

JANUARY 2025

TRADEBEAT

AN INTERNATIONAL & INDUSTRY LIAISON PUBLICATION



INTERNATIONAL
CUSTOMS DAY 2025

**CUSTOMS
DELIVERING ON ITS
COMMITMENT TO
EFFICIENCY,
SECURITY &
PROSPERITY**





World Customs Organization
Organisation mondiale des douanes

Customs Delivering on its Commitment to Efficiency, Security and Prosperity



Customs worldwide have the important mandates of facilitating trade, protecting their nation's borders and collecting the accurate revenue due to the coffers of their government. In Jamaica, the Jamaica Customs Agency collects over 38% of the country's revenue, thus playing a huge role in our nation attaining prosperity. This crucial role has long been recognised by the JCA, where dedicated and strategic efforts have been employed in alignment of this year's International Customs Day theme, ***"Customs Delivering on its Commitment to Efficiency, Security and Prosperity"***. International Customs Day is celebrated on January 26 annually and serves to highlight and build awareness regarding important aspects of Customs, while celebrating the hard work of the Customs Team.

Let's take a look at the JCA's progress in achieving efficiency, security and prosperity for our nation.

Efficiency

To achieve efficiency, Customs aims to streamline processes, reduce delays and ensure the swift movement of goods and people across borders. This is accomplished through modernizing customs procedures, promoting data-driven operations, leveraging technology, and optimizing trade processes and partnerships. In this regard, the JCA has adopted an agile approach, which has yielded positive results.



Notably, the JCA acceded to the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures as Amended on August 7, 2021. Also known as the Revised Kyoto Convention, this Agreement is largely regarded as the blueprint for Customs in the 21st Century.

The Agency's adoption of a risk-based approach has allowed for the identification and focus on high-risk consignments, key to which was the establishment of dedicated risk management and post clearance audit units.

Some milestones along the JCA's path to modernization and increased efficiency include the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), to streamline clearance processes; the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Program, to reward compliant traders with reduced inspections and faster processing; and the implementation of Jamaica Single Window for Trade (JSWIFT) for enhanced trade facilitation. These tools and instruments have significantly contributed to the modernization of the JCA, aligning it with international standards and ensuring that the Agency remains competitive by streamlining operations and reducing delays, thus facilitating swift and secure trade.

The JCA has also placed increased emphasis in leveraging tools such as data analytics and non-intrusive methodologies including scanners, drones and portable detection and inspection devices. This has resulted in greater efficiencies and optimal use of resources at the ports, speeding up clearance times and minimizing disruption to legitimate trade.



Other recent advances made by the JCA in increasing efficiency include the popular JA Customs Connects (JCA Mobile App), which puts key Customs operations such as goods classification, calculation and payment of duties and taxes at customers' fingertips; the Electronic Immigration and Customs Declaration (C5); Contactless Clearance, which simplifies the clearance of non-commercial cargo and fosters optimal utilization of human and other resources; and the attainment of ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Systems Certification, a significant milestone, which helped the Agency to see improvements in efficiency, customer satisfaction and increased stakeholder confidence.



Security

The JCA has the complex task of balancing the protection of Jamaica's people and borders and enhancing the economic prosperity of our nation. Security in the Jamaica Customs context can be defined as protecting the national interest of Jamaica through the implementation of rules and regulations entrusted to the Customs administration; and in so doing, manage the flow of goods, people and transportation to ensure their compliance with customs and related laws.



The Border Protection Division (BPD) is the targeted security arm of the JCA and is comprised of five (5) units; the Intelligence Unit, Investigation Unit, Non-intrusive Inspection and Security Management Branch (NISMB), Risk Management Unit and the Contraband Enforcement Team (CET). These teams are crucial to the nation's security mechanism as they are responsible for the interdiction of firearms, illicit drugs and radioactive materials; enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPR), combatting lottery scamming, money laundering and other corrupt trading practices. The Division employs a collaborative approach, working with local, regional and international partners to achieve optimal results. Some notable security initiatives employed by the Agency include passenger controls through the use of advanced passenger information (API), non-intrusive inspection through the use of mobile truck scanning units, pallet scanners and passenger bag scanners; electronic advance cargo information to identify and manage high-risk cargo; and a documented business continuity management, which serves as the roadmap for optimal mobilization of the Agency in the event of a disruption.



Prosperity

While it is easy to associate thoughts in relation to efficiency and security, it is more challenging in relation to prosperity. What is prosperity and how does Customs achieve it? As defined by the Merriam Webster Dictionary, “prosperity is the condition of being successful or thriving, especially economic well-being.” In the Customs context, prosperity is directly linked to Customs’ ability to ensure fair revenue collection, support sustainable economic development, facilitate trade and ease of doing business, and create environments that are diverse and inclusive, supporting our various stakeholders. Through streamlined processes, Customs is able to reduce the time and cost of moving goods across borders, further stimulating trade activities and enhancing the ease of doing business in the country. Positive spin-offs from growth in trade include increased income and employment potential, as well as stimulation of national and foreign investment.

The JCA , with the support of the Government of Jamaica, has engaged in many reforms and initiatives aimed at increasing prosperity. Two crucial areas are those of trade facilitation and stakeholder engagement.

Trade facilitation is concerned with the streamlining of Customs procedures and documents, and encompasses all measures affecting the movement of goods along the international supply chain. In striving to create an enabling environment for productivity, investment and growth, key initiatives undertaken by the JCA, include the Agency’s Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), the Jamaica Single Window for Trade (JSWIFT), relaunch of the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Programme, JA Customs Connects (JCA Mobile App), Electronic Passenger Declaration C5 and the Contactless Clearance Programme.



The JCA has proven to be a model in the area of stakeholder engagement, actively cultivating and integrating stakeholder partnerships, with the objective of building awareness, fostering compliance and facilitating legitimate trade. These efforts have been well-received by local, regional and international stakeholders, even being recognised as best practice. The Agency has engaged in robust consultation, designed to target the different sets of stakeholders, and thus reflect a more comprehensive and holistic approach. A few key examples include the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), Customs Meets the Community (CMC) and the Customs Business Interaction (CBI) initiative.

Acknowledging that a critical aspect of an efficient, secure and prosperous Customs and nation involves strong mitigation against corruption, the JCA has collaborated with the WCO and has taken onboard The Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Programme as a part of its anti-corruption strategy. The programme focuses on enhancing integrity and combating corruption within the Agency. Key aspects include the development of risk profiles, capacity building, the execution of the Customs Integrity Perception Survey and collaboration with international partners to implement best practices and improve governance.



Future Initiatives

The Agency has many new and exciting initiatives in the pipeline, which will serve to improve our efficiency, security and contribution to prosperity. These include:

- The promulgation of the new Customs Act which is designed to modernize customs operations and make them more efficient and transparent. Some key features include modern terminology, simplified language, trade facilitation provisions, enhanced enforcement powers to better protect Jamaica's borders and the incorporation of risk-based compliance and selectivity in Customs processing to enhance efficiency.
- Advance Rulings in tariff classification and origin. These Rulings will facilitate trade by improving certainty and predictability for traders with respect to the treatment of their goods on arrival at the border, as well as reducing processing times and costs.
- The implementation of a K-9 Unit, which will allow for faster detection of illegal items, ensuring that non-compliant goods are detected without slowing down the processing of legitimate goods.

As Jamaica continues on its trajectory of making our Island the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business, Team JCA plays a critical role in helping the nation achieve this Vision. The foregoing serves to highlight the Agency's commitment to continuous improvement in efficiency, security and ultimately, sustainable development and prosperity. Having experienced big wins in recent years, the Agency is poised to achieve even more in the short, medium and long term. We are excited about the new Customs Act, the upcoming trade facilitation initiatives, like Advanced Rulings, and continuous advances in our technologies. Even as we forge stronger partnerships with our stakeholders, it will redound to an "All of JCA" approach to achieve success. Thank you Team JCA for your contributions and we look forward to achieving higher heights and a secure, prosperous and resilient Jamaica together.



The International & Industry Liaison Branch (IILB) is committed to raising awareness on topics relating to the International Trade, as well as issues concerning the Caribbean Community which may affect our internal and external stakeholders. Our quarterly Newsletter seeks to highlight global trade topics and their importance to Customs Administration worldwide, specifically as it relates to the Jamaica Customs Agency.

As we realize our vision to becoming a modern customs administration delivering excellent service, we recognize the importance of knowledge transfer in delivering our objectives and use this forum as one way of contributing the vision of Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA). The IILB is located at JCA's Head Office, and our officers are available to respond to your trade-related queries. Contact us at: iilu@jca.gov.jm