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## Organic agriculture: an alternative for the future

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### THE EDITOR, Sir:

I HAVE lived in Jamaica and am currently planning the development of Jamaica's first 'organic resort' in St. Mary. I am glad to see some news about Jamaica's organic certification in **The Gleaner**. However, I think an alternative approach needs to be taken by Jamaica and the agricultural sector.

I have been in and around organic business for more than a decade. For Jamaica, going organic on a small level purely for privileged access to high price foreign markets is not a sustainable venture. It is true, organically grown fruits and vegetables bring a premium price of double or triple. They also cost three to five times of conventional farming to produce. There is also training, infrastructure and RADA reform costs to consider.

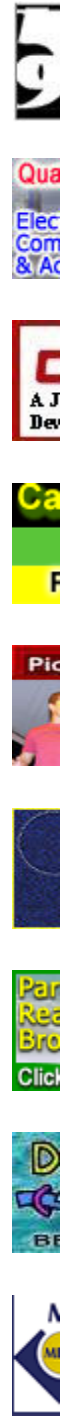
In order to be effective, Jamaica must wholeheartedly convert to 100 per cent organic over the next 20 years. Especially when one thinks of the expense of conventional farming: Ginger root rot, fungus, poor nutritional quality, land damage, job hazards, cancer, highway chemical spills, polluted waterways and other unknown and unavoidable health risks. Aren't those reasons enough? If Jamaica is going to 'sell' anyone on organic, maybe it would be better to consider the quality of the finished product, not the market price.

What about the environment? The permanent environmental damage to Jamaica's precious water supply from poisonous chemical fertilisers, pesticides and 'mildewcides' has already taken its toll on every waterway. Remember, water is life, not with agro-chemical contamination! How much longer can a small island like Jamaica use chemical food production without serious environmental damage? Can Jamaica trust US chemical companies? In the US, there are multinational agro-chemical companies who offload chemicals that have been found unsafe, to countries like Jamaica. Besides, don't Jamaicans deserve to eat safe organic food too?

Jamaica is an unbelievable environment where almost any plant will grow, why use chemicals when they aren't even necessary? Why should Jamaica import millions of pounds of poison to farm with when many of the bush farmers of Jamaica have perfected natural methods of farming already with rat bat guano from caves.

These reasons and many more are why Jamaica must go organic, or suffer the massive environmental damage seen in my country. If you think this is ludicrous, remember these chemicals have only been in existence for 50 years. It is time to stop stealing this planet from our children for low prices today. Investing in organic agriculture now is investing in Jamaica's sustainable future.

I am, etc.,  
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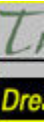
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