

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (2019-2020)

■ INTRODUCTION

When the current Executive Committee of the Jamaica Pig Farmer's Association took up office in September 2019, there were a few initiatives that we wanted to see accomplished. Foremost on our agenda, was our aim to strengthen the ability of the JPFA to execute its work plan in the interest of Jamaica's pig farmers. The Executive was firmly of the perspective that the Association, must be endowed with adequate financial and technical resources, coupled with modern facilities to support improved governance, administration, and programme implementation. Hence, without hesitation, we started this term focusing on the matter of **Mobilizing Resources to Execute the Association's Work Plan.**

■ MOBILIZING OF RESOURCES

-Increasing Farmer's Contribution -

In the first quarter of 2019, the JPFA Executive Committee engaged the two local feed mills (i.e., Newport Mills Ltd and HiPro Feeds Ltd) in a dialogue process that was aimed at effecting the increased financial contribution of pig farmers to the JPFA, as approved by our members at the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Association.

Between May and June 2019, the Association convened four Regional Dialogue and Capacity Building forums, for the purpose of engaging its members and other stakeholders in discussions about initiatives that would form the core of the JPFA's 2019/2020 Work Plan. The major outcome of this process was that **by the 3rd quarter of 2020, the Association's Executive was able to mobilize the first tranche of increased farmer's contribution.** Also, by agreement with the feed mills, **every farmer who purchase commercial pig feeds, now automatically becomes a member of the JPFA, thus eliminating the payment of a membership fee.** With this agreement has come a fresh initiative to register new Association members. Between February and March 2020, the Association executed another round of regional

meetings with its members, for the purpose of refining key aspects of our 2019/2020 Work Plan.

JPFA Regional Meeting - St. Catherine



JPFA Regional Meeting - Westmoreland



JPFA Regional Meeting - Portland



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-MOA Covid Relief Grant Funds-

Just as the JPFA was about to conclude its second rounds of Regional meetings to refine details of its work programme activities, in March 2020, the Covid 19 pandemic impacted Jamaica. Pig farmers islandwide, who had a total of over 1,000 market-ready pigs, experienced significant loss of markets and sales revenue, as government placed restrictions on international travel and restricted public gatherings which led to the closure of hotels, and curtailed opening hours for supermarkets and restaurants.

In response, the JPFA Executive, via its website, radio & the print media, immediately advised pig farmers, to curtail (not stop) their breeding programme, and to adhere to the guidelines set out by the Ministry of Health & Wellness to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus. In May 2020, the JPFA engaged the Ministry of Agriculture with a documented proposal that would give relief to affected pig farmers.

Subsequently, the Ministry under its Covid Relief programme, agreed to provide the JPFA with J\$3M in grant funds to assist pig farmers who had marketing challenges - by way of facilitating the slaughter and storage of carcasses, and J\$1.0M for the provision of feed to newly registered JPFA members. The Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) was assigned to assist the JPFA in rolling out the new membership registration programme.

Unfortunately, challenges were encountered with the costing and logistics for the slaughtering and storage facility. Most farmers, being in dire need of working capital, rather than put their pig carcasses into storage, sold their market-ready pigs to buyers at cost price or below. Based on a proposal submitted by the Association, the Ministry of Agriculture later agreed that the portion of the funds earmarked for the slaughter and storage facility, be used to support a JPFA's generic pork marketing campaign. The campaign would in the medium to long-term, impact positively on consumer demand, and in turn, increase the offtake of pork from a relatively larger number of pig farmers.

■ EXECUTING THE WORK PLAN

Having accomplished the task of mobilizing financial resources to execute the Association's Work Plan, the Executive Committee turned its attention to embarking on the journey to execute major work programme initiatives. Detailed below are these initiatives which include the generic pork promotion campaign; the Pig Production Early Warning System; establishment of a Pork Council; and activities related to animal health and genetics.

-Generic Pork Promotion Campaign-

The Generic Pork Promotion Campaign is a major work programme initiative of the JPFA, for which plans were developed several years ago. The Association's Executive has long argued that if there is to be increased investment in pig production, consumers in Jamaica must be encouraged to eat more local-origin pork meat. The market has to be expanded.

It is with this understanding that the JPFA Executive agreed, that not only was it the opportune time for such a campaign, but that the Covid19 situation also presented the opportunity to educate the consumer about pork's immune building attributes. The promotion methods to be used in getting the message across to consumers are strategically placed billboards across the island, daily radio adverts, instore promotion, and social media. The campaign will start in the 4th quarter of 2020, and last for a period of one year in the first instance.

- Pig Production Early Warning System' (PPEWS)-

In our Position Paper, the JPFA has propositioned that if the average pig farmer, along with our two feed mills, local pork processors, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Association itself, were to know with a fair degree of accuracy, the current state of pigs/pork meat production, and also what are the prospects in the immediate future for gluts and shortages, we would all be in a better position to plan and execute business investment decisions, regulatory interventions, and capacity-building activities.

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This proposition is the fundamental reasoning behind the establishment of a '**Pig Production Early Warning System**' (PPEWS) which has been endorsed by pig farmers, feed mills, and the Ministry of Agriculture. The JPFA is collaborating with RADA and other private entities to determine the cost of implementing the PPEWS, and the modalities for undertaking a pilot programme to test the parameters of the system in the first half of 2021.

-Establishment of a Pork Council-

It has been the JPFA's perspective that pig production and pork marketing in Jamaica, cannot increase in a stable fashion without our input suppliers, pig farmers, pork processors, importer/distributors, and retailers adhering to industry agreed/approved production best practices, processing best practices, and product quality standards. These should be enforceable by law. There also has to be a high degree of formal and engineered cooperation between the key private and public actors in the industry.

Hence, the reason why the JPFA's Executive, has increased its lobby for establishing a Pork Council that not only represents the industry, but also has the legislative/regulatory clout to ensure adherence to standards and best practices, promote the welfare of industry operators, promote greater equity and increased expansion along the pork value chain, promote programmes that reduce illicit imports and dependency, and activate export initiatives.

As a result of our lobbying efforts, in May 2020, the Ministry of Agriculture agreed to assist the Association in preparing the appropriate legal instruments needed to have the Council established. At the end of August 2020, the JPFA submitted draft Constitutions and By-laws to the Ministry for its consideration and action.

-Animal Health and Improved Breeding Stock-

During the year, the JPFA's President has been an active member of the Veterinary Services Division's Jamaica Animal Health Surveillance network (JASHN). The Network is working assiduously to determine the disease status of our swine population on the island, inclusive of

any wild boar populations. Blood samples are being collected from pig farms, and tests are being conducted for more than 40 listed diseases.

While this activity is a relatively time-consuming and expensive process, determination of Jamaica's animal health status is a necessity, as by so doing we are ensuring that Jamaica complies with international regulations of the World Organization for Animal Health (O.I.E.) to prove its disease-free status. Countries that fail to prove their disease-free status, face the prospect of having their exports of meat restricted.

Concerning the matter of the quality, cost, and access to improved breeding stock, which has become of concern to pig farmers because of its long-term impact on productivity, the JPFA Executive in the first quarter of 2020 collaborated with a local pork processor to obtain grant funds through the Development Bank of Jamaica, for the purpose of establishing a modern pig breeding facility. Despite our efforts, we were unsuccessful in obtaining the grant funding. Notwithstanding this setback, the Association continues to seek ways of addressing this issue along with that of feed quality, another key variable in increasing productivity. We will continue to work with the Ministry of Agriculture in the latter's upgrading of the breeding facility at the Bodles Research Station in St. Catherine.

-Other Noteworthy Activities and Events-

▶ **Farmer Sensitization - African Swine Fever**

Through our regional meetings, and in collaboration with the MOA Veterinary Division, and also on our website, the Association has taken the opportunity to inform pig farmers about the spread of the dreaded African Swine Fever, and appropriate mitigating measures to be adapted.

▶ **Meeting-US Ambassador**

In March 2020, Executive members met with the US Ambassador, Mr. Donald Tapia and discussed several issues including trade, animal health, and technical assistance to the industry.

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▶ Hi Pro Grow Initiative

In June 2020, JPFA collaborated with Hi Pro Feeds under the latter's Covid 19 Recovery programme, to distribute 300 bags of feed to pig farmers in Cornwall, Middlesex, and Surrey.

▶ Annual General Meeting

Because of the Covid19 pandemic, and the restrictions on public gatherings, the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Association, scheduled for September 2020, will be postponed until further notice. The Minutes of the 17th Annual General Meeting; this President's Annual Report, and the Audited Financial Statements, are to be posted on the JPFA's website. The Association's current Executive body remains in place and will continue to meet monthly.

▶ JPFA Systems upgrade

The Association continues to upgrade its banking facilities and financial auditing framework. Use of the digital platform of our Bank now enables better monitoring of the Association's financial resources and the conduct of on-line transactions.

■ OUR WORK PLAN 2020-2021.

In keeping with previous work plans, and reinforced by the Covid 19 experience, completing the execution of our **Campaign To Promote the Consumption of Local-Origin Pork** will be a major part of the Association's 2020/2021 Work Plan agenda. The planning phase for this activity will end in November 2020, and implementation will commence in January 2021.

We will continue to pursue implementation of the proposed **Pig Production Early Warning System (PPEWS)** which has been agreed to by key industry stakeholders and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The pilot phase of the PPEWS should commence before June 2021.

Also, on the agenda moving forward, is the continued **Sensitization of Pig Farmers and Border Control Agents about African Swine Fever and other Harmful Diseases**, and the biosecurity measures to be adapted to guard against possible outbreaks. This topic along with

matters related maintaining animal productivity such as feed and breeding stock will form the core of JPFA's capacity building programme for our members.

The need to inject better quality standards all along the value chain from input supply to market, and to ensure that regulations reinforce these standards, cannot be overemphasized. Hence the Association's pursuit during this period, of **establishing the Pork Council composite of key Industry Stakeholders, private and public.**

Given the Covid 19 experience, under the umbrella of the Pork Council, or that of the JPFA, we will seek to collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and other industry stakeholders to develop a **Contingency Plan for Domestic Pork Market Failures**. This Plan will provide guidelines as to actions that would be taken to shore up domestic pork consumption and maintain stability in pig production when there are extraordinary events beyond the control of the industry parties.

Finally, the Covid19 pandemic is giving rise to 'new norms' in all aspects of consumer life and business. Plans have to be recalibrated to suit. In moving forward, the JPFA Executive, with the assistance of our in-house Consultant, will craft and table at our next Annual General Meeting in 2021, a new **Strategic Plan for the period 2021-2024.**

In closing, the Executive Committee of the JPFA takes this opportunity to thank all pig farmers, the representatives of feed mills, pork processors, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) and Jamaica Customs Agency, for their continued engagement with the Association, and we look forward to furthering engagements in the year ahead.



Annel Williams

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President