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Report Name: Biotechnology and Other New Production Technologies
Annual

Country: Jamaica

Post: Kingston

Report Category: Biotechnology and Other New Production Technologies

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Report Highlights:

U.S. agricultural exports to Jamaica in 2024 totaled approximately \$590 million, a one percent decrease from the \$601 million sold in 2023. In spite of this decline, the United States remains a key trading partner for the largest English-speaking Caribbean nation. Currently, a number of U.S. exported livestock feed inputs and intermediate foods to Jamaica are produced using biotechnological methods. In 2020, Jamaica approved a national Biosafety Policy, which will guide how biotechnology and biosafety are utilized in the country.

Executive Summary

Jamaica established a biosafety policy to develop regulations that guide how biosafety is applied and how products of biotechnology are traded with partner countries. The Cartagena Protocol influences the biosafety regulations in Jamaica. The Protocol addresses the “*safe handling, transport and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effects on biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health.*” Jamaica is a signatory to the convention, and the Protocol was enforced on December 24, 2012.

Jamaica’s [Biosafety Policy](#)¹ (2020) is geared towards meeting international obligations, specifically those set out in the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Jamaica is also keen to review its biotechnological needs while reducing risks to biodiversity, health, and the environment to the extent possible. Considering that Jamaica imports products produced using biotechnological methods, the Biosafety Policy that Jamaica has enacted may affect future trade with the United States.

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¹ https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/gmfp/docs/Biosafety%20Policy-Jamaica.pdf

CHAPTER 1: PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY

PART A: PRODUCTION AND TRADE

- a) **RESEARCH AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT:** The Biotechnology Centre at the University of the West Indies (UWI) conducted experiments in crop production using genetic engineering. This research produced a transgenic variety of papaya (*Carica papaya*), which is resistant to the Papaya Ringspot virus. The developed variety of papaya is not approved for distribution or commercial production. Post is unaware of any other biotech crops that were produced or is currently under development through research in Jamaica.
- b) **COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION:** Currently genetically engineered (GE) crops are not produced commercially in Jamaica.
- c) **EXPORTS:** Jamaica does not export GE crops.
- d) **IMPORTS:** Jamaica imports bulk grain and oilseed products, such as wheat, corn, and soybean, which are used mainly in feed ration formulations. These products are predominantly purchased from Brazil and the United States, which both produce GE crops. Apart from Jamaica's biotechnology and biosafety legislation, Post is not aware of any specific requirements for GE product imports into Jamaica.
- e) **FOOD AID:** N/A
- f) **TRADE BARRIERS:** N/A

PART B: POLICY

a) REGULATORY FRAMEWORK:

Legal Term	Laws and Regulations where term is used	Legal Definition
Living Modified Organism (LMO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Biosafety Policy (2020)	Any living organism that possesses a novel combination of genetic material obtained through modern biotechnology.
Genetically Modified Organism (GMO)		
Genetically Modified (GM)		Molecular-level techniques used to move genetic material from the cells of one organism to those of another
Genetic Engineering		The selective, deliberate alteration of genes (genetic material) by man.

In 2020, Jamaica enacted legislation (i.e. Biosafety Policy) that governs the use of modern biotechnology and its products. Although the legislation is in place, Post is unaware of any specific regulations that affect the importation of GE products intended for food, animal feed, or processing purposes. The importation of GE products for commercial release into the natural environment is prohibited; however, there are regulations that guide GE imports for experimental purposes.

Biosafety regulatory responsibility spans several Jamaican ministries and government agencies. Current laws affecting biotechnology regulation include but are not limited to the following: Animal Disease and Importation Act, Food and Drug Act, Pesticides Act, Pharmacy Act, Plant Quarantine Act, Public Health Act, Standards Act, and the Natural Resources and Conservation Act.

In November 2002, Jamaica drafted a National Biosafety Framework. The Framework was developed under a five-year project funded by the United Nations Environmental Program/Global Environmental Facility (UNEP/GEF) – Global Project “Development of National Biosafety Frameworks.” The Government of Jamaica approved the Biosafety Policy in 2020, and it will be used to guide the national biotechnology and biosafety regulations. The biosafety policy currently mandates the compulsory labeling of genetically engineered products.

Another legislation that addresses the use of biotechnology is the National Commission on Science and Technology Act (NCST). The Jamaican Parliament passed the Act in 2007, and it outlined the Commission’s role as “promoting the sustainable development and utilization of local science and

technology capacities for competitive and profitable production through education of the populace, partnership with government, private sector, academic institutions and such other bodies or institutions as the Commission considers appropriate.

Additionally, the Biosafety Policy outlines that the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA) has been designated as one of the four competent authorities, including the ministry responsible for the environment and the ministry responsible for agriculture. These competent authorities are established for different types of “LMOs” and for executing the administrative functions required by the Cartagena Protocol. Under the Biosafety Policy, the National Biosafety Committee determines any proposed releases to the environment. All final decisions will be posted on a biosafety clearinghouse which is hosted at the Institute of Jamaica (IOJ).

- b) **APPROVALS/AUTHORIZATIONS:** Post is not aware of any lists identifying GE plants or crops which are registered for trading or local production.
- c) **STACKED OR PYRAMIDED EVENT APPROVALS:** No additional approval is required from the Government of Jamaica for stacked or pyramided events.
- d) **FIELD TESTING:** Jamaica allows field-testing of GE crops. Any such research is monitored by the NBC, which was established for this purpose. While the biosafety policy regulates how biotechnology is utilized in Jamaica, another law that affects the impact of biosafety in the environment is the Plants (Importation) Control regulations (1997) under the Plants Quarantine Act of 1994. This legal instrument was enacted in 1997 and amended in 2005 and directly addresses the issues of biosafety. Under the guidelines, the NBC is empowered to monitor the importation of any GE plant, seed, cutting or slip, which has been imported into Jamaica for the purpose of research.
- e) **INNOVATIVE BIOTECHNOLOGIES:** N/A
- f) **COEXISTENCE:** N/A
- g) **LABELING AND TRACEABILITY:** Jamaica does not have a specific labeling requirement for GE products/ingredients. Labeling standards in Jamaica are based on the guidelines of the CODEX standards.
- h) **MONITORING AND TESTING:** Currently, there is no monitoring and testing for GE traits in imported products.
- i) **LOW LEVEL PRESENCE (LLP) POLICY:** Currently, there is no LLP policy in Jamaica.

- j) ADDITIONAL REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS: None
- k) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR): N/A
- l) CARTAGENA PROTOCOL RATIFICATION: Jamaica ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) to the United Nation's Convention on Biological Diversity on September 25, 2012. The Protocol came into force on December 24, 2012.
- m) INTERNATIONAL TREATIES/FORUMS: Jamaican officials from the Ministries of Agriculture, Industry, Investment, Commerce and Health, participate in international standard setting bodies such as:
- The World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS)
 - The WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)
 - The Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex)
 - The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)
 - The WTO Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of International Property Rights (TRIPS)
 - The World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH)

RELATED ISSUES: N/A

PART C: MARKETING

- a) PUBLIC/PRIVATE OPINIONS: Post has not identified any active organizations or groups that are lobbying for or against the use of GE products in Jamaica.
- b) MARKET ACCEPTANCE/STUDIES: The most recent study on public perception of GE food in Jamaica was conducted in 2007 by [Pinnock and Tennant](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279698314)². The study indicated that although Jamaicans are knowledgeable about products of agricultural biotechnology, they are concerned about the safety of these products, and many support mandatory labeling for these products.

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<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279698314> Public perception of genetic engineering and the choice to purchase genetically modified food in Jamaica

CHAPTER 2: ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

Jamaica does not conduct research related to GE animals or use GE animals for food production.

PART D: PRODUCTION AND TRADE

- a) RESEARCH AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT: N/A
- b) COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION: N/A
- c) EXPORTS: N/A
- d) IMPORTS: N/A
- e) TRADE BARRIERS: N/A

PART E: POLICY

- a) REGULATORY FRAMEWORK: N/A
- b) APPROVALS/AUTHORIZATIONS: N/A
- c) INNOVATIVE BIOTECHNOLOGIES: N/A
- d) LABELING AND TRACEABILITY: N/A
- e) ADDITIONAL REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS: N/A
- f) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS: N/A
- g) INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND FORUMS: N/A
- h) RELATED ISSUES: N/A

PART F: MARKETING

- a) Public/Private Opinions: N/A
- b) Market Acceptance/Studies: N/A

CHAPTER 3: MICROBIAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

PART G: PRODUCTION AND TRADE

- a) COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION: N/A
- b) EXPORTS: N/A
- c) IMPORTS: Jamaica imports food ingredients, such as enzymes and additives for different food processing activities, as well as processed foods containing these ingredients. However, the volume or value of these imports, and whether the products are derived from microbial biotechnology, could not be determined.
- d) TRADE BARRIERS: N/A

PART H: POLICY

- a) REGULATORY FRAMEWORK: N/A
- b) APPROVALS/AUTHORIZATIONS: N/A
- c) LABELING AND TRACEABILITY: N/A
- d) MONITORING AND TESTING: N/A
- e) ADDITIONAL REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS: N/A
- f) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS: N/A
- g) RELATED ISSUES: N/A

PART I: MARKETING

- a) PUBLIC/PRIVATE OPINIONS: N/A
- b) MARKET ACCEPTANCE/STUDIES: N/A

Attachments:

No Attachments