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### **SPECIAL SUPPORT TO SMALL ISLAND STATES IN CAPACITY BUILDING FOR FOOD SAFETY AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

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## Summary

1. Our vision for the future of the small island states of the region, must be informed by the developments taking place in the international trading arena, which are currently being scripted by globalization; and in this scenario, trade in agriculture and the related issues of food safety have continued to take center stage.
2. While provisions for special and differential treatment to assist developing countries to make the necessary adjustments, in order to survive in the new liberalized trading environment have been put on the table, it is uncertain whether the developed countries, which 'hold the handle' will be willing to accommodate these requests in any meaningful sense.
3. Conventional wisdom, therefore, dictates that the small island states of the region must seek to fast-track the modernization and repositioning of their major sectors, together with their supporting trading infrastructure, so as to enable them to comply with the global requirements, which will shortly be enforced.
4. Against this background, as a region we are also grappling with our commitment to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, in keeping with the 'Millennium Development Goals', and as such, with assistance from our international partners, we have taken a collaborative approach to infrastructural capacity building in international trade, as it relates to Food Safety compliance issues. We are pleased to report that we have achieved a measure of success in this area, however, as the ameliorative measures on the compliance issues, are being initiated hand in hand with the implementation of macro and microeconomic policies to reduce poverty, given the scope of our economies, there is still much to be achieved.

## **Overview: The Geopolitical Situation of the Caribbean and the Special Requirements of Small Island Developing States in Relation to the MDG**

5. Globalization, in so far as it seeks to open markets and remove farm subsidies, presents many trade and investment opportunities for the larger, more developed, efficient producer countries. However, there is no gainsaying that it has impacted adversely on the Caribbean's food production and trade, in the short to medium term, as the region has been forced to make severe and rapid adjustments to the increased competition from considerably more efficient producers in its primary export markets.
6. In the case of the banana industry, for instance, these adjustments have been a direct result of the WTO's ruling on the European Union banana import regime, which has resulted in reduced preferential benefits. The EU is expected to implement a tariff only regime for bananas in January 2006, and unless a protective tariff of 275 Euro per tonne can be agreed on, the region's banana industry is likely to receive a further setback to its

continued viability. This will have a negative effect on the thousands of farmers and their families, who depend solely on this crop for their economic survival.

7. The Caribbean's sugar industry has also been facing critical challenges in light of the reform of the EU sugar market, consequent upon the need to make its regime WTO-compatible. We in the region, therefore, face the possibility of a tremendous reduction in our export earnings from sugar.

8. In the case of Jamaica, our response to these and other challenges unleashed by globalization, has been an attempt to fast-track the reorganization and repositioning of our major industries, in order to make them more competitive and where possible, to explore the production of new value-added commodities, as well as economically viable niche market opportunities. However, the resources required to make these adjustments present an equally daunting challenge, as the traditional budgetary sources have been significantly depleted by our debt servicing requirements.

9. Jamaica, like the other small island states in the region, therefore, needs all the assistance that is available from the international community, to address its adjustment programmes and strategies designed to ensure that it can continue to survive and thrive in a more liberalized trade environment.

10. To return to the Caribbean scenario, as net importers of food, the region faces the imminent consequences of increased food import bills, should the removal of farm subsidies, sanctioned by the WTO result in an increase in food prices. In light of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) for the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the region will of necessity require supplementary budgetary resources to address the increased deficit in its food bill.

11. Poised against the challenges of globalization per se, the emergent emphasis on food safety and improved sanitary and phytosanitary standards in the current trading environment, have presented additional challenges for the region, as it strives to upgrade its food safety standards for both the export and domestic markets.

### **Macro and Microeconomic Policy for Alleviation of Hunger and Poverty in Jamaica**

12. Jamaica's Social Policy Framework and Action Plan 2002-2007 detail the Government's strategy for building a sustainable social development model. It was designed to protect the poor and vulnerable, while generally improving the quality of life for all, through increased access to developmental programmes, social and economic opportunities and enhanced social harmony. Poverty reduction is at the core of this strategy, to be achieved through a combination of measures to improve incomes, self-reliance and the lifestyles of the poorest groups and communities. The poverty eradication strategy has three components.

- The first speaks to social assistance, with targeted income transfers under the Government's Social Safety Net Programme.
- The second, is the development of the income-earning capacity of the working poor, by providing training opportunities, micro-enterprise support and financial services, using community-based approaches; and
- the third is the provision and upgrading of social infrastructure in poor areas.

13. Prior to the development of the framework, coordinated efforts by the Government to address the needs of the poor and vulnerable began with the implementation of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NPEP), initiated in 1995, following the World Food Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen that year. The NPEP coordinates a wide range of poverty-related projects administered by various ministries and agencies, with the aim of marshalling all available resources, through integrated community development.

14. The World Food Summit targeted a 50 percent reduction in the eradication of poverty and hunger by 2015, with emphasis on the three main elements:

- availability;
- stability; and
- access.

15. Available data indicate that there has been a downward trend in both the level of poverty, and in the number of undernourished persons in the country.

16. This notwithstanding, in the mid nineties, the government took steps to continue the trend of poverty reduction by the implementation of a number of initiatives including:

- the development and implementation of an Industrial Policy to create a social and economic environment conducive to optimal growth;
- the implementation of projects to increase food production and productivity; and
- the implementation of poverty eradication initiatives, through a number of mechanisms including the establishment of a Social Investment Fund (SIF) to develop community-based projects for the poor.

17. In a report in 2001, the Government highlighted a number of positive indicators in the economy, which endorsed the fact that poverty was in fact being eliminated:

- a reduction in the level of poverty from 33.9 percent in 1992 to 27.5 percent in 1995;
- a reduction in the level of inflation from 77.3 percent in 1992 to 19.9 percent in 1995;

- and the increase in Dietary Energy Supplies (DES) from 2,570 in 1984-1986 to 2,575 in 1992- 1994.

### **The Impact of Globalization on Small Island Developing States in Relation to Local Food Production and Trade**

18. The majority of the small island developing states in the Caribbean are net importers of food, primarily from developed countries, while at the same time, they are invariably relatively large exporters of a wide variety of fresh and processed foods of plant and animal origin, to developed countries. As a result, the World Health Organization's (WHO's) guidelines for sanitary and phytosanitary protocols, as well as Veterinary inspection and certification of products of animal origin, currently dominate regional trade requirements.

19. While globalization in trade has served to increase product availability, it has also bombarded the region with an increasing number of animal, as well as agricultural products from varying countries. This has amplified the likely health risk from exotic diseases affecting both plants and animals. Additionally, the liberalization of trade worldwide, has necessitated significant changes in agricultural production and processing systems, resulting in the need for more stringent food safety measures, against the background of the potential increase in instances of food-borne diseases, including:

- Bovine and Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), *Mad Cow* Disease;
- Foot and Mouth Disease; and
- Avian Influenza in poultry.

20. For small island developing states in the region with limited budgetary resources, sub-optimal infrastructure, together with typically inadequate legislation to regulate food safety and production processes, globalization has presented additional challenges.

#### ***Regional food safety initiatives***

21. A regional food safety needs assessment was conducted, which highlighted the deficiencies with respect to meeting food safety standards. As a result of this assessment, several steps have been taken both regionally and nationally to address these needs, including:

- increased awareness of food safety issues within the region;
- approval by the region's head of Agriculture and Health for the establishment of a Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA). This agency has as its mandate, the coordination of all food safety and agricultural health issues within the region.

22. Barbados and other OECS countries, with assistance from IICA/FAO, are actively pursuing an eradication and control programme for the Amblyoma Tick. This tick infestation has severely restricted livestock sales from countries in which the infestation exists.

***Technical assistance received within the region***

23. The *IICA/USDA Initiative of the Americas* – This is a technical assistance programme, which for the last two years has facilitated the participation of small island developing states within the region, in SPS Committee meetings in Geneva. This initiative has resulted in increased awareness among Caribbean stakeholders in relation to SPS and other food safety issues, and has led to greater dialogue between the private and public sectors in many of these states, which have benefited. In addition, many, including Jamaica, have made positive strides towards meeting their obligations under the WTO/SPS Agreement, in relation to updating regulations to become more WTO-compliant, establishing Enquiry/Notification Points and setting up SPS Committees.

24. Funding for training and capacity building in food safety and SPS issues has also been provided by IICA, FAO, PAHO and WTO.

25. PAHO has also assisted Barbados in preparing and enacting appropriate legislation to cover Veterinary inspection and certification for products of animal origin; and

26. the Trinidad-based Caribbean Epidemiological Centre, otherwise known as CAREC, has served the region in undertaking epidemiological investigation and diagnosis of food-borne diseases. However, CAREC's capabilities need to be strengthened so that its services may be more easily accessible to the countries of the region.

***Food safety initiatives undertaken by Jamaica***

27. For its part, Jamaica has undertaken several initiatives to address the food safety requirements within the context of globalization, as they relate to food production and trade. Some of these are:

28. Infrastructural Upgrading of National Quarantine Programme – We have upgraded our Quarantine Programme for regulating the importation and export of live animals and products of animal and plant origin. The programme, which is responsible for inspection and certification at the ports of entry:

- operates a quarantine facility for the importation of livestock and pets;
- monitors the disposal of waste from vessels and aircraft; and

- conducts qualitative risk assessments of products of animal origin.

29. The Ministry of Agriculture, under whose purview the Veterinary Division falls, has facilitated the development of an identification programme for livestock. This initiative has been taken to satisfy the required traceability of products of animal origin, and possible points of food contamination within the production chain.

30. The Government of Jamaica, in collaboration with the United States, the Mexican Commission, the USDA/APHIS Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services and the International Atomic Energy Agency, spearheaded a National Programme for the eradication of the New World Screwworm Fly, aimed at eradicating the pest from Jamaica, in an effort to safeguard the quality of products of animal origin.

31. The Government has also established a Pesticide Control Authority with legal responsibility for regulating the importation and usage of pesticides for agricultural (animal and plant) food production.

32. The Ministry of Agriculture continuously undertakes disease surveillance programmes for Newcastle and Avian Influenza, Salmonella, Bovine Tuberculosis and Bovine Brucellosis.

### **Requirements of Infrastructural/Human Resource Development and Issues of Economies of Scale**

33. Given their respective economic challenges, Caribbean island states currently need more financial and human resources to develop and maintain adequate and efficient infrastructural capacity, in order to become compliant with the WTO/SPS protocols and OIE guidelines for Veterinary inspection and certification of products of animal origin.

34. As a net importer of food, the Caribbean imports milk and milk products, fish and fish products, as well as meat and meat products. The table below shows Jamaica's import pattern in relation to meat and seafood products, during the past calendar year.

#### **Jamaica's Imports of Meat and Seafood Products January - December 2004**

| <b>Type of Meat</b> | <b>Quantity in Kilograms</b> |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Beef                | 5,024,199.26                 |
| Mutton              | 4,025,753.52                 |
| Seafood             | 16,505,603.04                |
| Poultry             | 38,313,342.76                |
| Goat                | 64,003.98                    |
| Pork                | 2,995,756.77                 |



35. While the region is a major importer of beef and beef products, pork and pork products, poultry and poultry products, as well as fish, lobster, conch and shrimp based on its inability to adequately satisfy local demand, in many instances we are unable to meet the export requirements for value-added dairy, poultry and other products such as patties (meat pies) soups, sauces and seasonings, for which there are lucrative overseas markets. This is due to our inability to satisfy many of the WTO/SPS and OIE requirements, as they relate to food safety.

***Jamaica's initiatives to address these issues***

36. Our major food production/processing operators involved in fishery, poultry, milk and dairy production are adopting and implementing HACCP-based inspection and monitoring systems, Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Standard Operating Procedures Systems, which are necessary to satisfy international standards.

37. We have enacted the *Meat & Meat By-Products (Export) Act*, which establishes appropriate guidelines for the production and processing of meat and meat products.

38. We have also enacted the *Aquaculture and Inland Marine Products and By-Products (Export) Act 1999*, together with its enabling regulations; and I am proud to say that Jamaica has received accreditation on the EU "Third Country List", thereby allowing us to export fish and fish products to EU member states.

39. It should be added that we are also taking steps to put the requisite procedures in place to allow for the export of a wider range of processed foods to the United States and Canadian markets.

40. We have expanded our Veterinary Laboratory, acquired state-of-the-art equipment and implemented programmes to improve microbiological testing, residue analysis and Veterinary drug monitoring programmes for production, harvesting and processing of fishery products.

41. The Veterinary Services Division has also employed additional personnel to inspect and monitor food systems; and

42. I am proud to report that Jamaica currently meets the certification requirements in relation to residue analysis for export.

### ***Food safety***

43. Despite our successful achievements on an individual country level, given the small size of Caribbean island states, together with the attendant problems of scarce resources - the scope and demand for compliance with international food safety standards are far reaching. In addition to these international requirements, strong consumer awareness of the potential threats posed by food-borne hazards, is now putting enormous pressure on traditional food safety systems, which in most developing countries are largely in the hands of the food-processing sector, which focuses on removing unsafe food from the market 'after the fact'.

44. Our food safety systems are also facing unprecedented challenges arising from demographic changes, globalization of the food trade, changing consumption patterns occasioned by the thrust towards healthier lifestyles, increased urbanization and more intensified food production. Regional governments, therefore, need to pool their scarce resources wherever possible, for example in areas such as residue testing and the formulation of food safety policies, in order to take advantage of the economies of scale.

### ***People at risk***

45. The World Health Organisation estimates that almost two (2) million children in developing countries die each year from diarrhoea, caused mainly by microbial contamination of food and water, while in industrialized countries it is estimated that as much as one third of the population suffers from food-borne disease each year.

Food-borne diseases may be categorized as physical, chemical or biological. Some examples of these are:

- Zoonoses
- *Listeria monocytogenes*
- *Salmonella*
- *E. coli* O157, H7
- Industrial Contaminants
- Agricultural Chemicals

46. In Jamaica, the recently formed Pesticide Control Authority (PCA), comprising representatives from various agencies including the Ministry of Health, is responsible for regulating the importation, distribution and usage of agricultural chemicals. In addition, the Veterinary Services Division has in place, a Veterinary Drug Residue Monitoring Programme for antimicrobials, hormones, pesticides, heavy metals and toxins.

47. Veterinary Drug Residues found in food include antibiotics and hormonal growth promoters and it is felt that the widespread use and misuse of such drugs may have contributed to the development of drug-resistant organisms. These microorganisms may be passed from animals to man, through the food chain.

### ***Methods of improving food safety***

48. Traditionally, undercooked food of animal origin was regarded as the primary sources of food-borne diseases. Increasingly, however, attention is now being focused on items such as fruits, vegetables and fruits juices.

49. The present food safety system, which is based on the regulation and control of products, must be combined with preventive measures to control the introduction of hazards into the food chain. Some people refer to this combination as the "farm to table" or "farm to fork" approach to food safety. Such a system requires:

- The application of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPS) in food production, post-harvest treatment, processing and handling, which reduces the risk of microbiological and chemical contamination. In terms of GAPS, the Ministry of Agriculture along with agencies such as IICA, is currently engaged in the development of GAPS for the agricultural and agro-processing sectors.
- The application of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPS) that also apply to production processing/slaughtering establishments/facilities. Jamaica has had a measure of success in the implementation of GMPS in processing facilities, especially those engaged in the preparation of aquaculture products for the export market. This notwithstanding, there is still a great deal to be accomplished in terms of establishing similar guidelines for other food-processing and slaughtering facilities.
- The regulation of food processing operations, which should be based on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) System. This System identifies and monitors the most vulnerable points in a food production chain.

### **Recommendations**

50. National and regional governments must give priority to the implementation of integrated food safety and food security measures, together with the appropriate legislation, in order to achieve United Nation's Millennium goals in poverty alleviation and improved agricultural health.

51. Efforts must be made to implement HACCP-based biosecurity systems in local food industries, as well as in the production, processing and distributive sectors.

52. Regional governments must collaborate on the development and maintenance of effective and efficient food safety policies (eg. Veterinary Services Inspection and Certification Programmes).

53. In order to conform to OIE requirements, Regional Veterinary Services should receive legislative support to facilitate the implementation of their respective Animal Health Programmes. Such programmes should include:

- animal disease prevention, surveillance monitoring, eradication and control;
- quarantine activities (import, export) and control of the movement of animals and products of animal origin;
- laboratory testing/analysis and diagnosis of animal, zoonotic and food-borne diseases;
- veterinary health inspection and certification of products of animal origin;
- implementation of food safety programmes including HACCP inspection systems, as they relate to animal production, processing, slaughtering and preparation of products of animal origin;
- veterinary public health programmes;
- animal identification and traceability systems;
- risk analysis measures to protect human and animal health from the threat of diseases transmitted via importation of products of animal origin; and
- veterinary drug residue monitoring.

## **Conclusion**

18. To conclude, the reality is that globalization, free trade and the attendant WTO Sanitary and Phytosanitary protocols must now be regarded as part of the modern-day agricultural landscape. Faced with the challenge of our inability to exploit the full economic potential of international trade in agriculture, together with the attendant vagaries of persistent poverty, such as malnutrition and the ever-present hazards of unsafe food, Caribbean island states need to consolidate their resources and collective wills, if they are to effectively meet the Millennium Development Goals for the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

19. As such, I would like to reiterate the urgent need for further support in the form of accelerated technical assistance programmes to meet the plethora of existing global food safety obligations, in order to ensure healthy and productive populations within the region, with the capacity to take full advantage of the trading and other opportunities being unleashed by globalization.

20. It is, therefore, particularly heartening to note that recommendations for this kind of assistance are endorsed in Article 9 of the SPS Agreement, which speaks to “Technical Assistance”, and Article 10, which addresses the issue of “Special and Differential Treatment”. By way of additional endorsement, it is equally encouraging to note that

further elaboration of these two important Articles cited in the Agreement, is currently being discussed at the level of the WTO/SPS Committee meetings, with the objective of fast-tracking compliance of small island developing states; thereby facilitating improved access to international trade.

21. In the final analysis, despite the formidable adjustments, which globalization has necessitated within the region, we have had a reasonable measure of success in upgrading the capacity of our agricultural and health sectors, in our quest to promote better efficiency and safety in the food production chain. While we have been proactive in this regard, the process has been supported by the invaluable assistance received from our international funding partners. Against this background, we are confident that we can continue to make positive strides in meeting the Millennium Development Goals of hunger and poverty reduction, with their continued commitment to support our efforts future initiatives.

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