

# Drought Conditions and Management Strategies in Jamaica

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# Background

- Jamaica lies within the Atlantic hurricane belt.
- The island experiences a bi-modal rainfall pattern with distinct dry and rainy periods, the southern coast experiencing much less annual rainfall levels than the rain shadow north.
- Over the past 2 decades, the frequency and intensity of natural disasters including drought directly affecting Jamaica have risen significantly.

# Drought Monitoring and Early Warning Systems

- The Climate Branch of the Meteorological Service in Jamaica maintains a rainfall network of nearly four hundred rain gauges and rainfall recorders located strategically across the island.
- From the information collected the values for the island's drought Index are computed. This index is used to determine the onset, intensity and end of a drought in Jamaica.
- Monthly electronic Agromet Bulletins are issued to assist stakeholders with information on rainfall and drought conditions.

# Vulnerability Assessment

Jamaica is particularly vulnerable to the drought hazard due to the following reasons:

- Jamaica relies heavily on agriculture.
- Predominant number of approximately 260 ,000 farmers in Jamaica fall in the category of small, rain-dependent farms, with less than two (2) hectares in size.
- The increase in Jamaica's population due to urbanization, has led to a greater increase in demand for an already limited supply of water.
- Limited/poor national water storage systems.

# Strategies to alleviate Drought Impact

- RADA will continue to truck water to production areas where possible.
- Exploring the rehabilitation of existing permanent water tanks in communities across the island.
- Encouraging farmers to use efficient and economical irrigation systems .e.g. gravity drip systems, small portable pumps, tanks for water storage (black tanks);
- Encouraging farmers to install temporary guttering systems to catch water from sporadic rainfall.
- Strengthening of multi sectorial approach to disaster risk management