

ADDRESS

**HONOURABLE ROGER CLARKE,
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES**

HAND OVER OF GAP, FOOD HANDLER'S CERTIFICATES TO FARMERS

AND GRANT ASSISTANCE TO EXPORTERS

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

2ND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

TUESDAY, JULY 30, 2013

Salutations...

Ladies and gentlemen, as the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries continues its efforts to ensure that sufficient quantities of safe food are available for people and as we seek to ensure that Jamaica meets global food safety requirements, it is important that all of us understand food safety quality management systems. These systems include Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) and others that are germane to our food security and capacity to trade.

To this end, the Ministry's Food Safety Modernization Act Committee, working with several local and international entities, has undertaken a number of initiatives.

Firstly, the Ministry and RADA, in collaboration with the Jamaica Social Investment Fund, 200 farmers have been trained, under a pilot programme, in GAPs for crops such as yam, hot pepper, pumpkin and callaloo.

Twelve of these specially trained farmers are here this morning to receive their GAP and Food Handler's Certificates and we want to salute them for their commitment to ensuring that the foods they produce are safe and of good quality. Another 5,000 farmers have been sensitized regarding local food safety standards and the new Food Safety Modernization Act.

To date, JSIF has allocated over J\$27m to this component of building capacity for farmers and other stakeholders and we again wish to publicly acknowledge the significant partnership with the Ministry.

I wish to also speak of the Ministry of Health's support. The Ministry of Health has, to date, **certified** 200 farmers and 20 members of the Ministry's Food Safety Modernization Act Committee in safe food handling practices.

Mr. William Broughton, Mrs. Beverley Stone and Ms. Khadine Richards are here, and along with their other colleagues from the Ministry of Health, be assured that we greatly appreciate the good work you are all doing.

Secondly, ladies and gentlemen, you will recall that in 2012, there were several yam shipments that were detained or rejected at US ports, due to pesticide levels exceeding allowable limits; Also, there were FDA inspections of a number of our export facilities, and while none of the exporters were issued with a FDA-483 (Inspectional Observation Form), i.e. they had passed the inspection, it was obvious that greater attention and work in both quality management systems and infrastructure are needed.

Against this background and building on the work done in 2012, five Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) workshops were held between May and June, 2013.

Fifty-three (53) Plant Quarantine Produce Inspection officers and 73 exporters and middlemen were trained in the standards and practices required for fresh produce packaging and exporting facilities. All participants expressed satisfaction with the workshops and the exporters and middlemen acknowledged the timeliness of the training, and that they were in a better position to be compliant with the FSMA requirements.

Alongside this effort and under the Food Safety Modernization Act Committee's workplan, a Grant Assistance Component was implemented. The total grant is J\$30m and is available to farmers and exporters who have satisfied certain criteria.

Today, nine (9) exporters, representing a first batch of grant recipients, will receive in total, approximately J\$10m to assist in their on-going efforts to upgrade infrastructure at their facilities, in order to become compliant with the FSMA.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we speak, further training for our fresh produce exporters and middlemen is being organized and farmers and exporters are being encouraged to make use of the grant assistance.

I must also point out that we have been recently advised by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, that *Thiabendazole*, *Boscalid* and *Pyraclostrobin*, may be used as post-harvest treatments for yams.

This development is important as it represents a potential shift away from complete dependence on *Botran*, which is the only pesticide presently approved.

We are currently working with the USDA and the FDA to have the above-mentioned pesticides officially listed as approved for use.

Ladies and gentlemen, the above outlines some of the activities being undertaken for Jamaica to be compliant with the FSMA.

Food safety is everybody's responsibility and I wish to laud the work of our farmers and exporters for their commitment and entrepreneurial acumen, in providing safe food for our populace and to safeguard our exports to the United States and other markets.

I thank our several partners who are working with the Ministry-

- The FSMA National Task Force;
- The Inter-American Institute for Co-operation on Agriculture (IICA) – we have last week received IICA's review on our soon to be published **Jamaica's Good Manufacturing Practices Manual**;
- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA); and
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

In closing, I wish to underscore the Government's commitment to have safe food for our populace and to safeguard our exports.

We will do this by strengthening our policy, institutional and regulatory framework and provide technical support.

Working together, we will achieve high levels of food safety in Jamaica and be globally competitive.