

Food System Transformation Pathway for Jamaica

1st Draft Response

An Overview of Jamaica's Food System

Jamaica is the largest island in the English-Speaking Caribbean with a population of approximately 2.7 inhabitants. Subsequent to its geographic location and its tropical climate, the island is vulnerable to numerous natural hazards such as, tropical storms, hurricanes, floods, landslides and droughts and has seen an increase in the worsening of these patterns over the past 20 years.

Notwithstanding the intensifying climate crisis being faced by the island, *the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 2022 Food System Profile* indicates that Jamaica has great potential for increasing its own food production, greater utilization of locally produced staples, creating more nutritious local varieties and the reintroduction of underutilized foods.

This potential for growth was evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, because although there was a fall in performance being experienced during this period, the agricultural systems were robust enough to resume growth, as soon as the pandemic pressures began to ease. Consequently, the agriculture sector experienced growth for all four (4) quarters of the 2022 calendar year, with the highest being the 3rd quarter, July-September, with a growth of 17.4%. The average growth for the entire 2022 calendar year was 10.4% and the contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 8%.

As part of the process to transform the food systems for Jamaica, the following key challenges and opportunities for action are currently the four (4) areas of focus and are aligned with the UN 2021 Food System Summit Action Tracks. They are namely:

- Ensuring Access to Safe and Nutritious Food for All
- Shift to Sustainable Consumption Patterns
- Boost Nature Positive Production and Advance Equitable Livelihoods
- Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shock and Stress

The progress updates on the following area of focus is as follows:

1) ENSURING ACCESS TO SAFE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD FOR ALL

Proposed Systemic Levers:

- Design programs and implement policies to deliberately increase availability and affordability of nutritious foods and reduce availability and affordability of foods high in fats, sugars and salt.

Transformation Update/Action Taken by Country

The Forestry Department in Jamaica has undertaken a *National Tree Planting Initiative* during the period 2019-2023 and with the assistance of the citizens of Jamaica has planted approximately 600,000 food and fruit trees in urban, peri-urban and rural spaces.

Proposed Systematic Levers

- Increase decentralized procurement and utilization of locally grown fresh foods by public institutions. (*Increase investment and training of cooking staff and cold storage at schools, hospitals and relevant public institutions to increase utilization of locally grown fruits and vegetables alongside nutrition and health education campaigns.*)
- Invest in urban agriculture and home/school gardens for education about healthy diets and regular supplementation of diets with nutritious local varieties such as fruit trees.
- Reduce appeal and availability of highly processed foods high in fat, sugar and salt to children through implementation of policies such as National School Nutrition Policy.

Transformation Update/Action Taken by Country

The Forestry Department in Jamaica, under its recently revitalized *Agroforestry Programme*, is strategically aligning with rural schools for the provision of technical support in the development and implementation of agroforestry farm, with the aim to enhance productivity, supplement their school canteens and, where possible, generate additional income.

Through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) over 1200 trees, mainly fruit, were planted in vulnerable areas in and around Kingston and St. Andrew to help build the resilience of urban spaces through ecosystem-based adaptation.

Proposed Systematic Levers

- Increase multisectoral and multi-ministerial as well as inter-institutional collaboration on access to healthy food and food system transformation. Increase collaboration between health, education, agriculture and infrastructure/finance on domestic access to healthy diets.

Transformation Update/Action Taken by Country

The Agroforestry Programme conducted by the Forestry Department in Jamaica adopted a multi-ministerial approach, as collaboration would be between the Forestry Department, as an Executive Agency, its parent organization, namely, the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation and the Ministry of Education and Youth.

2) SHIFT TO SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

Proposed Systematic Levers

- Increase research investment into improved plastic alternative packaging and enact policies to actively discourage usage of single use plastic in food systems, and tourism industry. Supermarkets should stop selling fresh produce such as fruits and vegetables in plastic packaging, as research points out that it doesn't make them last longer and adds to pollution and food waste.

Transformation Update/Action Taken by Country

- On January 1, 2019, the Government of Jamaica commenced the phased implementation of a ban on the importation, distribution, manufacture and use of certain types of single use plastics as follows:
 - ✓ Plastic bags of a specific dimension and thickness
 - ✓ Expanded polystyrene foam products used in the food and beverage industry
 - ✓ Plastic drinking straws (to include straws attached to the packaged drink boxes and juice pouches)

The ban is governed by two (2) Ministerial Orders as follows:

- ✓ The Trade (Plastic Packaging Material) Order, 2018
- ✓ The National Resources Conservation Authority, NRCA (Plastic Packaging Material Order), 2018

For the financial year of 2022/23, the Government of Jamaica intends to implement a fourth phase of the ban, which would constitute plastic packaging food containers and microbeads utilized in cosmetic care products.

- Jamaica's reefs are under the constant threat of overfishing , pollution and global warming. Subsequently, in the financial year of 2021/22, the Government of Jamaica declared the landscape and seascape of the Black River a protected area under the National Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA) Act.
- The Pedro Cays and surrounding waters were declared a protected area under the NRCA act in the financial year 2022/23.
- This represents 15% of the area of territorial marine space protected, which will be specifically managed to conserve marine biodiversity.

3) BOOST NATURE POSITIVE PRODUCTION AND ADVANCE EQUITABLE LIVELIHOODS

Proposed Systematic Levers

- Mapping soil fertility in the country with the view to assess use of fertilizers and pesticides and support development of biofertilizers through pilot projects. Increase uptake of agroecological and nature positive agricultural practices for improved soil health management.

Transformation Update/Action Taken by Country

The Forestry Department of Jamaica is seeking to reinvigorate its thrust to mainstream agroforestry and has recruited two (2) Agroforesters to develop and implement a strategy and action plan to build awareness and capacity among small to medium sized farmers.

Proposed Systematic Levers

- Investing in programs aiming at strengthening access to land and capital for smallholder producers and climate-smart startups supporting Jamaica's food system transformation. Exploring increasing microfinance for climate smart, agroecology and nature positive investments.

Transformation Update/Action Taken by Country

Through the European Union (EU) Budget Support Programme, forty six (46) climate-smart alternative livelihoods projects were awarded in twenty one (21) communities, which combined planting 120 hectares with timber, ornamental, fruit trees and crops to the benefit of many families. This was achieved by the Forestry Department in Jamaica.