

## **Minister's Statement**

### **Cheque Presentation Ceremony**

#### **Centre of Excellence – (CEATA)**

The establishment of the *Centre of Excellence for Advanced Technology in Agriculture* (CEATA) represents a milestone for the advancement of research within the sector.

The principal objectives of the Centre are to: define the agricultural research agenda; to link the critical entities engaged in agricultural research; and to develop a practical model in order to provide efficient training for Extension Officers to ensure the transfer of the research findings to farmers in the field.

Although the Centre of Excellence will be located in Jamaica, it is intended to serve the region as a whole, as against the background of the liberalization of global trade, the Caribbean region as a whole is challenged to boost our agricultural productivity- and by extension, our competitiveness. In order to effectively define the research agenda for farmers in Jamaica and the region, this agenda must be influence by appropriate data from end-users in the marketplace; and it must also address the challenges faced by the farmers in providing what the market demands.

For too long, the approach to research has been disconnected from the practical challenges faced by farmers. Despite this,

institutions such as the UWI, the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute, UTECH and Northern Caribbean University, have done, and continue to do tremendous work in agriculture. However, much of these research findings have continued to reside within the realms of academia. As a result, there is little practical application to help farmers in the field to improve their methods of production.

Against this background, the establishment of the Centre of Excellence is timely, because as a region for too long, we have been engaged in discussions on the role of agriculture in countering the challenges faced in terms of our food security and our dependence on imported food to sustain our nutritional requirements.

The *Centre of Excellence* will be managed by a 15-member advisory board drawn from various local, regional and international institutions including: the College of Agricultural Science & Education (CASE); the Caribbean Agricultural Research & Development Institute (CARDI) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, having briefly outlined the rationale for the Centre's establishment, I wish to use this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the Spanish Government and to the Spanish Ambassador for their invaluable contribution and for their continue support of Jamaica agricultural sector.

