

MINISTRY PAPER No. : _____

PERFORMANCE OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NCST) FOR THE 2005/2006 FINANCIAL YEAR AND FOCUS FOR THE 2006/2007 FINANCIAL YEAR

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this Ministry Paper is to inform Parliament and the public about the performance of the National Commission on Science and Technology (NCST) for the 2005/2006 Financial Year and its focus for the 2006/2007 Financial Year.

2.0 Mission

The Mission of the NCST is to improve the quality of life of all Jamaicans through the application of Science and Technology (S&T) for social and economic development by:

- providing S & T policy advice to decision makers
- coordinating, monitoring and evaluation of S & T policy, planning and implementation
- providing S & T information
- mobilising and allocating resources to the scientific community

3.0 Vision

In 2015, Science and Technology is being used to maximize the potential of Jamaica's human resources. There is widespread Science and Technology education and a culture of Science and Technology for national development, and sustainable natural resource utilization. This has resulted in sustainable agriculture and food security, wealth, and a better quality of life for Jamaicans.

4.0 Background

The National Commission on Science and Technology (NCST) had its genesis in the National Science and Technology Policy promulgated in 1990. Arising from the Policy, the need was identified for more effective management of Science and Technology for national socio-economic development. The Commission was established in 1993 and is a broad-based, cross-sectoral national advisory body to the government on policies and strategies relating to science and technology (S&T).

The NCST comprises a group of designated commissioners who normally meet at regular intervals to consider S&T issues and provide insights on S&T interventions that should be pursued. The NCST is serviced by a small administrative Secretariat. Decisions of the NCST are pursued by the Secretariat and various sub-committees, which constitute stakeholders and others from the wider society with an interest in the

particular subject area. Implementation of S&T interventions is done by the various line ministries and agencies.

5.0 Functions

The main functions of the NCST are as follows:

- Act as a forum for bringing together key individuals within the scientific and corporate community to provide insights to Government on S&T matters
- Provide general policy advice to Government on matters concerning S&T
- Facilitate and monitor the implementation of key S&T-type policies and interventions across government
- Develop and monitor implementation of a national S&T strategic plan across government
- Develop S&T indicators, set targets, institute formal system for collection of data, collect data and monitor performance
- Review and recommend the selection and use of key technologies which are relevant to national development.
- Review and evaluate S&T initiatives of ministries and agencies and provide advice on the prioritization of S&T-type interventions
- Provide advice on budgetary allocation of ministries and agencies to S&T initiatives
- Provide incentives to enhance the development of S&T in the country
- Identify sources of funds for S&T projects
- Create essential linkages between the users and suppliers of S&T thereby enhancing levels of production and productivity.
- Promote education and training in S&T and monitor targets
- Collaborate with other stakeholders in the promotion of S&T in the country
- Foster, promote and ensure the optimal use of national, regional and international Government and non-Government S&T linkages.

6.0 Strategic Objectives

As a co-ordinating organization, the success of the NCST is measured by the overall performance of the Science and Technology (S&T) sector. The following strategic objectives represent desired achievements of the S&T sector in order to ensure the achievement of the National Vision.

- (a) To improve the utilization of S&T for competitive and profitable businesses
- (b) To make S&T efforts for national development more efficient, impactful and environmentally sustainable
- (c) To develop local S&T competence and capability
- (d) To ensure that the population understands the importance of S&T
- (e) To broadly disseminate knowledge and information on S&T

7.0 Highlights of Main Achievements for Financial Year 2005/2006

The NCST continued its quest to ensure the integration and application of science and technology (S&T) activities towards national socio-economic development.

7.1 NCST Legislation and S&T Policy

In order to strengthen its institutional capacity and infrastructure, the Commission is pursuing the promulgation of legislation for its legal entrenchment. Additionally, the second S&T Policy promulgated in 1990 was revised to produce a more modern and relevant policy.

7.2 Private Sector Partnerships/Support

In order to facilitate greater private sector participation in S&T development and application, regular meetings of the NCST and the private sector continued throughout the review year. These meetings have forged closer linkages especially with the small business sector.

The NCST has also partnered with the private sector and other stakeholders in a ginger innovation initiative which will further develop the Jamaican ginger industry.

7.3 Research and Development (R&D) Tax Incentives Programme and Technology Investment Fund

Recognizing the importance of research and development, the Government, through the NCST, continued to stimulate Research and Development (R&D) activities and subsequent transfer of technologies to various industries by the provision of tax exemption for R&D activities in the purchase of equipment and materials. In addition, funds were made available through the Technology Investment Fund (TIF) to finance technology-intensive projects and R&D activities.

7.4 Increasing Biotechnology Competence

Jamaica possesses considerable reserves of natural resources and it is essential that a concerted effort be made to optimally exploit our rich biodiversity, particularly for increased food security and preservation of human and environmental health. In this regard, for the first time, through the NCST, the Government is on a path to develop a national biotechnology policy and implementation strategy, which should be finalized within the financial year.

Efforts have also been made to increase our competence in this area and the NCST has facilitated training of its personnel.

7.5 Bio-Safety Activities

Monthly meetings of the National Biosafety Committee (NBC) of the NCST are held to monitor the use and handling of genetically modified organisms and provide advice on the potential impact on human health and the environment.

7.6 Spinning Cone Column Flavour Extraction Project

The Spinning Cone Column Flavour Extraction Project is a project of the NCST and represents a major achievement of the entity. The NCST is convinced about the financial and economic viability of this project and was responsible for getting a decision taken to implement the project. Accordingly, the NCST pressed for funding to be provided by the Government for the implementation of the project. The project is located in St. Elizabeth and is now being implemented.

7.7 National Medal for Science and Technology

To encourage the pursuit of excellence in S&T, the National Medal for Science and Technology was awarded for the second time in January 2006. This award is bestowed on individuals who have made outstanding contributions in the natural and applied sciences, including engineering and whose work has contributed significantly to the social, cultural and economic development of Jamaica. The Medal is awarded biennially.

7.8 Science and Technology Indicators

The NCST places much emphasis on the development of a set of S&T Indicators for Jamaica, to begin the process of assessment of national S&T competence, identify markers of progress and make recommendations for improved efficiency.

The first volume of the *“Report on Science & Technology Input and Output Indicators for Jamaica”* was completed by the end of 2005. The report provides information on public sector expenditure on S&T and Research and Development (R&D), patents granted by Jamaica, S&T publication rates by Jamaica’s major academic institutions, and data on the number of degrees awarded in S&T by local universities and colleges.

Work continues towards the updating of these indicators and development of other critical indicators to inform policy decisions.

7.9 Development of Human Resources for S&T

The Millennium Committee for Science and Technology has considered fine-tuning of activities to be included in a project proposal to be submitted for funding. It entails strengthening of S&T in Jamaica, establishment of centres of excellence, identification of strategic S&T areas, provision of fellowships/internships and development of local S&T journals. The project proposal for development of an S&T public education programme was subsequently submitted to the CHASE Fund for funding consideration.

7.10 Jamaica Young Scientists Forum (JYSF)

The Young Scientists Forum is intended to foster collaboration, networking and participation among young Jamaican scientists. Registration of the JYSF as a non-governmental organization (NGO) was finalized with the Companies Office of Jamaica (COJ) by August 2005.

7.11 NCST Website

The Commission continued to maintain a website (www.ncst.gov.jm), which functions as the national S&T portal. Regular update of information on the site is done through the services of the Jamaica Information Service (JIS).

7.12 Profile of R&D Institutions

The NCST maintains a compendium on the programme profile of Jamaica's R&D institutions. Regular updates of the profiles were done based on information received from the institutions and this is posted on the website.

7.13 National Foundation for the Development of Science and Technology

The Secretariat of the NCST continued to function as the Secretariat to the National Foundation for the Development of Science and Technology (NFDST). The NFDST operates a Technology Investment Fund (TIF) which functions as the funding arm of the NCST.

The Technology Investment Fund is a special fund established by the Government to finance investments in commercial activities containing new or substantial technological improvements, which would not qualify for funding under existing criteria of commercial and development banks, and to provide funding for R&D activities to enhance competitiveness and productivity. The NCST continues to coordinate activities relating to the Fund.

7.14 Sidgrains Wastewater Project

The Secretariat of the NCST also functions as the Secretariat to Sidgrains Ltd., the Company established to implement a waste water project for agricultural production. The project has been completed, a decision was taken to de-list the company and this is now in progress.

8.0 Major Tasks for 2006/07

- Organize NCST and NFDST meetings and ensure implementation of decisions taken
- Interface with the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and other entities to provide technical details to facilitate the passing of the NCST Bill
- Facilitate the award of the National Medal for S&T
- Provide administrative and technical support for agreed activities
- Establish systems to collect and report on S&T targets
- Request data on targets from institution and insert in Strategic Plan
- Prepare and submit project proposals for funding
- Provide secretarial support to the NFDST

- Assist the NDFST with implementation of a comprehensive fundraising and fund management plan to cover planned activity identified in the *National Commission on Science and Technology – Strategic Plan 2005-2010 (February 2005)*
- Support the operational activity of the Technology Investment Fund
- Process applications, request and monitor disbursements of funds to projects as approved.
- Convene meetings of key members of the S&T training institutions to harmonize S&T delivery
- Intensify efforts to obtain current information on the profiles of the S&T Institutions
- Update, analyze and prepare evaluation report based on existing S&T indicators (i.e. human resources, expenditure, and patenting activity) to determine the extent to which S&T is being exploited to the benefit of the country.
- Participate in advancement of Ginger, Agricultural, Science and Technology Innovation Initiative led by Ministry of Agriculture
- Implement the NCST/CTA Study on Sugar Cane
- Attend local and international meetings, seminars, workshops, conferences as approved

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