licensed and integrated into a modern, regulated industry that allows them to fully benefit from these investments. This Honourable House might recall that through the modernisation of the public sector programme, a digital platform called IrieFINs was introduced to improve and increase efficiency of licensing fishers, fish farmers, and fishing vessels. Madam Speaker, I am happy to announce that this has yielded an increase from 23% to 52% in annual licence renewals. The introduction of this system has improved the turnaround time from more than a month to a maximum of 5 days.

The NFA has also strengthened compliance and enforcement with the recent launch in November 2025 of a Compliance

Dashboard. This system allows verified enforcement partners to include NFA Compliance Officers, Jamaica Defence Force, Jamaica Constabulary Force, and the Jamaica Customs Agency, to search and verify the licence status of persons they interact with in the field. Since the strengthening of the Compliance Branch and integration of the dashboard, the data shows that 78% of persons who are checked for licences are compliant. Cases of non-compliance have been referred for prosecution.

But Madam Speaker, we are taking it a step further. I am happy to announce that the Ministry through the NFA will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tax Administration of Jamaica (TAJ) and the Ministry of National Security and Peace by July to join its Traffic Information Management System (TiMS), which will allow enforcement officers to issue tickets for specific fisheries offences.

Madam Speaker,

- Failure to report a fishing vessel that is lost, becomes permanently unserviceable and is no longer seaworthy will attract a fine of \$50,000
- Failure to stow fishing gear in prescribed manner will attract a fine of \$50,000
- Failure to take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of a fishery inspector will attract a fine of \$100,000
- Failure to comply with a lawful enquiry or requirement made by a fishery inspector will attract a fine of \$100,000
- Leaving or depositing, or causing to be left or deposited on the shore of any bank of any water, remains or offal will attract a fine of \$50,000
- Leaving decayed or dying fish in any net or other fishing equipment will attract a fine of \$50,000
- Organising or causing to be organised a recreational activity without approval will attract a fine of \$100,000

Madam Speaker, this system to be launched by September of this year will allow for offenders to pay a fine upfront without having to go to court. However, failure to pay the fine will result in offenders facing the court at the prescribed date where they will be subject to the discretion of the honourable judge. We are serious about compliance in our fisheries ecosystem.

Update on Spiny Lobster

Madam Speaker, as promised, with our spiny lobster fisheries, the regulations are now in place to permit the full utilization of lobster throughout the year, to include the closed season. Although all fishing of lobster during the closed season remains illegal, the lobster caught in the open season and declared, can now be enjoyed by all consumers, to include our visitors, all year round. Madam Speaker, all players are urged to comply with the rules governing these allowances by the NFA.

Madam Speaker, we have long spoken about the level of protection that our fisherfolk need for sustainability of

the sector. Our plan this year is to take further steps to promulgate the minimum size of fish to be harvested from our waters. We have had extensive consultations over the last 10 years. We have recommended the size of mesh wires for the construction of fish pots, fishing while night diving, and have promulgated prohibited gear. We now serve notice that effective within this financial year we will be issuing drafting instructions towards finalising the regulations for the implementation of the minimum size catch regime.

Fisheries Infrastructure

Madam Speaker, if we are to truly *Grow Forward*, we must prioritise the development of our fisheries infrastructure. Our fishing beaches are among the most crucial infrastructure within the sector, as they are the vehicles through which our operations are executed. As such, through the NFA's Fishing Beach Infrastructure Development Programme, we have completed the upgrade of 6 fishing beaches over the last two years. These included the Black River, Parottee, Salem, Pagee, Great Bay and Portland Cottage Fishing Beaches.

These renovations included repairs to the fish markets, gear sheds and bathroom facilities, improvements to the sewerage systems, and the installation of solar-powered lighting to enhance safety and security on the beach. Madam Speaker, all of this was done at a total cost of over J\$88 million.

Madam Speaker, I am happy to announce that this financial year, the Whitehouse Fishing Beach complex that was damaged by Hurricane Melissa is being renovated at an estimated cost of J\$34 million.

Madam Speaker, allow me to also announce that the NFA has leased offices at the Artisan Village in Trelawny to support the establishment of a sub-office to provide the requisite support and services in that region. The NFA has also acquired 2 additional properties, one in Barham Wharf in Westmoreland and the other in Green Island, Hanover, to establish fishing beach complexes that will enhance the service delivery to fisherfolk.

Madam Speaker, through our Boat and Equipment Retooling Initiative, specifically under the Fisheries Production Incentive Programme, 20 boats and 20 engines valuing J\$50 million, suitable for pelagic fishing and mariculture activities have been distributed to youth fishers across the island. Dontae from Billy's Bay, Kemar from Galleon, Sashae from Portland and Leonard from Hanover are now extremely happy and have expressed how much their lives have changed in a positive way with this kind of support.

Madam Speaker, for this fiscal year, we will be distributing an additional 20 boats and 20 engines valued at J\$66 million to fisherfolk across the island.

Establishment of Additional Fuel Depots

Madam Speaker, the NFA currently owns and operates 14 fuel stations across the country. However, in recognizing the high demand and the need to supply fuel in close proximity to our fishers who are using fishing beaches, we need to establish at least 8 of these facilities. To this end, in this financial year, we will be prioritizing an additional

2 stations in Trelawny and Portland. We are currently in advanced discussions with petroleum marketing companies to partner with the NFA to establish these depots by the end of this first quarter.

Update on 200-acre Aquaculture Park at Mitchell Town

Madam Speaker, I am happy to announce that the Mitchell Town Aquaculture Centre of Excellence project proposal has been approved under the Public Investment Advisory Board (PIAB). The project will now move to the business case and design phase.

Update on New Facilities for Aquaculture

Madam Speaker, the lease of the 330-acre property at Toll Gate has been approved and the development process will now be advanced. Similarly, the NFA has expressed serious interest to the NLA in having the Barton Isle property in St. Elizabeth, with its 300-acre fish farm, handed over to be used exclusively for aquaculture production. These two properties in the past produced up to 6000 MT of fresh, good quality tilapia for domestic and export markets. Madam

Speaker, the Ministry is strategically revitalising these efforts through public-private partnerships towards our nation's food security.

Madam Speaker, over the last financial year, we have made significant strides in the fisheries sector.

Through the work of the NFA and the Ministry, we have strengthened enforcement, modernised how the sector is regulated and brought greater structure to how our fisheries resources are managed.

And we are not slowing down. Madam Speaker, we are *Growing Forward*.

Mining

Madam Speaker, the Mining sector remains a cornerstone of Jamaica's economy, driving 85% of traditional exports, making it a significant contributor to national development, accounting for approximately 2% of GDP. Especially at this time of recovery and reconstruction it is critical that the mining sector continue *growing forward*.

While we continue to actively advance exploration and diversification to include Rare Earth Elements (REE), gold, copper and high purity limestone within the sector, bauxite and alumina continue to serve as its foundation, accounting for approximately 85% of mineral export revenues. It is therefore important that we begin with an update on this critical industry.

Bauxite and Alumina Sub-Sector Performance

Madam Speaker, developments within the bauxite and alumina sub-sector continue to reflect the realities of a globally

exposed industry, where performance is closely tied to international market conditions. In 2025, export earnings from the sub-sector totalled approximately US\$612 million. Madam Speaker, investor interest within the industry has remained evident. Inflows to support operations increased to US\$326.8 million, up from US\$251.3 million in the previous year. This increase in inflows was for supporting efforts to stabilise operations, strengthen production capacity and position the sector for recovery and sustainable growth.

Madam Speaker, Jamaica remains well positioned especially because of her geographical location close to the industrialised Gulf regions of the United States, to capitalise on the new opportunities that are emerging in our nearshore neighbour.

Update on Mining Companies

Madam Speaker, Hurricane Melissa had a significant impact on the productive capacity of the bauxite and alumina sub-sector. Operational disruptions and infrastructure

challenges contributed to declines in both bauxite exports and alumina production, with the country's two refineries operating below normal capacity during the immediate recovery period. Recovery activities have however continued across the sub-sector, with operators advancing infrastructure rehabilitation, equipment upgrades and production stabilisation measures, with the intent to restoring full operational efficiency by the end of June.

Firstly, Windalco has completed their haulage road to Penny in St. Ann, which opened access to increased quantities of high-quality ore and has commenced mining of these reserves to strengthen operational efficiency at an overall investment of approximately US\$29 million.

The January 12 announcement of Atlantic Alumina's \$450 million strategic partnership in Gramercy, Louisiana, alongside Discovery Bauxite Partners, signals a significant shift in the alumina industry. This development not only strengthens U.S. supply chains but also underscores the growing importance of alumina and related critical minerals in global industrial strategy. Discovery Bauxite has

announced investments in maintenance upgrades, heavy-duty equipment, the construction of haulage roads and operational improvements at a cost of approximately US\$45 million. Last year, we appointed a review committee chaired by the Honourable Wesley Hughes to look at our management arrangements and options for strengthening the relationship. We will be forwarding those recommendations for Cabinet to approve our next steps.

Century Aluminium has invested approximately US\$80 million into capital upgrades at the JAMALCO refinery, including the installation of a new turbine generator to improve energy self-sufficiency and support the refinery's return to targeted production levels.

JISCO – CHINA VISIT

Madam Speaker, a delegation from the Ministry will travel to China in June for direct discussions with Jiuquan Iron and Steel Company (JISCO) as we seek definitive clarity on the reopening of the Alpart plant and the future direction of its operations.

This is a matter of significant importance to the mining sector and, more importantly, to the people and communities of St. Elizabeth and surrounding areas whose livelihoods have long depended on the industry. From workers and contractors to transport operators and small businesses, many Jamaicans continue to wait for renewed activity and stability within this area.

Madam Speaker, this Government remains fully engaged and committed to securing clear answers and a realistic path forward as we continue efforts to strengthen and revitalise Jamaica' s mining industry.

Rare Earth Elements

Madam Speaker, a lot has been made about Rare Earth Elements in the past but unfortunately it has not amounted to much. Now more than ever Jamaica must take its place at the forefront of the world' s conversation about these critical minerals. From Electric vehicles, wind turbines, satellites, defence systems, semiconductors., nations that secure reliable supplies of rare earth elements will anchor the

next industrial age. Those that do not will depend on whoever does.

More than a decade ago Japan's Nippon Light Metal working with the Jamaica Bauxite Institute found that our bauxite residue, our red mud, contains rare earth element concentrations that test at roughly 25 times those found in the upper continental crust. Yet that project never proceeded any further, through a combination of factors, including world pricing and the fact that what was designed was a pilot plant, not commercial.

There is renewed drive to capitalise on red mud, Jamaican Red Mud. Members, it is worth indicating that our Mining Act does maintain that where someone has a licence for one mineral but finds another, he is under a duty to report it and to pay royalty. I am of the view that that legal position persists whether the red mud is here in Jamaica or in Louisiana. I have asked the Attorney General to opine on the subject and have instructed the legal team to make the requisite changes to the Mining Act to make that position beyond doubt.

The JBI is now in advanced discussions with the local licence holder towards expanding the pilot plant into a full commercial plant, a two-year process and investment that should begin this year. A robust sampling programme has been executed, and we look forward to the formal signing.

I have also instructed the team to finalise the fiscal regime around the production of RRS. Any such regime has to ensure it reflects the true strategic value of the resource and that Jamaica and Jamaicans get their fair share. We believe that countries like the US and Japan would be great partners for strategic supply arrangements Jamaica stands ready to partner.

Industrial Minerals Sub-Sectors

Madam Speaker, unlike bauxite and alumina, over 70% of output within the industrial minerals sub-sector is absorbed locally. It is the foundation of the construction industry, accounting for over 85% of the cement used, as well as all the sand and gravel, construction blocks, marl and fill, among other materials. It also has important linkages to the trucking and haulage sector.

In 2025, production of quarry materials increased significantly to approximately 5.9 million tonnes from 3.7 million tonnes in 2024, reflecting strong demand from infrastructure and construction activities. This performance is mirrored in revenue collections, with quarry taxes reaching approximately J\$179 million in the 2025/2026 financial year, more than doubling collections recorded just 5 years prior. Based on current construction trends, including major infrastructure works and tourism-related developments, the Ministry is projecting a further increase to approximately J\$200 million for this financial year.

Madam speaker, especially now as we look to rebuild our nation after Hurricane Melissa, it is crucial for us to ensure the availability of these high-quality construction materials, further cementing the importance of this sub-sector.

Madam Speaker, strengthening revenue generation within the mining sector remains an important priority for the Government, particularly as we continue efforts to improve regulatory compliance, modernise collection systems and ensure that the country derives fair value from its mineral resources.

Royalties from Non-Bauxite Minerals

Madam Speaker, revenues from non-bauxite mineral operations also continue to show encouraging growth. Approximately J\$24.6 million was collected from non-metallic mineral operations during the 2025/2026 financial year, driven largely by activity within the high-purity limestone industry and increased demand linked to the construction sector and export markets.

This growth, Madam Speaker, is being supported by ongoing assessments of limestone reserves for industrial applications, increased investor interest in the sector, and greater demand for limestone inputs within cement production and other industrial activities. Madam Speaker we will be actively pursuing an investor to do value added production here using our high purity limestone.

Mineral Exploration

The Need for Diversification

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform the country that two of the world's largest mining companies are partnering with junior exploration companies in Jamaica to intensify the exploration for gold, copper, and related metallic minerals. In this regard, Freeport-McMoRan, in partnership with C3 Metals Inc., has agreed to expend US\$75 million to explore for copper and gold, and Barrick Mining Corporation has partnered with Geophysx Jamaica Limited to expend an initial US\$20 million to explore for gold and copper. Freeport and Barrick are both prepared to spend significantly more should their initial investment uncover commercial-scale mineral deposits.

Madam Speaker, these companies have already indicated promising findings. C3 Metals Inc has reported encouraging signs of possible large **copper** deposits, and is moving for further exploration.

Madam Speaker, if these partnerships uncover commercial-scale deposits, they are expected to reap great returns for the country. Not only will we see increased export earnings, but we will also significantly benefit from the revenue generated through imposed taxes and the collection of royalties.

Mineral Resources Framework

Madam Speaker, the government, through the Mines and Geology Division of the Ministry, is playing its role in supporting these kinds of exploration. One of our key strategies involves the publication of an information resources manual that will guide Mineral Investment and Development. This guide will provide information that will support investments in Jamaican mineral deposits. This modern reference manual will be a text resource for researchers, empowering them to know more about the economic geology of Jamaica, based on practical scientific findings within the last few decades.

Similarly, in this financial year, we will complete a Manual of Quarry best practises that will provide a guide for improved quarry practices and better environmental management.

Policy and Legislative Framework to Support Metallic Minerals and Sector Diversification

Madam Speaker, to facilitate further investment in the Minerals Sector, particularly the Metallic Minerals Sub-sector and the Industrial Minerals Sub-sector, several policy and legislative changes are contemplated. These include:

1. Increasing the period over which active mineral exploration activities will be permitted. This is being done to help investors secure the required funding to effect mineral exploration and develop the required mining, processing and related facilities to successfully develop and operate the mine, processing and related facilities.
2. Completing a new fiscal regime to direct the government's tax receipts from the exploitation of the country's metallic mineral resources.

3. Creating an Industrial Minerals Policy to help direct government's action to facilitate development within the Industrial Minerals Sub-sector. This document will be completed in the current fiscal year.

Bauxite Community Development Programme

The Jamaica Bauxite Institute has redoubled its effort to strengthen bauxite communities with a strong focus on agriculture, entrepreneurship, education, health and infrastructure. Our community councils have normally been the routing through the which the communities are engaged and select their projects, where the community councils are functioning the engagement is rich, where they are not it presents challenges. We have started the process of reform. Seven (7) audits of Bauxite Community Councils were completed. The findings will inform a structured capacity-building programme, with targeted training scheduled to commence in the upcoming financial year based on identified governance and operational needs. We are reiterating that each Council must have MP representative and starting a recruitment drive for new council members spearheaded by the SDC.

Last year JBI produced a standardised and practical guide for protected agriculture. Additionally, approximately 50 farmers were trained across citrus cultivation and

greenhouse management, strengthening technical capacity and supporting sustainable agricultural practices.

Phase I of the poultry training programme was successfully concluded, benefitting a total of 602 farmers since the programme's inception. Participants received comprehensive training along with starter inputs, including day-old chicks and feed. Total investment in the programme exceeded J\$13 million. The programme evaluation revealed a significant increase in household income, with monthly earnings improving from an average of J\$40,000 – 75,000 to approximately J\$300,000, demonstrating strong income-generation and outcomes. Programmes like these ensure our communities *Grow Forward*.

Phase VIII of the Bauxite Community Development Programme was approved by this house, ensuring the continuation and expansion of targeted investments in infrastructure, livelihoods, and social development across bauxite-bearing communities. Projects will include:

- An allocation of JMD 70 million will support education initiatives in bauxite communities, including school infrastructure upgrades, skills training, and Scholarships.
- JMD 30 million has been earmarked for the development and improvement of healthcare infrastructure in bauxite-bearing parishes, enhancing access to quality healthcare services for residents.

- Operation Piped Water will be accelerated. Support will be provided for the development of water infrastructure, including community tanks and water catchment systems, in partnership with key stakeholders. These initiatives will address water access for both domestic use and agricultural production, strengthening climate resilience and livelihoods.
- Allocations to Members of Parliament for constituency development within bauxite communities will be increased between 25% and 50%, enabling greater responsiveness to local priorities and community-driven projects.
- Fifty (50) acres of land were identified in St. Ann for the development of an agro-park, supporting the Government's food security agenda, agribusiness expansion, and increased employment opportunities in bauxite-bearing areas.
- ARC-GIS Platform is being developed to showcase and identify Community projects being undertaken by the JBI and the BCDP to include location, images and impact assessment. This platform also incorporates the Land Lease programme and

survey where applicants can identify properties available for Agricultural production.

Hoilett/Lambert Scholarship

In 2024, we awarded 14 students from bauxite producing parishes the inaugural Hoilett/Lambert Scholarship, spending J\$7 million dollars. This year, I am pleased to announce that we are more than doubling that support. We will be offering 30 Scholarships to the tune of J\$15 million dollars for youth from bauxite producing parishes who are accepted or enrolled in a recognizable tertiary institution for the 2026/27 academic year to study for a first degree in the following areas:

- Sciences
- Engineering, Information Technology and/or Computer Science related degrees
- Education
- Arts
- Logistics
- Any other degree related to Agriculture and Food Processing

Applications are now open and will close on June 4. We are encouraging youth from St. Ann, St. Catherine, Clarendon, St. Elizabeth and Manchester to apply.

Jamaica Bauxite Mining Limited (JBM)

Port Operations

Madam Speaker, Reynolds Pier demonstrated strong operational resilience following Hurricane Melissa, reopening within seventy-two hours and becoming the first cruise facility in Jamaica to resume operations after the storm. The rapid restoration of operations ensured minimal disruption to cruise arrivals and reinforced the strategic importance of the facility within Jamaica's maritime and logistics infrastructure. The facility safely accommodated 122 cruise vessels, ensuring continuity of cruise arrivals to Ocho Rios and sustaining economic activity for transport operators, vendors, tour providers and other stakeholders within the tourism ecosystem.

In addition to cruise operations, Reynolds Pier continued to support mineral export activity through cargo and barge operations. Between April 2025 and February 2026, the port facilitated the export of 296,701.22 tonnes of limestone, alongside 1,661.16 tonnes of limestone and 8,647.31 tonnes of boulders transported via tug-and-barge movements.

Importantly, this period also marked the commencement of operations at the barge pier, which has proven to be a

valuable addition to the port's logistics framework. The barge pier not only expands income-earning capacity by diversifying export channels but also delivers environmental benefits, reducing emissions and fuel consumption compared to traditional cargo vessel movements.

Madam Speaker, through its Green Port strategy, JBM is advancing a long-term decarbonisation and sustainability agenda, including solar energy systems at Reynolds Pier projected to supply approximately 84% of the facility's electricity demand.

As the JBM seeks to diversify, the 101 Industrial Park now offers 83,000 square feet of commercial space, of which 75% is already occupied, underscoring strong market demand and validating the project's strategic direction. The Lyford Commercial Park will build upon this success.

Earthquake Awareness and Seismic Preparedness

Madam Speaker, one of the realities we must confront is that Jamaicans are now living through more frequent shocks and disruptions, whether from hurricanes, flooding or earthquakes. And while we cannot prevent an earthquake, we can strengthen our ability to detect, monitor and respond to them quickly and effectively.

That is why important work continued this year through the Earthquake Unit to strengthen Jamaica's seismic

monitoring and emergency preparedness systems. During the period, the Unit recorded and analysed more than 549 seismic events, including 280 local earthquakes, while also upgrading monitoring systems, communication links and emergency power infrastructure across the island. A new seismograph station was installed in St. Catherine, six additional sensors were deployed across the country, and further upgrades were carried out to improve the speed, reliability and continuity of data transmission, especially during emergencies.

Madam Speaker, even after Hurricane Melissa disrupted sections of the seismic network, the Unit moved quickly to restore service at critical sites. With support from the Ministry, satellite systems have been deployed to improve communication and data transmission during emergencies, ensuring that Jamaica can maintain real-time monitoring capacity even during severe weather events. Repairs were also undertaken to stations and communication systems, including work connected to the Pedro Cay GPS station and the country's national data centre operations.

This is about protecting lives, strengthening disaster readiness, improving building safety, informing land-use planning and ensuring that Jamaica is better equipped to withstand both hydrometeorological and seismic shocks in the years ahead.

Modernised Mapping and Geological Systems

Madam Speaker, as we continue to build more houses, expand road networks and invest in major infrastructure across the country, we must ensure that the science guiding those decisions is strong, modern and reliable.

That is why the work of the Mines and Geology Division has become increasingly important, not only for mining and exploration, but for public safety, disaster preparedness and national development. The Division continues to strengthen Jamaica's geological mapping and hazard assessment systems so that we are better able to identify vulnerable areas, guide safer construction practices and support smarter land-use planning.

Among the major achievements this year, as part of its ongoing hazard mapping programme, a Landslide Susceptibility Map for Hanover was prepared. This identifies communities and locations most susceptible to landslides, giving planners, developers and emergency responders stronger data to guide future decisions.

Following Hurricane Melissa, the Division also carried out post-disaster coastal assessments and developed a Storm Surge Severity Map to better understand the areas that are most vulnerable to storm surge impacts, particularly along sections of the south-west coast. Madam Speaker, that work is critical because it helps us determine where additional protection may be needed, where infrastructure must be

strengthened and, in some cases, where future development may need to be reconsidered altogether.

The Division also continued modernization work on Jamaica's Geological Sheet Series, including updated mapping activities in Black River, St. Elizabeth, supporting everything from groundwater assessments and environmental management to infrastructure planning, and future mineral exploration.

Engineering geology mapping projects are also advancing in St. Thomas, and Kingston and St. Andrew, to guide planners and developers in making safer and more informed decisions based on geotechnical analysis of subsurface conditions.

Madam Speaker, the Government is also leveraging advanced technologies to strengthen geological assessments, improve development planning, support mineral resource auditing, and enhance national revenue protection.

These technologies include:

- Ground Penetration Radar technology used to identify underground vulnerabilities and infrastructure risks
- Drone and LiDAR systems capable of improving aerial imaging, real-time mapping, and mineral resource quantification and auditing

These investments are helping Jamaica move from simply reacting to disasters to planning smarter before they happen. They are giving the country stronger technical

tools to better understand risk, protect communities, guide safer development and improve how we prepare for future shocks and emergencies.

Conclusion

Madam Speaker, as I close today, one thing should now be clear to this Honourable House and to the people of Jamaica. These sectors are not standing still. They are not retreating. And they are certainly not surrendering to the pressures before them.

Over the last year, we have faced hurricanes, drought conditions, global instability, rising costs and supply chain disruptions. We have seen farms destroyed, fishing beaches damaged and operations disrupted. But even in the middle of those challenges, Madam Speaker, our farmers returned to the fields, our fishers returned to the sea and our miners continued to power national development.

And what this Government understood, Madam Speaker, is that resilience cannot simply be spoken about during difficult times. It must be built deliberately through investment, through infrastructure, through technology, through policy reform and, of course, through direct support to our people. That is exactly what this Administration has continued to do.

Madam Speaker, while the other side focuses only on criticism and confusion, we remain focused on building.

Building stronger production systems. Building food security. Building rural economies. Building opportunities for young people. Building resilience against climate change. Building a Jamaica that is more self-sufficient, more competitive and better prepared for the future.

Madam Speaker, in this presentation, I did not throw out pretty words and sweet-sounding statistics or programmes. It was never about that. It was about people. The farmer in St. Elizabeth rebuilding after Hurricane Melissa. The fisher in Portland trying to recover after months of drought and unstable weather conditions. The young entrepreneur entering agriculture for the very first time. The miner, the trucker, the vendor, the processor, the exporter, the extension officer...the ordinary Jamaicans whose lives and livelihoods depend on these sectors every single day.

And so, Madam Speaker, when we say “*Growing Forward: The Blueprint for a Better Future*, ” we want it to be understood as a direction, a commitment, a declaration that despite every challenge placed before us, this Government remains committed to moving Jamaica forward.

Madam Speaker, at the beginning of this presentation, I referenced Isaiah 40:31:

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.”

Madam Speaker, over the past year, this sector has had to run through storms and walk through uncertainty. There were moments that tested our strength and challenged our resolve. But by the grace of God, we did not faint.

Instead, we renewed our strength.

We rebuilt.

We recovered.

And today, we rise with even greater determination to secure the future of these sectors and the future of Jamaica.

Madam Speaker, our farmers are still farming.

Our fishers are still fishing.

Our miners are still mining.

And this Government is still working.

Because despite the storms, despite the disruptions, despite the setbacks, we, Madam Speaker, are still Growing Forward.

May God continue to bless our farmers, our fishers, our miners and the people of Jamaica.

I thank you.