

SPEAKING NOTES

FOR

Mr. Omar Sweeney, CD, PE.

Managing Director,

Jamaica Social Investment Fund

At the

Contract Signing Ceremony

for

Greenhouse Cluster & Cooperative
Infrastructure Upgrade Projects

On

Tuesday, February 24, 2026.

Dr. Osbil Watson - Master of Ceremonies and Veterinary Animal Health & Production Specialist,

Honourable Floyd Green - Minister of Agriculture Fisheries & Mining,

Honourable Franklin Witter - Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Mining,

Members of Parliament, representing the beneficiary parishes,

Ms. Lilia Burunciuc - World Bank Group Country Director for Caribbean Countries,

Representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Mining,

Mr. Garnet Edmonson- Chief Executive Officer, Rural Agricultural Development Authority,

Representatives from the Rural Agricultural Development Authority,

Partners from the Jamaica Bauxite Institute, RADA, JAMALCO, WINDALCO, Discovery Bauxite Company,

Members of the REDI-II Project team,

Representatives of our Community Councils and Benevolent societies, and most importantly—our farmers and rural leaders.

Good morning. Today, we are not just signing contracts. We are authorizing a new level of agricultural resilience and market readiness—a new chapter in how Jamaica grows food, manages water, and secures rural livelihoods in some of our most climate-vulnerable communities.

Let us begin with what farmers already know in their bones: the climate is changing the rules of production. Rainfall is more erratic, dry spells are longer, and extreme weather events are more frequent and more intense. For open-field farmers, that can mean one good season followed by two or three bad ones, and an income line that swings as wildly as the weather.

In Communities impacted by bauxite mining, these climate pressures often arrive on top of disrupted employment, degraded lands, and limited infrastructure. The result is unstable incomes, constrained access to formal markets, and continued reliance on imported produce to fill gaps that Jamaican farmers are fully capable of supplying, if we support them properly.

We therefore must scale what works: protected agriculture, supported by water harvesting, drip irrigation, and fertigation, because this combination has proven to be one of the most effective climate-smart solutions in the Jamaican context.

We have evidence. Under the previous JSIF–JBI Greenhouse Cluster and Water Harvesting Project, we built 160 greenhouses, adding an estimated 762 tonnes of vegetable production per year and benefiting approximately 1,160 farmers and their households across Manchester, St. Elizabeth and St. Ann. Those were not experiments; they were results.

Today, we are scaling that success, deliberately, transparently, and at meaningful size.

This Greenhouse Cluster & Cooperative Infrastructure Upgrade Project sits under the Second Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI - II), implemented by JSIF, with an objective that is clear: to enhance access to markets and climate resilient approaches for targeted beneficiaries.

And that is exactly what these Greenhouse Cluster & Cooperative Infrastructure Upgrade Projects are designed to deliver.

With a total investment of approximately **JMD 880.5 million**, we will implement eight greenhouse clusters across five parishes, delivering 95 greenhouses and integrated water and post-harvest systems to around 848 direct beneficiaries; farmers, their families, and key value-chain actors such as purveyors and supermarkets.

This is not a pilot. This is scale. This programme is built on partnerships that bring land, technical capacity, community leadership, and financing into one execution engine.

- The **Jamaica Bauxite Institute** will coordinate greenhouse cluster development in bauxite-affected communities, engage bauxite companies and host communities, and provide targeted funding and technical assistance for critical infrastructure—water catchment ponds, pond liners, solar-driven water pumps, and seedlings.
- The **Rural Agricultural Development Authority** will deliver technical support, extension services, farmer training, and enforcement of good agricultural practices, so the greenhouses produce not just volume, but quality, safety, and consistency.
- And **bauxite companies—JAMALCO, WINDALCO, and Discovery Bauxite Company**, will support land access and site preparation, aligning this work with strong Corporate Social Responsibility commitments.

At the community level, our anchors are doing what great rural institutions do: organizing people, protecting governance, and creating platforms for production.

- **Mocho Community Council Benevolent Society in Clarendon** will deliver 40 greenhouses across four clusters—Belmont, Dawkins, Foga, and Settlement—with water catchment, packing, input storage, sanitation and changing facilities, supporting about 320 beneficiaries to shift from weather-dependent farming to stabilized, market-ready supply.
- **South Plateau Community Council Benevolent Society in Manchester** will build 10 greenhouses and full supporting infrastructure, benefiting about 80 farmers and strengthening the

transition from declining bauxite jobs to a new agro-based economy.

- **Water Valley Community Council Benevolent Society in St. Ann** will deliver 20 greenhouses across two clusters, moving approximately 160 beneficiaries into climate-resilient systems with integrated water harvesting and storage.
- **Ewarton JBI Alumina Community Council Benevolent Society in St. Catherine** will construct 10 greenhouses with full supporting infrastructure for about 80 beneficiaries, advancing the vision of an agro-park model with collective production, secure storage, coordinated supply, and strong youth engagement.
- **Blackstoned edge in St. Ann** will support small-scale farmers transitioning from open-field farming to protected agriculture within a community-scale model.
- And the **Mafoota Agricultural Cooperative Society Ltd. In St. James**, with 124 beneficiaries will see major improvements through upgraded solar-powered infrastructure, an improved sewerage system, and increased water harvesting and storage.

Each cluster—each cooperative upgrade, is more than a construction package. It is a platform for long-term community transformation.

Across these parishes and community anchors, the contract packages you are witnessing today will deliver:

- **95 climate-smart greenhouses**, fully equipped with drip irrigation and fertigation systems.
- **Integrated water catchment and storage systems**—ponds, tanks, and solar-powered pumping solutions—to ensure reliable supply year-round.
- **Sanitary and changing facilities**, meeting basic health and safety standards.
- **Dedicated storage for pesticides and fertilizers**, improving safety and food-safety compliance.
- **Packing facilities** for post-harvest handling, grading, and distribution aligned with national and international requirements.

In other words, we are not only growing vegetables; we are growing market-ready products—with the infrastructure to back them from the water source to the supermarket shelf.

And we are targeting five major outcomes:

1. **Increased and stabilized production**—year-round production that reduces dependence on erratic rainfall and shields crops from pests and extreme weather.
2. **Improved income stability and resilience**—consistent yields and improved quality that translate into more stable, higher incomes.
3. **Stronger climate resilience**—climate-smart technologies that reduce risk and create demonstrable models of adaptation.
4. **Enhanced food safety and market readiness**—facilities and systems that make it easier to meet high-value buyer requirements locally and internationally.
5. **Institutional strengthening**—community organizations gaining governance and cluster-management capability that outlasts this project and catalyzes further investment.

Collectively, these outcomes mean more local food on local tables, more Jamaican vegetables in regional markets, and stronger, more competitive rural economies.

This programme also aligns directly with Jamaica's national priorities for agricultural growth and diversification; climate resilience and disaster risk reduction; sustainable use of lands; rural employment and youth engagement, and food and nutrition security.

Through REDI- II, JSIF's focus is practical: sustainable livelihoods, poverty reduction, and rural infrastructure that improves quality of life for beneficiaries. So today, I want to issue three clear expectations:

First: disciplined execution. Contractors must deliver quality, safety, and schedule. These are productive assets; delays cost families income.

Second: strong governance at the community level. I urge our Community Councils, Benevolent Societies, and Co-operatives: steward these clusters. Own them. Keep governance strong, records clear and up to date, and youth meaningfully involved.

Third: market behaviour, not just production behaviour. Farmers, these greenhouses are businesses. Treat them like businesses. Plan crops to demand, track costs, meet quality standards, and coordinate supply so buyers can rely on you week after week.

If we all do our part, six months from now we will not only see structures completed—we will see seedlings in the ground, contracts signed with buyers, and young people building careers in modern agriculture.

Ladies and gentlemen, today's Contract Signing is about far more than 95 greenhouses and upgraded cooperative infrastructure. It is about changing the trajectory of 848 families and the communities around them. It is about proving that we can turn climate risk into climate resilience, and vulnerable communities into competitive producers.

On behalf of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund, I thank all partners and beneficiaries for the trust you have placed in this programme. Now we must match that trust with disciplined execution and shared accountability.

Let us build these clusters, grow these crops, reach these markets—and in doing so, honour the core objective of REDI – II; to enhance access to markets and climate resilient approaches for targeted beneficiaries.

Thank you—and let's get to work.