

Jamaica

The Central Role of Agriculture in Jamaica

Although it makes up only about 7 percent of the country's GDP, Jamaica's agriculture industry holds significant potential for rural growth. It represents an important source of income for the rural population and accounts for approximately 28 percent of employment for men and 10 percent of employment for women.

Most farmers are smallholders with fewer than five hectares of land. This fragmentation leads to inefficiencies in production and restricted farmers' access to inputs and services such as credit, new technology and market information. Smallholders struggle to produce at the volume and quality required by the market and they are vulnerable to the damage caused by hurricanes and other natural disasters.

ACDI/VOCA has over 40 years of experience in Jamaica, helping the country's cooperatives and agricultural sector compete locally and internationally. Our early work in Jamaica focused on providing short-term technical assistance to smallholder farmers and fisheries. In more recent years, ACDI/VOCA's programs have targeted agricultural development that is tailored to deal with climate change.



Early Work Strengthened Agriculture and Cooperative Development

ACDI began its work in Jamaica in 1967, conducting a one-year marketing assignment that, with funding from USAID, eventually led to the country's first dairy cooperative: the Rhymsefield Dairy Cooperative. By the end of 1969, the cooperative was marketing over 50,000 pounds of milk per month and helped establish 56 operational farms.

In 1983 ACDI agriculture marketing advisors provided assistance to the Christiana Potato Growers Cooperative, an organization of 14,000 growers. The advisors developed a marketing strategy that included exporting produce and installing a potato washing and packing line. A year later, the cooperative marketed 12 million pounds of potatoes. The

ACDI advisors also helped to establish smaller post-harvest facilities and provided training in agricultural produce sales and market management for Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries staff.

ACDI's early interventions in the Jamaican agricultural industry strengthened fresh produce value chains and the quality of those goods. Simultaneous improvements in processing channels and the formation of farmer-owned and -controlled producer marketing organizations contributed to a boost in productivity and quality.

During these years, VOCA was also supporting cooperative development in Jamaica through the use of expert volunteers. In 1971 VOCA sent one of its first volunteers to Kingston to help the Jamaica Agricultural Society improve and expand the distribution of farm supplies to its 100,000 members. From 1983 to 1993, VOCA mobilized seven more volunteers to carry out different assignments in Jamaica.

Recent Support to Agricultural Value Chains

In recent years, ACDI/VOCA has implemented several programs in Jamaica that address value chain constraints and ways to increase production. In January 2010, ACDI/VOCA began the four-year USAID-funded **Jamaica Marketing and Agriculture for Jamaican Improved Competitiveness (MAJIC)** project to address some of the constraints in the Jamaican agriculture industry. MAJIC

originally aimed to address value chain constraints for target crops—onion, scotch bonnet pepper and cocoa—through a variety of interventions, including the use of expert volunteers.

During its first two years of implementation, MAJIC improved productivity by promoting better crop care through application of best practices. ACDI/VOCA provided training and technical assistance for smallholders using the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach. This methodology emphasizes improving production, productivity and profits in order to attract and retain women, youth and other marginalized groups in farming.

Innovative Climate Change Efforts and Dedication to Capacity Building

In response to Jamaica's vulnerability to climate change, MAJIC's focus was revised in late 2012 to address the impacts of global climate change on natural resources and rural communities. Starting in 2013, MAJIC began incorporating measures to increase the adaptive capacity of smallholder farmers to respond to challenges posed by climate change. With this revision, the former MAJIC project grew into the Jamaica Rural Economy and Ecosystems Adapting to Climate Change (Ja REEACH) project. Ja REEACH recognizes that climate change poses both economic and social problems and thus applies integrated approaches that improve adaptive capacity and build resilience in rural communities and ecosystems.

Ja REEACH activities have two objectives: to improve the adaptive capacity of Jamaican partners and institutions to promote livelihoods and natural systems that are resilient to climate change and its impacts; and to strengthen local and national institutions to support the processes of adaptation and sustainability. Through Ja REEACH, ACIDI/VOCA, in partnership with the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), has trained more than 150 farmers across Jamaica on "climate smart" agricultural practices.

Ja REEACH works with both beneficiaries and the broader community of stakeholders to ensure that traditionally marginalized groups and vulnerable populations are included and represented as both stakeholders and participants.

Using the FFS approach, Ja REEACH is working with local partners like RADA to strengthen their ability to provide services at all levels of the value chain to ensure that they will be able to deliver training on adaptation to climate change in future years.

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