

**MINISTRY PAPER No.:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA/SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
COOPERATION AGENCY – “STRENGTHENING JAMAICA’S NATIONAL  
QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE” PROJECT**

**1.0 Purpose of Ministry Paper**

The purpose of this Ministry Paper is to inform Parliament and the public about the nature, objectives and status of the Government of Jamaica/Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) – Project for the Strengthening of Jamaica’s National Quality Infrastructure (GOJ/Sida NQI Project # INEC-IKTS/433/00).

**2.0 Background**

New ground rules of trade, established through various World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements, promote free movement of goods and require that safety and quality of products be proven through transparent and reliable conformity assessment systems, thus eliminating technical barriers to trade. These new global rules require that governments implement conformity assessment systems that will ensure that the various agreements are met.

A country’s National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) is that set of facilities and mechanisms needed to perform conformity assessment. They cover activities ranging from the establishment of the rules on the market to the activities used to prove that individual products and services fulfill the requirements set in the market rules or buyers’ specifications. The National Quality Infrastructure therefore covers activities such as the preparation, adoption and application of technical regulations, the preparation, adoption and application of standards, accreditation, certification, inspection, testing, metrology (measurement) and other methods of enforcement.

Jamaica is a signatory to both the WTO Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), and Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary (SPS) Measures agreements, and is therefore obligated to ensure that its NQI is in line with these agreements.

Currently Jamaica is striving to develop international competitiveness and to succeed in its export-led development strategy as articulated in the National Industrial Policy. Therefore in 2000 the Government, recognizing that an appropriate National Quality Infrastructure is critical to this developmental strategy, took a decision to upgrade the country’s NQI and bring it in line with international best practice.

The NQI Project is being implemented by the Ministry of Industry, Technology, Energy and Commerce (MITEC) in co-operation with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Swedish Board for Accreditation and Conformity Assessment (SWEDAC).

## **2.1 Project Goal**

The main goal of this Project is “To support the Jamaican authorities in adapting the National Quality Infrastructure to the new international principles for conformity assessment and thus to increase the competitiveness of Jamaican products on International Markets”.

## **2.2 Purpose of Project**

The purpose of the National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) Project is to assist Jamaica to upgrade its NQI and bring it in line with the requirements of WTO -Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), and Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary (SPS) Measures agreements and international best practices. This will facilitate Jamaica’s goods and services being traded competitively on the world market.

## **3.0 Specific Project Objectives**

The specific project objectives are:

**(i) To develop an overall policy for the organization of the national quality infrastructure in Jamaica**

The National Quality Policy was formally approved by Cabinet in October 2001. The main intent of this policy was to formally guide the people of Jamaica on the overall intentions and directions of the Government with respect to quality. It also sought to establish a modern framework within Jamaica for quality and conformity assessment and to ensure that development in these areas recognizes international principles.

**(ii) To support the adaptation of the food sector to the new principles for technical regulations and conformity assessment**

This objective seeks to “support the food sector in adapting to the new principles for technical regulations and conformity assessment”. The quality infrastructure in the food sector is being upgraded in response to the demands of globalization and increased trade both between the developing countries and with the developed countries. Issues of food safety and quality have therefore taken on renewed prominence.

Within the framework of the WTO, food and agricultural products are covered not only by the WTO/Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement, but

also by the Agreement on Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary measures (the WTO/SPS Agreement). Member countries are encouraged to use international standards, guidelines and recommendations where they exist.

In addition to the two (2) above-mentioned agreements which in the future will form the framework within which Jamaican food and agricultural producers will have to trade, they will also have to meet the special regulatory requirements of the particular target market. This is so as increasingly, countries are passing food safety and security regulations that affect the entire food chain "From Farm to Fork".

It has been agreed that (1) the Government Administration related to food and foodstuff will be streamlined and simplified and the overall responsibility for food safety and marketing of food be allocated to one or two ministries. (2) A Food Safety Authority Secretariat will be set up at MITEC. The major task of this organization will be to rationalize the food safety regulatory system in Jamaica.

**(iii) To support the establishment of a national accreditation body**

A National Accreditation Body is currently being established through the Project for two reasons, i.e. to satisfy the various agreements of the WTO, and to facilitate trade.

Since it is appreciated that successful trade is built on trust, experts agree that there is a manifest need for a global growth in trust and confidence. Therefore throughout the world, countries are facilitating trade by using an Accreditation Based Conformity Assessment System to help increase the credibility and confidence in the trustworthiness of their goods and services.

Through the successful implementation of this system in Jamaica, it is expected that the country will satisfy the stipulations of its trade agreements as well as increase the confidence that international customers and their regulatory bodies have in the quality and safety of Jamaican products.

**(iv) To prepare selected laboratories for accreditation**

In respect of this objective, twenty-five (25) laboratories have received over seven hundred (700) man-hours of consultancy from SWEDAC to help them prepare for accreditation to International Standard ISO 17025 "general requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories".

It is anticipated that in future only evidence generated from accredited laboratories will be acceptable in international courts of justice or dispute settlement fora. It should therefore be the goal of every laboratory in Jamaica to be accredited since international accreditation is the means of ensuring that results from Jamaican laboratories are acceptable worldwide.

#### **4.0 Project Achievements Financial Year 2006/2007**

During the period April 2006 to March 2007 the NQI Project accomplished the following activities:

##### **(i) Laboratory Accreditation**

The Project continued to support the development of laboratories through the Laboratories Association of Jamaica. Support was given to the association in order to do its “teach-ins”, and conduct its board meetings and general meetings.

In February 2007, as planned, the Project started the new Laboratory Accreditation Technical Assistance (LATA) Programme for medical laboratories desirous of being accredited to international standard ISO 15189. This began with a seminar on “How to prepare your Laboratory for Accreditation” which was conducted during the period February 26 to March 21, 2007. Thirty-five (35) persons from Twenty-two (22) laboratories attended this seminar which was conducted in collaboration with the Laboratories Association of Jamaica.

At the end of the seminar, based on applications submitted, Seventeen (17) laboratories were selected to be part of the LATA Programme.

##### **(ii) Establishment of the National Accreditation Body**

In September 2006, Cabinet gave approval for the accreditation function to be removed from the Bureau of Standards Jamaica and for the establishment of the National Accreditation Body as a separate, legal and independent entity. The Ministry is now in the process of completing the setting-up activity. To-date the body has been legally incorporated as a company limited by guarantee, and, the board of directors has been approved by Cabinet.

During the review year, the Project also continued to support the development of the Caribbean Laboratory Accreditation Scheme (CLAS) - the regional accreditation system for laboratories - by participating in its development activities.

CLAS is a sub-committee of the CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ). Specifically Project staff assisted in conducting two (2) training workshops for participants from the National Accreditation Focal Points of other Caribbean countries. These workshops took place in Barbados in May 2006 and St Lucia in October 2006.

In September 2006, in the interest of developing the pool of local accreditation assessors, the Project co-sponsored a series of workshops for the training of assessors of medical laboratories to International Standard ISO 15189. A general seminar on accreditation was also conducted. Partnering with the Project was the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) of the Pan American Health Organization and the main trainers were from the South African Accreditation Body. During these training seminars, sixty-four (64) persons drawn from the various CARIFORM countries, including forty five (45) from Jamaica, were trained.

(iii) **Support given to the Food Sector**

The matter of food safety spans three ministries – Health, Agriculture and the Ministry of Industry, Technology, Energy and Commerce. The objective is to establish an institutional arrangement that will ensure that the regulation of food is seamless. In June 2006 Cabinet gave approval for an interim governing body (IGB) to be established. The IGB would function as a board to provide guidance in the establishment of a food safety coordinating or oversight body. The IGB began operating in October 2006 under the Food and Drug Act of the Ministry of Health. In March 2007, the IGB began work on the formation of a food safety secretariat which will be established in the Ministry of Industry, Technology, Energy and Commerce. The secretariat will be funded by the Inter-American Development Bank through the Agricultural Support Services Project in the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

Once the secretariat begins functioning, the NQI Project will provide the agreed technical assistance to help upgrade the Food Safety Regulatory Infrastructure.

## **5.0 Project Financing & Projected Expenditure for Financial Year 2007/2008**

Project expenditure from inception to March 31, 2007 was approximately \$80 M funded by the Government of Jamaica (GoJ) and the Government of Sweden. The projected expenditure for Financial Year 2007/2008 is expected to be J\$64.5M. This will be funded from GoJ's contribution of approximately \$37M and a Swedish Grant of J\$26,991,000.

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