

Jamaica revamps energy policy for green COVID-19 recovery

July 22 2020, by Zadie Neufville



Jamaica is aiming to reduce its agricultural, forestry and transport emissions by 2030, as part of its COVID-19 economic recovery and Paris Agreement climate commitments. Credit: [Jason Lawrence/Flickr](#), [Creative Commons 2.0](#)

Jamaica has overhauled its energy policy to create a post-pandemic recovery package anchored in stronger carbon emissions targets for farms and forestry—raising hopes other countries in the region will follow suit.

Jamaica hopes to cut emissions from the forestry and farming sectors by almost one third over the next decade, by optimizing water and energy use and diversifying food production.

The announcement comes as countries worldwide struggle to manage their economies during the COVID-19 outbreak, often using measures many fear will set back sustainability goals.

This year, governments were expected to present ambitious [climate](#) plans to meet obligations under the Paris Agreement. Low- and [middle-income countries](#) have been leading the way, with Rwanda and Suriname among the first ten countries to submit or update their nationally determined contributions (NDC).

Una May Gordon, climate change division director at Jamaica's Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, says the [new policy](#)—a revision of the country's 2030 [energy policy](#)—includes assessments and modeling to take into account the importance of agriculture and forestry to the economy.

The previous policy reduced the island's dependency on oil in its energy supply mix, from 95 percent in 2010 to about 50 percent at the end of 2019.

Under the new targets, Jamaica hopes to reduce [greenhouse gas emissions](#) from changes in land use, for development and increased [agricultural activities](#), and deforestation by up to 28.5 percent by 2030. Agriculture contributes about six percent to Jamaica's total emissions, while land use change and forestry account for 7.8 percent of emissions.

Carlos Fuller, a climate negotiator attached to the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC), says Jamaica's new measures "will create new economic opportunities and generate employment for

Jamaicans".

"The COVID-19 recovery must include a shift to a less carbon-intensive economy under the Paris Agreement and [this is something] which Jamaica has pledged to do through these new, enhanced and more ambitious nationally determined contributions," Fuller tells SciDev.Net.

"The activities required to achieve the more ambitious NDC provides Jamaicans with the opportunity to create new economic prospects, which will generate more employment, capacity building initiatives, development and deployment of new technologies, stimulate foreign direct investment and lead to a healthier and enhanced quality of life."

There is hope the country will pave the way for a regional trend towards improved emissions policies.

CCCCC deputy director and science advisor, Ulric Trotz, says: "There will be a significant decline in regional emissions if countries with high emissions like Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic ... take Jamaica as a precedent."

Predictions for the island's economy are bleak. The new energy policy could prove crucial to Jamaica's economic recovery, says Helen Mountford, vice president for climate and economics at the World Resources Institute.

"Jamaica is taking the kind of action needed both to tackle climate change and rebound from the COVID-19 crisis in a way that will strengthen its resilience to future shocks," she says.

Jamaica's government is projecting a 5.1 percent economic contraction as critical sectors like tourism, mining and transport are hit by the pandemic, while the Planning Institute of Jamaica has forecast the lowest

[economic growth](#) for the country in 40 years.

"Despite the serious economic pressure that Jamaica is facing from the COVID-19 crisis, this small island developing nation is demonstrating leadership on climate change that the world needs right now," Mountford says.

Provided by SciDev.Net

Citation: Jamaica revamps energy policy for green COVID-19 recovery (2020, July 22) retrieved 8 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-07-jamaica-revamps-energy-policy-green.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.