

Jamaican conference on agricultural development

An educational
resource by:

**Royal
Geographical
Society**
with IBG



About the conference

The Jamaican government is holding a conference on agricultural development as part of their National Development Plan for 2030.

Groups from the global papaya supply chain will meet to discuss the current issues and to propose possible solutions. Many groups will be represented, including:

- Fruit pickers
- Farmers
- Importers
- Supermarket buyers
- Consumers

The Agenda

You are tasked with **making Jamaican agriculture more competitive in a global economy**. But there are limits to what you can achieve so be sure to take your group's position into account and remember to think through the consequences of your decisions.

For example...

The Jamaican government recommends organic agriculture to reduce the environmental issues associated with chemical fertilisers. This will also open up the more lucrative organic food market. However, this requires farmers to grow organically, supermarkets to stock organic food and consumers to buy organic papayas.

What you need to know

Agriculture accounts for a large share of Jamaica's labour force and GDP. However, the sector has experienced a decline in productivity in recent years.

Over the past 20 years, the industry has struggled compete in the global trade arena. The small scale Jamaican farms face greatest competition from the large and efficient farms in Brazil. This has been made worse by:

1. An aging work force
2. Free trade enforcements by the World Trade Organisation (WTO)
3. Use of inappropriate technologies for small-scale farming
4. Gaps in infrastructure e.g. roads and irrigation
5. Environmental issues e.g. soil erosion, deforestation and fertiliser use

Vision: a dynamic transformation of the Jamaican agricultural sector

You are a group of...

FRUIT PICKERS!

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What do you do?

You spend your day stood on a platform made from scaffolding, welded to a tractor trailer. It's high up there: at least 30 feet off the ground. It's hot too.

There are eight of you stood up on that platform each day, being jerked about as the tractor pulling you moves slowly along the muddy, uneven track. This is difficult and potentially dangerous work.

The challenges you face

A weekly trip to the market costs more than you get paid for working on the farm. How are you expected to make ends meet? Currency devaluation has vastly inflated the prices of imported food and basic provisions in Jamaica.

You've just had a pay rise but it is still below the annual rate of inflation. Sure, things could be worse. You've got better pay and benefits than some agricultural workers, such as the sugar cane cutters.

Questions to consider

How can your wages be improved?

How can your working conditions be improved?

How can your job security be improved?

In case you finish early...

Reflect on your role in the global trade of papayas. Are you a winner or a loser? What would happen if people stopped buying Jamaican papayas?



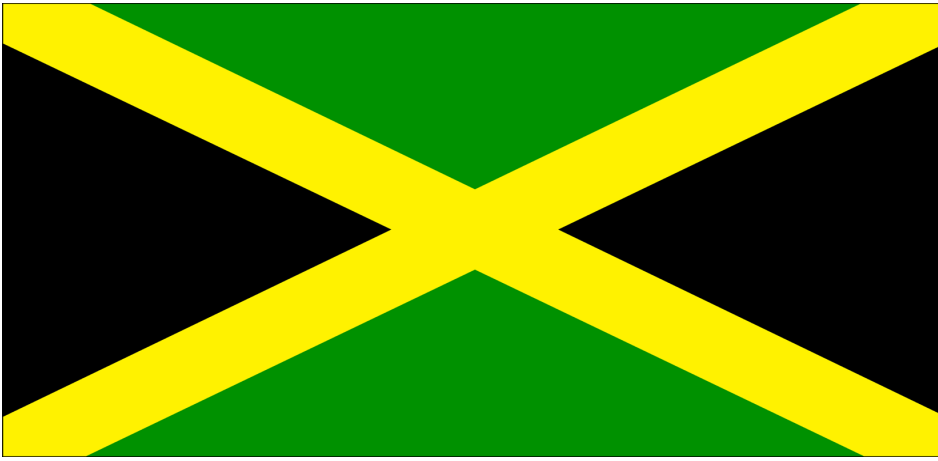
Photo: Papayas ripening on the tree. Credit: Belindah/Flickr

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You are a group of... **FARMERS!**

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What do you do?

You run a papaya farm with your wife. You spend a lot of your time trying to pay your 90 workers to do their jobs. To satisfy the supermarket buyers, you have no choice but to be strict with your workers. 1200 boxes are due to fly to London tomorrow afternoon. That's over 10,000 papayas.

The challenges you face

Jamaica's currency is declining in value relative to the global economy so your papayas are cheaper for international buyers. This makes you more competitive against the Brazilian papayas. But if the exchange rates change, your produce will be too expensive on the world market.

You live in constant uncertainty. If there was a scandal and the British press expose child labour, or poverty of farm workers, you could lose business and go bust overnight.

Questions to consider

How can you become more competitive on a global market?

How can you improve the farm working conditions?

How can you improve the security of your business?

In case you finish early...

Reflect on your role in the global trade of papayas. Are you a winner or a loser? What would happen if people stopped buying Jamaican papayas?



Photo: A tropical plantation farmer. Credit: Usagts/Flickr

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You are a group of... IMPORTERS!

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What do you do?

Your family has been dealing with fresh produce for three generations. You recently set up a specialist fruit importing business in a small suite of offices in central London.

You're a 'middle man' and you spent your time on the phone, talking to supermarkets about what they want and to suppliers about what they will pay.

The challenges you face

You need to trust your farmers to supply quality fruits on time. So you visit each farm once a year. You need to see if the fruit can be produced to a better standard.

But when you travel, you get to know the farmers personally and continually have to face up to the ugly realities of world trade – the rich getting richer, the poor getting poorer.

Questions to consider

How can you increase your profit margins?

How can you ensure a fairer deal for your suppliers?

What would make you switch to a different supplier?

In case you finish early...

Reflect on your role in the global trade of papayas. Are you a winner or a loser? What would happen if people stopped buying Jamaican papayas?



Photo: Papayas being packed into crates. Credit: Prato9x/Flickr

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You are a group of... SUPERMARKET BUYERS!

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What do you do?

You work for a major UK supermarket. You buy Jamaican papayas in large quantities to fill the customer demand. You buy the fruit on behalf of supermarkets from specialist importers.

You work at your supermarkets headquarters just outside London. Most of your work revolves around her phone and computer. You must to keep an eye on all the crops around the world to see where you can make the most profit.

The challenges you face

Occasionally, you go on a big trip to visit a farm to establish relationships with the famers and advise them on quality standards. You see the poverty first-hand, knowing that you are directly involved.

But back at the office, you forget about these things. You have to do your job. You have to get papayas all year round, in the right quantities at the right price.

Questions to consider

How can you make the most profit from selling papayas?

How can you encourage customers to buy papayas?

Does Jamaican development matter to you?

In case you finish early...

Reflect on your role in the global trade of papayas. Are you a winner or a loser? What would happen if people stopped buying Jamaican papayas?



Photo: Papayas in a supermarket. Credit: Jasja Dekker/Flickr

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You are a group of... CONSUMERS!

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What do you do?

You usually pass through the fresh fruit and veg first. Those colours, shapes, smells and textures come from all around the world. You often imagine where their exotic food comes from, believing they can experience faraway cultures.

The supermarkets expected papayas to become popular. They attempted to break into the mainstream market through promotions: low prices and high volumes. £1 per fruit was too expensive for the you. It's a psychological barrier. 99 pence, on the other hand, is good value.

You don't just consume papaya by eating the fruit. It is an ingredient in all kinds of other things: face-lift treatments, chewing gum, toothpaste, leather goods, shrink-resistant woolen fabrics, vegetarian cheese and beer.

Questions to consider

Do you want cheap products or a fair deal for producers?

Do you play a role in developing the Jamaican agricultural sector?
If so, how would you contribute to this?

Do you think that it is important for consumers to be at this conference?

Does it matter where your papayas come from?

In case you finish early...

Reflect on your role in the global trade of papayas. Are you a winner or a loser? What would happen if people stopped buying Jamaican papayas?



Photo: The ripe insides of a papaya. Credit: Janineomg/Flickr

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