

Jamaica to host regional forestry conference

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Jamaica will host the 32nd session of the Latin America and the Caribbean Forestry Commission (LACFC) from September 6 to 10.

The commission, which meets biennially, advises the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on the forestry programme to be developed for the region. At the meeting, the member countries analyse important forestry issues as well as share knowledge and experiences.

The week-long virtual conference will be chaired by CEO and Conservator of Forests Ainsley Henry, and will see Prime Minister Andrew Holness and Minister of Housing, Urban Renewal, Environment and Climate Change Parnell Charles Jr speaking during the opening ceremony on September 6.

A number of key issues impacting the forestry sector will be discussed during the conference, including COVID-19's impact on the sector and communities, the new FAO strategic framework on forestry, access to climate and environmental finance, restoration of forests and other ecosystems, and integrated fire management.

Jamaica, as vice-chair of the commission, volunteered to host the session at the end of the 31st session in 2019 and, following Cabinet approval, began to put plans in place for this year's staging, which is being done virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Henry believes Jamaica's hosting of the session reaffirms the country's support for, and commitment to, the sustainable development of the forestry sector locally, regionally and globally.

"It will bring visibility to our local forestry sector and highlight the significant work we are doing to protect and conserve our forest resources. This includes increasing our tree cover and climate resilience through the planting of three million trees over three years, the strengthening of our legislation, the development of a national plan to protect our critical mangrove forests, building the capacities of our forest communities to sustainably use forest resources and provide alternative livelihood opportunities," Henry said.

It will also provide a platform for strengthening regional and global partnership, as well as to showcase Brand Jamaica.

LACFC was established in 1948 as a statutory body of the FAO. Participants will include heads of forestry services and administrations of the region's member nations, along with observers from various United Nations agencies, national and international non-governmental and civil society organisations.

LACFC also invites participation from subregional coordination groups for the Caribbean, Meso-America, Amazon and Southern Cone, thus enabling member nations to coordinate and supplement actions based on the exigencies of each subregion.

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