



Speaking Notes

For

Mr. Omar Sweeney CD, PE

Managing Director, Jamaica Social Investment Fund

At

**Groundbreaking for the National Fisheries Authority
Tilapia Hatchery Upgrade Project**

On February 29, 2024

At Twickenham Park, St. Catherine.

Kingston.

Salutations

Honourable Floyd Green, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining

Ms. Denise Daley, Member of Parliament, St. Catherine Eastern

Mr. Dermon Luke Spence, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining

Mr. Courtney Cole, Chief Technical Director Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining

Ms. Dionne O'Connor, Operations Officer, representing Ms. Lilia Burunciuc, Country Director, World Bank Group

Councillors, and other representatives of the St. Catherine Municipal Corporation

Mrs. Avery Smikle, Principal Director, Aquaculture Branch, representing Dr. Gavin Bellamy, Chief Executive Officer, National Fisheries Authority

Mr. Vivion Scully, Chief Executive Officer, Agro-Investment Corporation

Mr. Keroma Bernard, Managing Director of Bernard Sustainable Limited, consultants for the project

Mr. Stephen Chung, Managing Director of Contraxx Enterprises Limited, contractors for the project.

Members of Staff of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund

Our Stakeholders and Partners within the parish of St. Catherine, including the National Environment Planning Agency, National Works Agency, St. Catherine Chamber of Commerce

Members of the Media

Other specially invited guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to stand before you today on this momentous occasion as we break ground for the construction of a modern, biosecure, climate resilient tilapia hatchery upgrade project. This endeavor marks a significant milestone in the Jamaica Social Investment Funds efforts to bolster the government of Jamaica's commitment to improve the agriculture sector, this time through sustainable aquaculture and the enhancement of our local communities.

With this upgrade, here in St. Catherine at this Tilapia hatchery the government aims to revolutionize hatchery operations, incorporating state-of-the-art technology and innovative methodologies. This investment will not only boost production capacity but also elevate the quality of tilapia stocks, ensuring healthier and more resilient fish stock being available in the Jamaican marketplace.

This multi-scope project includes the establishment and outfitting of a bio-secure, and climate-resilient hatchery. The project will employ sustainable, technically advanced, and financially viable Recirculating Aquaculture System.

It is expected that the facility will produce up to **five million** advanced tilapia fry (young fish) annually. This will provide farmers with improved access to high-

quality tilapia seedstock. This will overall support the sustainable production of tilapia for diverse markets, thereby contributing to improved income opportunities at community level, and overall food security.

Additionally, the project includes a crucial component for the training of hatchery operators, imparting essential skills in the management and operation of both the facility and specialist technology.

The project includes:

- The construction of a 12,000 sq. ft. bio-secure and modular tilapia hatchery, approach road, parking area and tertiary level sewage treatment system for facility.
- Installation of the Photovoltaic (PV) system, UPS, LPG standby generator, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems for the tilapia hatchery.
- Rehabilitation of the guardhouse and administrative building.

All this completed at a cost of **378 million JMD** poured into the project through our agriculture and tourism focused project, REDI II which is funded through a loan made available by the World Bank.

This upgrade underscores our commitment to environmental stewardship. By implementing sustainable practices and minimizing our environmental footprint, we strive to preserve the delicate balance of our ecosystems for future generations.

But beyond the tangible benefits, this project embodies our vision for community empowerment. As we expand our operations, we are creating

employment opportunities and fostering economic growth in our local communities. The synergies with the supply of locally produced tilapia for the hotel and wider tourism sector as well as the spin-off employment opportunities for fish vendors (predominantly female) are undeniable.

Our partner the NFA will amplify the benefit of this infrastructure project by facilitating extension services, training, and capacity building to empower fish farmers with the skills and knowledge to thrive in the aquaculture industry.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all our partners, stakeholders, and REDI II team members who have contributed to the realization of this project. Your dedication and support have been instrumental every step of the way.

As we embark on this journey towards a brighter and more sustainable future, let us remain steadfast in our commitment to excellence, innovation, and community impact.

Thank you.