

**Centre of Excellence – “Milestone in Advancing Research in the Field of
Agriculture” says Dr. Tufton**

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Minister of Agriculture, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton has lauded the establishment of the *Centre of Excellence for Advanced Technology in Agriculture*, sighting the move as “a milestone in advancing research in the field of agriculture”.

In making his presentation at the launch, which took place at the Ministry’s Bodles Research Station in St. Catherine on Friday, March 25, Dr Tufton pointed out that the main objectives of the Centre were to define the research agenda for the sector; 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.

Continuing, the Minister noted that while the Centre of Excellence is being located in Jamaica, it is intended to serve the region as a whole. “The truth is,” he said, “we are not only challenged as a country, but as a region, to boost our agricultural productivity and by extension our competitiveness.” In defining 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.

The Minister pointed out that for a long time, the approach to research has been disconnected from the practical challenges faced by farmers. Despite this, institutions such as the UWI, UTECH and Northern Caribbean University have done, and continue to do tremendous work in agriculture. The problem is that there is little practical application to help farmers in the field to improve their methods of production.

Against this background, Dr. Tufton noted that the establishment of the Centre of Excellence was “timely, because as a region, 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.