

## Yam Packaging House in Trelawny to Begin Soon

What a glorious day, when we roas di yellow yam!" Trelawny, Usain Bolt's birth parish, is famous for yam. Yam has been a staple of many a Jamaican rural and urban household for generations. So big and important is yam that Trelawny hosts an annual yam festival, which sees thousands of locals and foreigners, descending on the parish, to sample various yam dishes and just enjoying a 'yamfest'.

Now we going to start packaging it.

Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Christopher Tufton, has announced that refurbishing of the Wait-A-Bit multi-purpose building, in Upper Trelawny, as a yam packaging house for farmers of the parish, would get underway soon.

He pointed out that the project would cost some \$15 million, and would be completed within six months.

"We are moving ahead with the plans that were announced some months ago to establish a yam packaging house facility. We did the estimates and the money has now been identified, it is secured. We have done the designs and we are about to advertise for a contractor to restore that facility to allow for a buying facility for the yam farmers, so that they can have better information and better post harvest processing and better markets," the Minister said, at the 54th staging of the Hague Agricultural and Livestock Show, in Trelawny, on February 25.

Dr. Tufton explained that plans are being put in place for the proper management of the facility, through the collaborative efforts of the farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture and private sector interests, to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the project.

Issuing a strong warning to 'middle men' and those who would seek to exploit the farmers, Dr. Tufton said that, "any middle man who wants to work with the farmers of Trelawny or any other farmer in the country, you must come and expect to charge a fair price for your efforts. If you are coming to exploit the farmer, to look for credit or to ask for discount and cost price, don't bother to come, because the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), the Government and the Ministry intend to put certain things in place to say to the farmer, this is not a fair price, let him go his way."

"We must not allow people to manipulate us ... the farmers deserve a break and we are going to provide them with that break," the Minister emphasised.

Citing the economic downturn now facing small and developing countries, such as Jamaica, Dr. Tufton said that the only sector that could pull the country out of the "doldrums" it is now in, is the agricultural sector.

"I want you farmers to understand that a lot is riding on our shoulders at this time. The stability of this country is riding on your shoulders. You are going to have to rise to the occasion and produce and by so doing, ensure that Jamaica rises above the economic pressures of the day. The message to 'eat more of what we grow and grow more of what we eat' is still relevant today. We need to ensure that our trade policy does not marginalise our agricultural sector, by giving preference to imported produce," the Minister argued.

He urged consumers to ensure that they purchase local produce, in support of the farmers and thereby support the economic advancement of the country. Source: JIS