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SERVICE  
United States of America  
Department of Commerce

# U.S. Country Commercial Guides



Jamaica  
2020

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## Doing Business in Jamaica

### Market Overview

- The United States remains Jamaica's main trading partner, accounting for 40 percent of the nation's total trade. Jamaica's other major trading partners include China, Colombia, Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, Japan, and Norway.
- Jamaica is attractive to U.S. exporters due to its: (1) geographic proximity and access to shipping lanes; (2) relatively large English-speaking market; (3) strong commercial and cultural affinity to North America; (4) improving business climate as reflected in the World Bank 2013 to 2019 Doing Business Reports; and, (5) stable democracy.
- Jamaica has demonstrated bipartisan commitment to macroeconomic discipline since engaging in International Monetary Fund (IMF) guided economic reforms starting in 2013, in an effort to reduce its unsustainable debt.
- Through the IMF programs, Jamaica restructured its domestic debt and undertook an ambitious legislative agenda to enact significant structural reforms. These included the elimination of sector-specific tax incentives and waivers, and improving the business climate. Through December 2018, Jamaica successfully passed all IMF program reviews and ranked 75 in the World Bank's Doing Business report in 2019, topping other Caribbean countries in the rankings.
- The economy expanded by almost two percent in 2018 after growing by less than one percent per annum during the last four decades.
- In addition, the country's macro-economic indicators have improved since 2013: inflation has averaged less than 4 percent; the Net International Reserves climbed to above US\$3.0 billion, up from US\$1 billion at end December 2013; and, the current account deficit improved from over 10 percent of GDP at March 2013 to low single digit.
- The economy will be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but recovery should benefit from the reforms instituted during the last six years.
- Bilateral relations between Jamaica and the United States are strong.

### Market Challenges

- Crime remains a significant concern and security measures add considerably to the cost of doing business in Jamaica.
- The Jamaican judicial system has a long tradition of being fair but court cases can take years or even decades to resolve. The Chief Justice, appointed in 2018, has articulated plans to streamline the delivery of judgments by bringing greater levels of efficiency to court administration and targeting throughput rates in line with international best practice within five years.
- Corruption remains a major concern among Jamaicans. Despite numerous allegations of public corruption and a few arrests, no high ranking public officials have been convicted of corruption since 1962. Jamaica ranked 70<sup>th</sup>, out of 180 countries, in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index in 2018, falling two places since 2017.
- While trade liberalization has made it easier to import into Jamaica, some technical barriers, particularly sanitary and phyto-sanitary restrictions, remain.
- Jamaica is a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). Some goods imported from outside CARICOM are subject to a common external tariff (CET). Goods certified to be of CARICOM origin tend to enjoy duty-free status and are not subject to customs duty. However, these and other goods may be subject to additional taxes in Jamaica, including a 16.5 percent General Consumption Tax (GCT), Customs Administrative Fee (CAF), Standards Compliance Fee (SCF), and/or special consumption taxes (SCT) in Jamaica.

- High electricity cost remains a concern for businesses, although Jamaica has reduced prices by modernizing, liberalizing and diversifying its generation infrastructure. By the beginning of 2020, the country had reduced its dependency on petroleum, shifting to both LNG and renewables. Earlier this year the government also issued its long-awaited Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), which proposes over 1.5 GW of new generation capacity by 2037. Renewable energy will account for almost 80 percent of the new capacity, with 400 MW to be implemented by 2024.
- Obtaining work permits for foreign workers can be burdensome. When requesting work permits for foreign workers, employers must describe efforts to recruit locally to prove that the requisite skills do not exist in Jamaica. However, the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) does not readily have data available to determine if the requisite skills exist in Jamaica, sometimes delaying decision making.

### **Market Opportunities**

- The quality and reliability of U.S. goods and services have encouraged Jamaican businesses and consumers to purchase from the United States. U.S. businesses have also developed a good reputation for being honest partners. Jamaica has excellent air, sea, and underwater communications cable links with the United States and the rest of the world.
- Agricultural products, pharmaceuticals/chemicals, and machinery and transportation equipment remain important areas of demand in Jamaica. Opportunities also exist for goods and services associated with the renewable energy, construction, tourism, logistics, mining, and business process outsourcing (BPO) sectors.

### **Market Entry Strategy**

- Agents and distributors are commonly used as the conduit to enter the Jamaican market. The U.S. Foreign Commercial Service assists U.S. firms in their search for prospective partners in Jamaica through its partner post in Embassy Kingston.
- Much of the trade between Jamaica and the United States is the result of longstanding business relationships. While business can be conducted over the internet or telephone, Jamaicans are more comfortable with face-to-face meetings when negotiating business arrangements. Relationship marketing is also prevalent with distributors generally interested in visiting their suppliers to conduct due diligence. Exclusive arrangements, credit terms, and franchising arrangements are common business practices.

## Leading Sectors for US Exports & Investments

### Agriculture

#### Overview

Jamaica’s agriculture (food and beverage) market represents good business opportunities for United States suppliers, particularly since the island’s tropical climate and diversified topography incentivize the production of crops that differ largely from those grown in the cooler climates of the United States.

During 2019, the total value of food imports to Jamaica was \$1.025 billion, with approximately 44 percent of these imports supplied via sources in the United States. Approximately 60 percent of food imports are supplied to the hotel, restaurant, and institutional (HRI) sector. The remaining imports are channeled to consumers via retail outlets such as supermarkets, convenience stores, and small “mom-and-pop” shops.

Food/Animals (\$ US Millions)	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	229	228	218	219
Total Imports	853	843	902	1,025
Imports from the US	383	356	395	451
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Exchange Rates	125.14	128.36	129.72	134.22

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN)

\*N/A indicates no data is available

Beverage and Tobacco (\$ US Millions)	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	89	111	112	127
Total Imports	74	82	67	84
Imports from the US	11	11	12	11 (average of 14 percent of total imports)

Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Exchange Rates	125.14	128.36	129.72	134.22

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN)

\*N/A indicates no data is available

General information on Jamaica’s retail and hotel sectors and the demand for U.S. food and beverages is available at the [U.S. Department of Agriculture website](#).

**Leading Sub-Sectors**

*Grains & Soybeans*

Wheat flour is a major staple in Jamaica, with the country listed among the highest per capita consumers of flour and flour based products in the world, providing an important market for U.S. suppliers. There are two milling facilities in Jamaica, both of which have major shareholding by U.S. companies. This gives U.S. wheat and grains an advantage in the market, both as the source of primary inputs as well as the potential for forward integration. However, wheat flour from Canada competes with U.S. imports in the fine bakery segment of the market.

The exposure to U.S. culture has created a demand for U.S. products, including breakfast cereal. This combined with the trend to a more healthy diet has led to increased consumption of breakfast cereals and non-dairy milk substitutes (such as soy and almond milk). Higher priced U.S. cereals are positioned in the less price sensitive market segments on the basis of quality. Breakfast cereals from Trinidad and Tobago, a major supplier, are positioned in the lower priced category.

Demand for soybean, soybean meal and coarse grain is largely driven by the livestock sub-sector, particularly the poultry industry. Imports of these products are expected to be strong as Jamaican demand for poultry is high, with chicken remaining the primary source of protein.

*Fruits & Vegetables*

Importation of fruits and vegetables continue to be popular, as demand within the hotel/restaurant and retail sectors remain high. Importation of particular fruits (apples, pears, strawberries, plums, kiwis) and vegetables (broccoli, asparagus, spinach) is expected to continue to grow as there are few suitable areas to successfully cultivate these crops in Jamaica. However, other imported products, such as tomatoes, carrots, cabbages, melons, lettuce, and other fruits and vegetables that compete directly with local products are less competitive, and Jamaica’s Safeguard Act of 2001 further advantages local producers. Imports of these products, however, can increase during periods of shortages. Imported garlic and capsicums will remain competitive since local production is limited.

*Meats*

Demand for prime beef cuts comes primarily from the hotel industry, especially since high tariffs play a key role in limiting per capita imported beef consumption among Jamaicans. Jamaicans are, however, one of the highest per capita consumers of chicken. Chicken is primarily produced locally due to high import duties, although necks and backs may enter duty-free. Goat meat is also a principal component of local cuisine. Mutton and goat imports have been growing in importance among Jamaicans, but this market is price sensitive.

The GOJ bans the importation of most pork from the United States, citing phytosanitary concerns related to the porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDv). While U.S. pork had previously been determined to be of “negligible risk” for importation into Jamaica, and the U.S. food safety system already mitigates the risk of transferring PEDv through the exportation of pork products, the Jamaican ban remains in effect.

Currently only imports of processed U.S. pork that have been “hermetically sealed” are permitted.

#### *Alcohol*

The demand for wines and spirits in Jamaica is driven by the hotel and restaurant sub-sector. The presence of all-inclusive hotels in Jamaica favors low cost producers, which typically does not include U.S. wine. In recent years, U.S. brands have made small gains in market share, and their consumption can be expected to increase in the medium to long term. The United States competes with European producers in Jamaica’s sparkling wine market, and with producers from Australia, Europe, and South America in the market for other wine products. Jamaica annually imports over one million liters of vodka, brandy, gin, and other spirits. The Jamaican consumer generally has shown a preference for local rum over imported spirits. Heineken N.V., which owns locally-produced Red Stripe beer, is the dominant player in beer, offering Heineken and Guinness as well. High import duties on alcohol inhibits U.S. competition with domestic producers of beer and spirits.

#### *Prepared Snacks*

Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados are major suppliers of snack foods to the Jamaican market, protected by a 20 percent Common External Tariff on all snack products originating outside of CARICOM. However, U.S. products do compete based on quality and strong brand identification. Grocery stores across Jamaica carry a wide range of U.S. brands and hoteliers in Jamaica’s tourist centers routinely purchase U.S. food products to satisfy guests’ expectations.

#### **Opportunities**

Jamaica’s agriculture policy seeks to diversify the production of agricultural goods to build self-sufficiency, promote exports, and service the growing tourism industry. Jamaica’s challenge is the inability to produce significant quantities of consistent high-quality agricultural goods. There are opportunities in agricultural innovation and developing the supply chain to counter these challenges. JAMPRO facilitates investment in key products, including: yam, turmeric, Irish potato, sheep, cocoa, coffee, pineapple, onion, ginger and honey, as they are considered strategically important.

#### **Effects of the COVID -19 Pandemic on U.S agricultural and food exports to Jamaica**

The COVID-19 virus may have a negative impact on Jamaican imports of U.S. food and agricultural products in 2020. The hotel, restaurant and institutional (HRI) sector represents approximately 60 percent of Jamaica’s food imports, and border closings and the implementation of stay at home orders have negatively impacted this important sector. Imports which are destined for the HRI sector, and which may see a decline in 2020, include meat products, fruits and vegetables, and wines.



## Chemicals and Related Products

### Overview

Imports of chemicals and related imports from the U.S. have been driven by demand for ethanol to satisfy Jamaica's E10 fuel mandate and sodium hydroxide for the bauxite/alumina industry. There is also increasing demand for pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, cosmetics, and jewelry. Growth in pharmaceuticals has been driven by increased access to healthcare through the government's no-user fee policy and the National Health Fund, an aging population, and the increased incidence of lifestyle diseases.

Chemicals & Related Products (\$ M)	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	29	29	43	37
Total Imports	557	665	762	650
Imports from the US	276	359	442	324
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Exchange Rates	125.14	128.36	129.72	134.22

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

\*N/A indicates no data is available

Source: STATIN

### Leading Sub-Sectors

Best prospects include medications for hypertension, respiratory diseases, sexually transmitted diseases, and diabetes. Beauty products, jewelry, disinfectants, and agricultural chemicals provide some scope for growth.

### Opportunities

Exporters to Jamaica will find growing opportunities for pharmaceuticals as the population ages and lifestyle diseases become more prevalent. Demand for pharmaceuticals could also be driven by increased subscription to a National Health Fund and free access to healthcare. The National Health Fund, the government entity responsible for sourcing and distributing products to the public health sector, is a major importer of pharmaceuticals.

## Machinery and Transport Equipment

### Overview

U.S. brands enjoy significant goodwill in the Jamaican market, underpinned by a long tradition of safety and quality. However, Jamaicans are increasingly price sensitive, leading to a diversion of trade to cheaper competitors. This notwithstanding, machinery built in the U.S. remains visible at construction sites, large farms, and industrial facilities and there has been an uptick in imports from the United States during the last three years. There is still a strong market for telecommunications and data related products, batteries, and electrical components. Right-handed vehicles out of Japan and Europe continue to dominate the market, but the United States remains a major source market for auto parts and accessories.

Machinery & Transport Equipment (\$M)	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	40	33	20	24
Total Imports	1,093	1,262	1,421	1,464
Imports from the US	406	492	520	506
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Exchange Rates	125.14	128.36	129.72	134.22

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Source: STATIN

**\*N/A indicates no data is available**

### Leading Sub-Sectors

Best prospects include wheel rims, shock absorbers, clutch parts, brake parts, tires, and other general accessories.

### Opportunities

Jamaican authorities monitor the quality of the imports and this scrutiny increases opportunities for new higher quality aftermarket auto parts. The introduction of liquified natural gas (LNG) into the energy mix may also provide additional opportunities for products associated with this industry.

## Minerals, Lubricants and Related Materials

### Overview

In 2017 there was almost a doubling in the amount of Minerals, Lubricants and Related Materials (LMRM) emanating from the U.S. The share of imports from the U.S has continued to grow, increasing by over 20 percent in the two ensuing years. The United States now provides Jamaica with almost 60 percent of its mineral, lubricants, and related materials needs.

Mineral, Lubricants & Related Materials (\$M)	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	173	234	280	300
Total Imports	943	1,371	1,610	1667
Imports from the US	332	645	774	990
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Exchange Rates	125.14	128.36	129.72	134.22

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Source: STATIN

\*N/A indicates no data is available

### Leading Sub-Sectors

Best prospects in this category include lubricating oils, motor spirits (gasoline), and other liquid petroleum products.

### Opportunities

Earlier this year Jamaica released its Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) outlining an electricity roadmap for the next two decades. The IRP projects 1,664 MW of new capacity at a cost of \$7.3 billion, including fuel cost and the replacement of retired generation, over the twenty year planning horizon. Renewable energy sources will account for almost 80 percent of the new capacity, with just over 400 MW of renewable energy to be implemented during the next four years, starting with 147 MW of wind and solar in 2022.

## **Customs, Regulations & Standards**

### **Trade Barriers**

To protect local producers, significant import duties remain on certain agricultural products (such as chicken and vegetables) and consumer goods. Certain items such as beverages and tobacco, motor vehicles, and some agricultural products carry an additional stamp duty (ASD) and special consumption taxes (SCT). Most imported items, in commercial quantity, are also subject to a 21.5 percent General Consumption Tax (GCT).

There is a Standards Compliance Fee (SCF) of 0.3 percent, collected by Jamaica Customs on behalf of the Jamaica Bureau of Standards. The Bureau verifies product requirements, including labeling standards. There is an Environmental Levy of 0.5 percent on the cost, insurance, freight (CIF) value on imports to Jamaica.

Strict regulations govern the importation of drugs and pharmaceuticals for safety, efficacy, and quality. The Food and Drug Act requires all drugs distributed or sold in Jamaica to be assessed and registered. Clinical tests of drug uses and side effects are reviewed with special attention paid to stability under high temperatures and humidity typical of the tropics. Typically, a drug will not be admitted for use in Jamaica until it has been safely used in the country of origin for a period of more than one year.

For more information and help with trade barriers please contact:

[International Trade Administration  
Enforcement and Compliance](#)  
(202) 482-0063  
ECCcommunications@trade.gov

### **Import Tariff**

Jamaica Customs Agency is one of the major revenue-generating entities of the Jamaican government, accounting for approximately 40 percent of taxes. Still, the government has committed to gradually reducing duties, some as high as 180 percent compounded. As a CARICOM member state, Jamaica can apply a Common External Tariff (CET) to imports from countries outside CARICOM. The CET typically ranges between 10 - 20 percent.

### **Import Requirements & Documentation**

A number of items require an import license and/or permit for export to Jamaica. Some of these items include: meats, fish, cocunut products, edible oils, soaps, milk powder, refined sugar, plants and parts of plants for perfume or pharmaceutical purposes, gum-resins, vegetable saps and extracts, certain chemicals, motor vehicles and parts, arms and ammunition, and certain toys, such as water pistols and gaming machines. The Trade Board, the Veterinary Services Division, and the Plant Quarantine Division, all of which fall under the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture, and Fisheries (MICAF), and the Ministry of Health are responsible for granting licenses and permits, which must be obtained before an item can be imported and sold.

The documents required for the importation of goods are: (1) a supplier invoice; (2) certificate of origin; (3) bill of lading; (4) airway bill; and, (5) other shipping documents to include a declaration of value and an import license, if necessary. Certain products may also require sanitary or phytosanitary certification.

Upon arrival of the goods in Jamaica, the documents are submitted to the Customs authorities and relevant duties must be paid before the goods can be cleared. The importer may also be required to present a tax compliance certificate and a Taxpayer Registration Number (TRN).

The Jamaican government recently launched an online resource to ease access to trade-related information, the [Jamaica Trade Information Portal](#).

## Labeling/Marking Requirements

The Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ) administers the Standards, Processed Food, and Weights and Measures Acts, to which products entering Jamaica are subjected. It is the responsibility of importers and distributors to ensure that goods sold in Jamaica are properly labeled as required by the labeling standards. The BSJ stringently exercises its judicial authority and is known to block the entry and sale of goods that are not properly labeled. Improper labeling may occur in several ways such as incorrect date format, non-English language, and other impediments to clarity. A full description of labeling requirements is to be found in Labeling Standards JS1 Parts 1 to 29.

The smallest individual unit of a pre-packaged good should be labeled in English and should include the proper name of the product, an accurate declaration of the contents, an accurate description of the ingredients, a date mark or date of minimum durability, as well as the name and traceable business address of the processor, manufacturer, packer, importer or distributor and the country of origin. Manufactured, expiration, and other date marks must conform to the traditional European "dd/mm/yy" or ISO's "yy/mm/dd" date formats. The United States' conventional "mm/dd/yy" or the five-digit Julian "day-of-year year," "year day-of-year" or other such modifications of the Julian system are not accepted for the purpose of trade and commerce in Jamaica. Jamaica has not developed a definitive standard for the labeling of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) and Living Modified Organisms, but present directions favor adopting language developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

## U.S. Export Controls

The United States imposes export controls to protect national security interests and promote foreign policy objectives related to dual-use goods through implementation of the Export Administration Regulations (EAR). The Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) is comprised of two elements: Export Administration (EA), which is responsible for processing license applications, counseling exporters, and drafting and publishing changes to the [Export Administration Regulations](#); and Export Enforcement (EE), which is responsible for the enforcement of the EAR. BIS works closely with U.S. embassies, foreign governments, industry, and trade associations to ensure that exports from the United States are secure and comply with the EAR. BIS officials conduct site visits, known as End-Use Checks (EUCs), globally with end-users, consignees, and/or other parties to transactions involving items subject to the EAR to verify compliance.

An EUC is an on-site verification of a non-U.S. party to a transaction to determine whether the party is a reliable recipient of U.S. items. EUCs are conducted as part of BIS's licensing process, as well as its compliance program, to determine if items were exported in accordance with a valid BIS authorization or otherwise consistent with the EAR. Specifically, an EUC verifies the *bona fides* of transactions subject to the EAR, to include: confirming the legitimacy and reliability of the end-use and end-user; monitoring compliance with license conditions; and ensuring items are used, re-exported or transferred (in-country) in accordance with the EAR. These checks might be completed prior to the export of items pursuant to a BIS export license in the form of a Pre-License Check (PLC), or following an export from the U.S. during a Post-Shipment Verification (PSV).

BIS officials rely on EUCs to safeguard items subject to the EAR from diversion to unauthorized end-uses/users. The verification of a foreign party's reliability facilitates future trade, including pursuant to BIS license reviews. If BIS is unable to verify the reliability of the company or is prevented from accomplishing an EUC, the company may receive, for example, more regulatory scrutiny during license application reviews or be designated on BIS's Unverified List or Entity List, as applicable.

BIS has developed a list of "[red flags](#)", or warning signs, and compiled "[Know Your Customer](#)" guidance intended to aid exporters in identifying possible violations of the EAR. Both of these resources are publicly available, and their dissemination to industry members is highly encouraged to help promote EAR compliance.

BIS also provides a variety of training sessions to U.S. exporters throughout the year. These sessions range from one to two-day seminars that focus on the basics of exporting to coverage of more advanced, industry-specific topics. Interested parties can check [list of upcoming seminars and webinars](#) or reference BIS provided [online training](#).

BIS and the EAR regulate transactions involving the export of “dual-use” U.S. goods, services, and technologies. For advice and regulatory requirements, exporters should consult the other U.S. Government agencies which regulate more specialized items. For example, the U.S. Department of State’s Directorate of Defense Trade Controls has authority over defense articles and services, or munitions. A list of other agencies involved in export control can be found on the [BIS website](#) or in Supplement No. 3 to Part 730 of the EAR.

The EAR is available on the [BIS website](#) and on the [e-CFR](#) (Electronic Code of Federal Regulations) and is updated as needed. The [Consolidated Screening List](#) (CSL) is a list of parties for which the United States Government maintains restrictions on certain exports, reexports or transfers of items. The CSL consolidates eleven export screening lists of the Departments of Commerce, State and the Treasury into a single data feed as an aid to industry in conducting electronic screens of parties to regulated transactions. Exporters are encouraged to classify their items prior to export, as well as consult the CSL to determine if any parties to the transaction may be subject to specific license requirements.

### **Temporary Entry**

Importers may obtain authorization for temporary admission of products for a period of three or four months. To claim temporary admission of merchandise, regular import documentation and the C25 Form, with customs authorization, must be presented by the importer upon the arrival of the merchandise. In addition, the importer is required to deposit or place in bond up to one and a half times the applicable duty, which is refunded on exit of the merchandise.

### **Prohibited & Restricted Imports**

- Live pigs, fresh pork, and other pork products from the United States;
- Dogs for racing and dog racing equipment;
- Tablets containing a combination of methaqualone and diphenhydramine hydrochloride;
- Certain brands of crayons from China and Thailand;
- All items banned under the Customs Act and the Plants Protection from Disease Act;
- All goods prohibited entry into the United Kingdom under the Anthrax Prevention Act 1919;
- Animals and carcasses of animals prohibited under the Animals Diseases and Importation Act;
- Arms and ammunition, except with an export license from the U.S. Department of State and an import permit from the Ministry of National Security;
- Brandy of a lower strength than 30 degrees per centum under proof, unless it is proved that it has been matured for a period not less than ten years;
- Base or counterfeit imitation coin of any country;
- Coin, silver, or any money not of the established standard in weight and fineness;
- Opium and dangerous drugs;
- Essence of brandy or whisky or flavoring essences except as approved by the Minister;
- Indecent or obscene prints, paintings, photographs, books, films, etc.;
- Oil of gin or cognac, except as approved by the Minister;
- Rum coloring solutions;
- Spirits and wine, unless specifically imported with casks or other vessels of at least nine gallons content or in glass or stone bottles with each case containing not less than one gallon;
- Fictitious stamps and instruments; and
- Sugar, except under license; and
- Honey

Please refer to [Jamaica Customs](#) for the most up to date list of prohibited and restricted import items.

## **Customs Regulations**

### [Jamaica Customs](#)

Newport East, Kingston 15

(876) 922-5140

## **Standards for Trade**

### **Overview**

The [BSJ](#) is a statutory body established by the Standards Act of 1968. The Bureau of Standards is controlled by a Standards Council, which is responsible for policymaking and general administration. Standards are developed by standing committees representing varied interests, such as consumer groups, the manufacturing sector, and the public in general. The Bureau's main functions are formulating, promoting, and implementing standards for goods, services, and processes. It develops and enforces technical regulations for those commodities and practices which affect health and safety.

The Bureau also facilitates trade and protects Jamaican consumers with the timely development and promulgation of national standards. The Standards and Certification department seeks industry participation in the development of new standards and new markets both locally and regionally. The Bureau's mandate includes (i) preparing standards for particular products, practices, and processes and (ii) checking products against claims of conformity to published standards.

### **Standards**

#### *Standards Organizations*

The BSJ is the main standards development organization in Jamaica. At the BSJ, the preparation of standards is authorized by the Standards Council following representations from national organizations or from committees and staff of the BSJ. When the final draft of the standard is ready, it is sent to the responsible Ministry for approval after which it is made available to the public for comment. After consideration of the comments, a final document is prepared and the Standards Council recommends the document to the Minister for approval. The declaration of the standard is published and copies are made available for sale. Standards are revised every five years, while the Catalogue of Jamaican Standards is updated every six months. It includes a listing of all standards published to date as well as those approved by the Minister awaiting publication. The National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), the National Council on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET), private companies, and government agencies and ministries also have a limited role in standards development. The BSJ restructured its operations in 2018 to maintain standards setting, but created a separate enforcement entity, the National Compliance and Regulatory Agency (NCRA) to enforce the standards.

#### *Conformity Assessment*

The BSJ is responsible for issuing licenses to use the Bureau's Certification Mark (Mark of Conformity). A number of laboratories carry out tests in such areas as food analysis, chemistry, metallurgy, microbiology, building materials, furniture, packaging, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and weights and measures. Private companies involved in conformity assessment are Technological Solutions Limited and SGS Limited.

#### *Product Certification*

The National Certification Mark issued by the BSJ is a mark of quality awarded to products, processes, and practices, which conform to relevant standards. The BSJ encourages consumers to purchase products which bear this mark, as it guarantees consistent product quality. All manufacturers have the right to apply for the mark. The BSJ's team of analysts and specialists examines the manufacturers' processes, equipment, records, raw material, quality control systems, and the finished product to ensure good quality.

The Product Certification offered by the BSJ is voluntary (and at a cost to the applicant). Plans are being developed for the establishment of a National Certification body. Also being planned is a Compliance Sticker Program, which will allow local products of a suitable standard to bear a Compliance Sticker. The program will also extend to compliant imported products. There is a mutual recognition agreement between the BSJ and the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), and Jamaica has adopted more of ASTM's standards than any country in the Caribbean.

#### *Accreditation*

The BSJ offers laboratory accreditation to Chemical and Microbiological Laboratories, which apply for this recognition. Accreditation services may also be obtained from International agencies. Plans are in place for the development of a National Accreditation Body (separate from the BSJ), which will take over this function.

The BSJ's Technical Information Center is the only national standards library in Jamaica. It is the center of the international standards information network and serves as:

- The National Enquiry Point under the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)
- Contact Point for Codex Alimentarius Commission in Jamaica
- Local Agent for International Organization for Standardization (ISO), British Standards Institution (BSI), and American National Standards Institution (ANSI).
- The Bureau has membership in the following regional and international organizations:
- International Electro-Technical Commission (IEC)
- Caribbean Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ)
- Inter-American Metrology System (SIM)
- Pan-American Standards Commission (COPANT) (an ISO Commission)
- Caribbean Metrology Sub-Region (CARIMET)
- Additionally, the Bureau cooperates with several other regional and international standards and metrology institutions such as the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), National Center for Metrology-Mexico (CENAM), Physikalisch Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB), American Society for Mechanical Engineers (ASME), National Office of Standards-Cuba (NC), Columbian Institute of Certification and Technical Standards (ICONTEC), Barbados national Standards Institute (BNSI), Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS), and the Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS).

In 2013, a Hazardous Substance Regulatory Authority (HSRA) was established to administer the Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection Act, 2015, and ensuing regulations. The Act applies to the possession, acquisition, production, manufacture, processing, transfer, development, handling, storage, import, export, or disposal of natural and artificial radioactive material, nuclear material, ionizing radiation apparatus and devices emitting ionizing radiation.

Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to notify to the WTO proposed technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures that could affect trade. Notify U.S. ([www.nist.gov/notifyus](http://www.nist.gov/notifyus)) is a free, web-based e-mail registration service that captures and makes available for review and comment key information on draft regulations and conformity assessment procedures. Users receive customized e-mail alerts when new notifications are added by selected country or countries and industry sector(s) of interest and can also request full texts of regulations. This service and its associated web site are managed and operated by the USA WTO TBT Inquiry Point housed within the National Institute of Standards and Technology, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce.



## **Testing, inspection and certification**

The Jamaica National Agency for Accreditation (JANAAC) is the national accreditation body of Jamaica. JANAAC, an agency of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture, and Fisheries (MICAF), was incorporated in March 2007, and officially began operations in April 2008.

JANAAC is a member of the International Laboratory Accreditation Corporation (ILAC) and the Inter-American Accreditation Corporation (IAAC).

Test certificates from foreign laboratories are accepted, assuming that the foreign laboratories are ILAC mutual recognition agreement (MRA) signatories. In addition, U.S. testing laboratories can operate in Jamaica and test U.S. **products to comply with domestic regulatory requirements if the laboratories are ILAC MRA signatories.**

## **Publication of technical regulations**

Proposed Technical Regulations are made available to the public for comment. A 30-day period is allowed before publication. Any entity, including U.S. companies, may comment on the proposals before they are published. The BSJ has a Technical Information Center, which has information on standards being developed. Final Technical Regulations are published in the Jamaica Gazette Supplement - Proclamations, Rules, and Regulations.

Product labeling is one of the more important and topical matters handled by the BSJ. The Catalogue of Jamaican Standards lists requirements for over 30 different commodities. The list is wide and varied and includes items such as footwear, precious metals, household appliances, panty hose, thread, animal feeds, toys, furniture, and various packaged goods.

Labeling requirements are contained in a series of mandatory standards for the Labeling of Commodities (JS 1: Part 1 through to JS 1: Part 30). Adherence to these requirements is closely monitored by the BSJ. Monitoring entails verification of labels against the specifications outlined in the particular labeling standard.

It is critical for the BSJ to develop a system that will allow the organization to exercise its duty with increased efficiency and effectiveness with respect to compliance to compulsory standards (technical regulations). The Label Registration Program was therefore proposed. This program aims to prevent labeling violations both at the Ports of Entry and in the Domestic Marketplace. Labels of each product can therefore be registered with the BSJ under this program. This registration program is voluntary and will assist the speedy processing of goods through Customs (using a database) for importers who have their labels registered with the BSJ.

The steps required for this process are:

1. The completion of the Label Registration Form
2. Submitting the form along with the labels of the products to be registered (preferably on line) to the Bureau of Standards
3. Make payment using either the e-commerce facility or the other means available and showing proof of payment
4. The label is assessed and a report done
5. If the label is in conformance with the standards, the registration will be approved and a registration number assigned and added to list of compliant labels
6. Where a labeling non-conformance is identified, the report shall indicate the areas of non-conformance, and make recommendation to effect corrections
7. The applicant will be required to implement the recommendations and re-submit the corrected label and proceed again
8. Label registration number now used by Customs to process imports
9. Routine periodic verification conducted by BSJ Inspectors/Officers to identify continued compliance
10. If non-compliance is identified, registration is withdrawn and distributor advised to re-register the label(s)

Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to notify the WTO of proposed technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures that could affect trade. Notify U.S. ([www.nist.gov/notifyus](http://www.nist.gov/notifyus)) is a free, web-based e-mail registration service that captures and makes available for review and comment key information on draft regulations and conformity assessment procedures. Users receive customized e-mail alerts when new notifications are added by selected country(ies) and industry sector(s) of interest, and can also request full texts of regulations. This service and its associated web site are managed and operated by the USA WTO TBT Inquiry Point housed within the National Institute of Standards and Technology, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

### **Contact Information**

Bureau of Standards Jamaica  
6 Winchester Road, P.O Box 113  
Kingston 10  
Tel: (876) 632-4275 or (876) 618-1534; Fax: (876) 929-4736  
Email: [info@bsj.org.jm](mailto:info@bsj.org.jm)

### **Trade Agreements**

#### **Preferential Tariff Arrangements**

Jamaica has enjoyed preferential tariff arrangements with: the United States under the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA); the European Union under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA); with Canada under CARIBCAN (negotiations for a successor agreement has stalled); and with other English-speaking Caribbean states under [CARICOM](#). CARICOM has bilateral trade agreements with Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Venezuela.

CBERA, commonly referred to as the [Caribbean Basin Initiative](#) (CBI), provides duty-free entry to the United States to qualifying products of Jamaican origin (except textiles, footwear, handbags, luggage, work gloves, leather apparel, tuna fish, petroleum and petroleum products, and watches and watch parts from countries that do not enjoy Most Favored Nation status). An amendment was made to CBI provisions in 1990 (CBI II) allowing additional duty reduction on certain leather-related products, including handbags, luggage, flat goods, work gloves, and wearing apparel. To meet CBI eligibility standards, products must contain at least 35 percent value added in Jamaica, of which U.S. materials must comprise 15 percent of the value of the finished product. Articles assembled in Jamaica from 100 percent U.S. components are also given duty-free treatment (with certain exceptions, including textiles/apparel for which the U.S. duty is levied only on the value-added in Jamaica).

CBERA was substantially expanded in 2000 through the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA) and further in 2002 through the Trade Act. The changes restore the margin of preferences CBI countries enjoyed prior to the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), as well as improve the range of economic opportunities available to the countries. The Jamaican garment industry has not expanded under CBTPA as predicted due to: (1) the removal of preferential access to key markets following the removal of the quota system; (2) competition from low cost producers; (3) a large untrained labor force; (4) small factories that inhibit the achievement of economies of scale; (5) dependence on a few markets and on imported inputs; and, (6) high overhead costs, including energy cost. Jamaica also signed a Tax Information Exchange Agreement (TIEA) with the United States, allowing U.S. taxpayers to deduct legitimate business expenses incurred in attending business meetings and conventions in Jamaica.

CARICOM and Canada commenced negotiations for a free trade agreement in 2007 to replace the existing non-reciprocal Caribbean-Canada Trade Agreement known as CARIBCAN. However, after seven rounds of negotiations, the parties have not reached an agreement and no further negotiations are planned. Jamaica has been exporting certain items duty-free to Canada once eligible items meet a national-origin standard of 60 percent of the factory price

originating in Jamaica, Commonwealth Caribbean countries, or Canada. Textiles, garments, lubricating oils, clothing, footwear, luggage, handbags, and leather garments are excluded. Processed and fresh vegetables comprise most of the trade under CARIBCAN. Alumina, representing approximately 80 percent of all exports to Canada, was already admitted duty-free prior to the establishment of CARIBCAN.

The [Economic Partnership Agreement](#) or EPA, a trade partnership required by the Cotonou Agreement to replace the trade component of Lome IV, was signed in January 2008. The EPA is intended to help African, Caribbean and Pacific states, reduce poverty and achieve economic growth through sustainable trade with Europe.

Jamaica has been a leading member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) since 1973, when four countries signed the [Treaty of Chaguaramas](#). Over the years membership has grown to 15. There are also five associate members, and The Bahamas is a member of the community, but not the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). In 1989, the CSME was established to create a single economic space for the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital. To effect the CSME, a Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas was signed in 2002. In January 2006, CARICOM Heads of Government signed the single market aspect of the CSME, although at the time only six member countries had completed the process to bring the CSME into being. Six other countries have subsequently joined the CSME and the economic integration aspect of the CSME commenced in 2008. CARICOM members have not fully implemented the CSME, however, which remains the subject of ongoing discussions in CARICOM forums.

### **Licensing Requirements for Professional Services**

The General Legal Council (GLC) is responsible for organizing legal education and upholding the standards of professional conduct. In addition to upholding the ethics of the legal profession, to which registered attorneys are expected to adhere, the GLC also plays an integral role in the admission of attorneys being enrolled to practice in the courts of Jamaica.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Jamaica was incorporated under the Public Accountancy Act (PAA) to regulate the accountancy profession in Jamaica as well as the use of accountancy designations.

A real estate practitioner is expected to complete a one month, 100 hour sales course; registration with the Real Estate Board; and, “attachment” to a licensed Real Estate Broker. Practitioners are also expected to apply for a license from the Real Estate Board of Jamaica, which has to be renewed annually.

The [Professional Engineers Registration Board](#) (PERB) regulates the practice of engineering in Jamaica. Individuals or firms seeking to offer engineering services in Jamaica must seek registration through PERB under the Professional Engineers’ Registration Act.

Similarly, individuals and firms offering architecture services must register with the [Architects Registration Board](#) (ARB) who regulates the practices in Jamaica.

## **Selling US Products & Services**

### **Distribution & Sales Channels**

#### *Overview*

Distribution and sales of imported merchandise in Jamaica are done principally through distributors and agents. A large share of materials and supplies including machinery and equipment is imported directly by end-users. Close contact with clients, delivery of quality products, after-sales service, and competitive prices are all useful business strategies to succeed in the market. Due to Jamaica's proximity to the United States, many Jamaicans importing materials and products interface directly with U.S. exporters' and manufacturers' representatives, particularly in Florida. Most goods enter through the country's major port in Kingston and are distributed in smaller quantities by road. This mode of distribution is becoming more efficient with the construction of highways across the country.

### **Using an Agent to Sell US Products and Services**

There are no laws in Jamaica that dictate contract terms for agents/distributors. Contracting parties formulate their own terms and conditions of agreement with or without the assistance of an attorney. However, regardless of contract terms, every supplier and agent/distributor must be aware of the Fair Competition Act (FCA), which is designed to foster competition. Under Jamaica's legal system, once an agreement is reached and signed, it becomes a binding document and breaches may be contested in a court of law. Potential sources for business partner leads include the American Chamber of Commerce of Jamaica (AmCham), the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ), the Jamaican Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association (JMEA), and the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce (JCC).

### **Establishing an Office**

The establishment of a local office is best approached with the assistance of the Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO), the government's trade and investment promotion agency. Potential investors can also present project proposals to JAMPRO for assessment and guidance. Registration or incorporation of a business should be made with the Office of the Registrar of Companies (ORC).

Under the Companies Act of 2004, a single person may form a company and be its sole director and shareholder. Public companies are required to have a minimum share capital of J\$500,000.00 (the exchange rate was approximately J\$150 to US\$1 at end August 2020) and cannot borrow without first receiving certification from the Registrar. Although the head office of the company may be overseas, the company must now have a registered office in Jamaica. An amendment to the Companies Act in 2017 now requires companies to disclose beneficial owners and retain records of legal and beneficial owners for seven years.

### **Franchising**

To establish a franchise arrangement in Jamaica, the franchisee is expected to register a local company to assume the rights to operate the franchise. There are no specific laws that regulate the operation of franchises and there is a normal business relationship with the locally registered entity and the headquarters of the franchise. The locally registered company is responsible for managing the operation and ensuring conformity to the franchise requirements. Major U.S. food franchises in Jamaica include: Starbucks, Little Caesars, Hard Rock Café, Margaritaville, Popeyes, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Burger King, Wendy's, Dairy Queen, Subway, Pizza Hut, Domino Pizza, and TGI Friday's. There are other types of franchises in areas such as accounting, real estate, automobile sales and rental, and training services.

### **Direct Marketing**

Mail order sales and catalogs have historically not been popular, though moves towards deregulation and liberalization and the attendant competition have compelled retailers to utilize additional ways of getting their message to customers and achieving sales growth. Some local firms use direct mailings of promotional materials and telephone marketing. Local credit card companies sometimes target cardholders through direct mailing, offering goods and services.

Network marketing for the promotion of products has also been successful in Jamaica. Online direct marketing is becoming more popular and social media has grown in popularity as a means for businesses to connect directly with customers.

### **Joint Ventures/Licensing**

In a bid to stimulate economic activity, the GOJ has actively encouraged joint ventures and licensing. In 2012, the GOJ approved a Policy and Institutional Framework for the implementation of a Public-Private Partnership Programme (PPPP) to aid in the privatization process. Major opportunities are publicized by the government agency or ministry involved. Non-resident partners are subject to Jamaican tax on their share of the partnership profits that accrue in or are derived from Jamaica. Non-resident foreign corporations pay tax on their share of profits at the same rates as resident corporations. Double taxation relief is available under the 1991 Convention for the Avoidance of Double Taxation.

### **Express Delivery**

Three major U.S. based companies offer express delivery service to Jamaica. Deliveries from the U.S. take between one and four days. Several local companies have entered the express delivery space whereby small quantities ordered online are first delivered to a Miami address before being air freighted to Jamaica. This new mode of delivery has taken on added significance in the COVID-19 era, as travel has been stymied. The de minimis value for shipments attracting customs duty is US\$50.

### **Due Diligence**

U.S. companies planning to do business in Jamaica are advised to conduct thorough due diligence on potential business partners. This is particularly important as while the court system is fair, litigation can be expensive and the pace of resolution is slow.

### **eCommerce**

#### **Assessment of Current Buyer Behavior in Market**

Jamaica has relatively robust telecommunications infrastructure and has one of the highest mobile phone penetrations in the world. The country has therefore become an attractive location for information and communications technology firms to set-up business process outsourcing operations. While internet access is increasing, a “digital divide” still exists.

The last census conducted in 2017 found that 35 percent of Jamaicans have access to computers and 84 percent of households have mobile phones. Access to internet is on an upward trend, with Jamaica’s ranking in the World Economic Forum’s 2017-18 Global Competitiveness Index at 89 out of 137 for internet users as a percentage of the population, 71 for fixed broadband internet connections, and 74 for mobile broadband internet connections.

Online commerce is becoming more common, particularly amongst larger companies. These companies are more likely to have a web presence to market their products or services, in addition to using social media channels. Small and medium sized companies tend to rely on free social media platforms to market themselves. There are companies offering e-commerce domestically, as well as for cross-border sales. For companies offering online commerce, online payments can be made via credit card, paypal, online banking, or bill payment services.

#### **Local eCommerce Sales Rules & Regulations**

In 2007, the E-transaction Act came into effect, providing the legal framework for secured electronic commerce. Since then, e-commerce has grown in significance, with a larger number of businesses (particularly utilities and banks) offering the option to pay bills online or via mobile phone. Jamaicans with U.S. dollar credit cards also make online purchases from U.S. based companies.

A number of mobile payments services entered the market in the past five years. The Bank of Jamaica's regulatory framework for mobile payments, called "Guidelines for Electronic Retail Payment Services," came into effect April 2013.

## **Selling Factors & Techniques**

### *Overview*

Due diligence on customers is advised before selling to clients directly or through agents and distributors. Several large, established distribution companies in Jamaica import and distribute a range of products. Smaller companies may be suitable as agents for some products. Demand and markups for products vary. Some companies specialize in high volume and low markups while others only distribute goods that ensure a high markup. Due to Jamaica's proximity and strong cultural affinity to North America, successful business strategies in North America are generally successful in Jamaica.

## **Trade Promotion & Advertising**

Advertising is primarily done through radio, television, newspaper, social and other electronic media, and billboards, including electronic billboards. A number of advertising agencies have national coverage, and Jamaica has a wide range of companies licensed to offer broadcast media services and Subscriber Television (STV or Cable), including a wireless, multi-point, multi-channel, licensee. There are also several Internet service providers.

Radio is the most wide-reaching mass communication medium. The two major free-to-air local TV networks are:

- [Television Jamaica \(TVJ\)](#)
- [CVM](#)

The country also has two morning dailies, one afternoon tabloid, and several periodicals and magazines. These include:

- [The Gleaner Newspaper](#), 7 North Street, Kingston  
Tel: (876) 922-3400
- [The Jamaica Observer Newspaper](#), 40-421/2 Beechwood Avenue, Kingston 8  
Tel: (876) 931-7825/7832
- [The Star Newspaper](#) (afternoon tabloid), 7 North St., Kingston  
Tel: (876) 922-3400

## **Pricing**

Prices are largely market driven, with the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) and the Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC) responsible for monitoring competition. The CAC plays a role in conducting research and informing the public of price variations. The National Consumer League, a local NGO, plays a watchdog role. Most goods and services attract a sales tax called the General Consumption Tax (GCT), while goods such as alcohol, cigarettes, and fuel attract Special Consumption Taxes (SCT). Utility services, such as electricity, water and telecommunications are regulated by the Office of Utilities Regulation, with the latter two requiring approval for price increases.

## **Sales Service/Customer Support**

After-sales service is an important competitive advantage in the Jamaican market and a requirement for an effective sales operator. If a U.S. firm has difficulty setting up its own distribution system, a local agent or distributor may be retained to maintain a trained service staff with a reasonable stock of spare parts. Alternatively, the supplier could offer the customer rapid service from the United States.

## Local Professional Services

It is advisable to retain professional advice at the early stages of a business venture to ensure smooth start-up and compliance with local laws. [The Jamaica Bar Association](#) has a large list of members. Other professional service organizations include the:

1. [General Legal Council](#)
2. [Institute of Chartered Accountants of Jamaica](#)
3. [Incorporated Masterbuilders Association of Jamaica](#)
4. [Jamaica Bankers Association](#)
5. [Jamaica Institute of Architects](#)
6. [Jamaica Institute of Engineers](#)
7. [Jamaica Institute of Environmental Professionals](#)
8. [Jamaica Institute of Quantity Surveyors](#)
9. [Realtors Association of Jamaica](#)

The [U.S. Embassy's list of local attorneys](#) is available online.

## Principle Business Associations

All of the below mentioned associations are open to membership from U.S. companies.

[American Chamber of Commerce of Jamaica](#) – the largest association of U.S. companies, which promotes investment and trade between the United States, Jamaica, and the wider Caribbean region.

[Jamaica Chamber of Commerce](#) – assists companies doing business in Jamaica and has influenced the passage of legislation and regulations.

[Jamaica Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association](#) - represents manufacturers, exporters, and organizations providing services to these sectors.

[Jamaica Hotel and Tourism Association](#) - promotes the development of Jamaica's hospitality industry and represent the interests of its members with government and its agencies and in forums locally, regionally, and internationally.

[Private Sector Organization of Jamaica](#) - a grouping of private sector associations, companies, and individuals. The organization influences national policy by promoting discussions with the country's political directorate.

## Limitations on Selling US Products and Services

There are no areas of the manufacturing or services sectors restricting ownership or business opportunities to foreign or local entities.

## Trade Financing

### Methods of Payment

Letters of credit are a common method of payment in Jamaica. Prior to the establishment of a solid business relationship, upfront payment might be a prudent option, although many Jamaican prefer credit terms. Once a good business relationship has been formed, companies in good standing may move towards trading on an open account. In 2010, the Parliament of Jamaica approved the Credit Reporting Act and in March 2012, the government approved and granted a license to Creditinfo Jamaica, the country's first credit bureau. A second credit reporting agency Crif NM Credit Assure subsequently received a license. There is also a regional entity, Caribbean Information and Credit Ratings Services Limited (CariCRIS), formed in 2004. Occasionally, U.S. firms register trade complaints for non-payment by local buyers. For more information about the methods of payment or other trade finance options, please read the Trade Finance Guide available at <https://www.trade.gov/trade-finance-guide-quick-reference-us-exporters>.

### Banking Systems

Financial Institutions in Jamaica provide a range of personal and business services, including corporate banking. These include current accounts, savings accounts, loans and credit cards. In recent years, banks have been encouraging

customers to migrate to internet banking platforms. Some credit cards issued by local banks are for use in Jamaica only, but international credit cards have grown in importance. The Bank of Jamaica (central bank) regulates deposit-taking institutions, money services businesses (e.g., cambios and remittance companies), and credit reporting agencies. According to the Bank of Jamaica, credit unions are designated by the Ministry of Finance as “specified financial institutions” under the Bank of Jamaica Act, enabling the central bank to obtain information on their operations. Regulations to establish a formal supervisory framework for these entities are being finalized. The Financial Services Commission (FSC) regulates insurance companies, securities firms/dealers, unit trusts, private pension funds, and mutual funds. At the end of 2019, there were 11 supervised deposit-taking institutions consisting of eight commercial banks, one merchant bank (Licensed under the Financial Institutions Act) and two building societies. The number of credit unions shrank from 47 at the end of 2009 to 25 at the end of 2019.

Following a crisis in the financial sector in the 1990s, the GOJ increased the prudential and supervisory powers of the BOJ by passing the Financial Institutions Act and the Banking Act. Amendments were also made to the regulations governing Building Societies. The Banking Services Act passed in 2013 aimed to consolidate regulations. Credit Unions are now designated as ‘specified financial institutions’ under the Bank of Jamaica Act, bringing them under the supervision of the central bank. The Jamaica Deposit Insurance Corporation (JDIC) and a FSC were introduced to protect depositors and regulate institutions and brokers outside the scope of the Central Bank’s oversight. These adjustments have brought the regulatory standards governing the financial sector up to international standards and should therefore aid, rather than impede, businesses.

### **Foreign Exchange Controls**

Since liberalization of the financial and capital accounts in the 1990s, foreign exchange controls have been removed, but the BOJ still regulates activities in the foreign exchange market. In 2017 the central bank, with technical assistance from the International Monetary Fund, introduced a new tool called the BOJ Foreign Exchange Intervention and Trading Toll (B-FXITT) to improve foreign exchange operations. According to the BOJ, the the implementation of B-FXITT is part of its strategy to enhance efficiency and transparency of the foreign exchange market to provide greater assurance about the availability of supplies.

Foreign currency can be accessed through a network of authorized foreign exchange dealers, cambios, and bureaux de change at market-determined rates.

### **US Banks & Local Correspondent Banks**

Canadian banks dominate the banking sector. Citigroup operates in Jamaica, but it does not offer retail-banking services. The Jamaica National Building Society and Victoria Mutual Building Society are Jamaican financial institutions with offices in the U.S. All Jamaican commercial banks have correspondent U.S. banking arrangements.

### **Protecting Intellectual Property**

Jamaica has one of the stronger intellectual property (IP) protection regimes in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to the International Property Rights Index, although legislative and enforcement gaps still exist. Jamaica is a member of a number of multilateral IP regimes, and has signed bilateral agreements with the United States which provide assurances to protect IP (see Investment Climate Statement (ICS) section on “Intellectual Property Rights” for more details). U.S. companies can register patents and trademarks through the Jamaica Intellectual Property Office (JIPO), which also supports investors’ efforts to enforce their rights.

Jamaica was recently removed from the Special 301 Watchlist in 2020 after passing TRIPS compliant patent and industrial design legislation (see ICS for additional details).

In any foreign market, companies should consider several general principles for effective management of their intellectual property. For background, please link to our article on [Protecting Intellectual Property](#) and [Stopfakes.gov](#) ITA’s Office of Intellectual Property Rights Director Stevan Mitchell at [Stevan.Mitchell@trade.gov](mailto:Stevan.Mitchell@trade.gov).



## **IP Attaché Contact**

Claudia Rojas

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Telephone: +52 55 5080-5226

E-mail: [claudia.rojas@trade.gov](mailto:claudia.rojas@trade.gov)

## **Selling to the Public Sector**

### **Selling to the Government**

Government procurement is generally done through open tenders, direct advertising, or by invitation to registered suppliers. The GOJ developed a [central electronic portal for public tenders](#), which is mandatory for procurements over J\$1.5 million (approximately US\$11,500). Other tenders are listed on the relevant agencies' websites and advertised in newspapers weekly. The National Contracts Commission (NCC) is responsible for reviewing and endorsing recommendations for the award of government contracts above approximately US\$100,000 in value. The NCC registers and classifies contractors who respond to government contract tenders according to their size and capabilities. Water supply and distribution equipment contracts require registration with the National Water Commission, and to supply medicines and medical supplies, potential bidders must contact the Pharmaceutical Division of the Ministry of Health and Health Corporation Limited. Jamaica does not have a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States and is not a party to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Government Procurement.

U.S. companies bidding on Government tenders may also qualify for U.S. Government advocacy. A unit of the U.S. Commerce Department's International Trade Administration, the Advocacy Center coordinates U.S. Government interagency advocacy efforts on behalf of U.S. exporters bidding on public sector contracts with international governments and government agencies. The Advocacy Center works closely with our network of the U.S. Commercial Service worldwide and inter-agency partners to ensure that exporters of U.S. products and services have the best possible chance of winning government contracts. Advocacy assistance can take many forms but often involves the U.S. Embassy or other U.S. Government agencies expressing support for the U.S. bidders directly to the foreign government. Consult [Advocacy for Foreign Government Contracts](#) for additional information."

### **Financing of Projects**

**Multilateral Development Banks and Financing Government Sales.** Price, payment terms, and financing can be a significant factor in winning a government contract. Many governments finance public works projects through borrowing from the Multilateral Development Banks (MDB). A helpful guide for working with the MDBs is the [Guide to Doing Business with the Multilateral Development Banks](#). The U.S. Department of Commerce's (USDOC) International Trade Administration (ITA) has a Foreign Commercial Service Officer stationed at each of the five different Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs): the African Development Bank; the Asian Development Bank; the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; the Inter-American Development Bank; and the World Bank. For more information contact the [Advocacy Liaison for World Bank](#) and the [Advocacy Liaison Website for Inter-American Development Bank \(IDB\)](#).

## **Business Travel**

### **Business Customs**

Jamaica gained independence from Great Britain in 1962 and U.S. visitors will therefore notice some British influences on its business practices, traditions, and customs. In Kingston, a business suit or blazer may be advisable, especially for the first engagement. Dress tends to be less formal in resort areas such as Montego Bay and Ocho Rios.

### **Travel Advisory**

Embassy notices to U.S. citizens in Jamaica can be accessed at:

<https://jm.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/security-and-travel-information/>

### **Visa Requirements**

All U.S. citizens traveling by air outside of the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to exit or enter the United States. U.S. citizens traveling by sea must present a Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) compliant document such as a passport or a passport card for entry to the United States. Passport cards are an acceptable travel document for entry into Jamaica for sea travelers only.

Visitors to Jamaica must have a return ticket and be able to show sufficient funds for their visit. U.S. citizens traveling to Jamaica for work or extended stays are required to have a current U.S. passport and a visa issued by the Jamaican Embassy or a Jamaican Consulate. There is a departure tax for travelers, which is generally included in the airfare.

Effective 2005, foreign nationals who are conducting business on short-term basis will not require a business visa once they will be in Jamaica for a period not exceeding thirty days. However, foreign nationals will need a business visa to enter Jamaica if they are conducting business for periods exceeding thirty days. Foreign nationals who need visas for entry to Jamaica will require a business visa to conduct business. Affidavits will not be accepted by the immigration office.

### **Currency**

The Bank of Jamaica has the sole authority to issue notes and coins in Jamaica. Jamaican paper notes are issued in denominations of \$50, \$100, \$500, \$1000 and \$5,000. While the Jamaican dollar is the legal tender, the United States dollar is accepted as a form of payment, particularly in tourist resorts, where prices are sometimes quoted in both currencies. In 2020, over 1,000 ATMs were available across the country. There were also approximately 30,000 point-of-sale terminals of which over 10,000 were deployed. This network allows for the use of a wide variety of debit and credit cards, including international cards. These transactions generally attract a fee. Traveler's checks are accepted by financial entities, most hotels and larger commercial entities.

### **Telecommunications/Electric**

Jamaica has a modern and fully liberalized telecommunications system, which has seen significant expansion since 2001. There are two primary mobile providers, former monopoly full-service provider, FLOW, and Digicel. Digicel is the largest provider of cellular telecommunications in Jamaica and the Caribbean. Jamaica's tele-density now exceeds 100%, with many subscribers maintaining accounts with both providers. FLOW also operates a fixed line system. FLOW was acquired by Liberty Global in May 2016. While Jamaica continues to lag in broadband mobile and fixed internet penetration, Wi-Fi technology is prevalent in hotels, and starting to be rolled out in public spaces. Jamaica has submarine communications cables with the United States, Cayman Islands, Colombia, Cuba and the Dominican Republic. The Jamaican country code is 1-876. Electrical equipment in Jamaica operates on 110-120 volts at 50 Hertz (Hz), while in the United States the standard is 60 Hz. However, most small electrical appliances, such as mobile phones, battery chargers and hairdryers will work. Jamaica and the United States use types A and B receptacles.

## **Transportation**

Jamaica has two major international airports. Kingston's Norman Manley International Airport receives flights from Air Canada, American Airlines, British Airways, Caribbean Airlines, Cayman Airways, Copa, Delta, Fly Jamaica, JetBlue, Spirit, and WestJet. Sangster International Airport in the resort town of Montego Bay is served by over 30 airlines and a number of charters. Major cruise ship terminals in Jamaica are located in Falmouth, Montego Bay and Ocho Rios. A fourth major terminal was opened in Port Royal in 2020.

Ground transportation options include taxis, car rental, and luxury coach services. Allowance should be made for possible delay arising from traffic congestion, particularly in the capital city, Kingston. Public transportation is not recommended, as public buses can be overcrowded, off schedule and susceptible to crime. Travelers who use taxicabs should take only licensed operators or those recommended by their hotels.

A new highway linking Kingston and the resort town of Ocho Rios was opened at the beginning of 2016. However, A1, A2, and A3 highways remain the primary links between the most important cities and tourist destinations on the island. Most of these roads are not comparable to American highways, and road conditions can be hazardous due to disrepair, inadequate signage and poor traffic control markings. The B highways and rural roads are often very narrow and frequented by large trucks, buses, pedestrians, cyclists, and open range livestock. Highways are traveled at high speeds, but are not limited-access. Nighttime driving is especially dangerous and should be avoided whenever possible. U.S. Embassy personnel are prohibited from driving at night outside of the cities of Kingston, Ocho Rios, Montego Bay, and Negril.

## **Language**

Jamaica's official language is English, but there is a local dialect known as patois.

## **Health**

Jamaica has a number of public and private hospitals. Most public hospitals have deteriorated over time due to underinvestment. One major public hospital operates a private wing, which provides more personalized service and a Spanish chain currently operates a private hospital in Montego Bay. While there is significant room for improvement, the existing state of the health sector compares favorably with other developing countries. Apart from the recent introduction of mosquito borne diseases and COVID-19, the Embassy is not aware of any potential health risks of which businesspersons should be notified.

## **Local Time, Business Hours and Holidays**

The normal working day for government offices and factories is 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Fridays. Government offices are generally closed on Saturday and Sunday. Almost all commercial businesses are open on Saturday, but only few open on Sunday. Jamaica is on Eastern Standard Time (EST) year round and does not observe daylight savings time.

Holidays observed in Jamaica are the following:

New Year's Day	January 1
Ash Wednesday	Variable
Good Friday	Variable
Easter Monday	Variable
National Labor Day	May 23
Emancipation Day	August 1
Independence Day	August 6

National Heroes Day      October (Variable)

Christmas Day              December 25

Boxing Day                 December 26

**Temporary Entry of Materials or Personal Belongings**

Those who wish to bring in items temporarily such as software, exhibit material, etc., are required to identify the items at Customs, pay the required duty and General Consumption Tax (as security), and collect a refundable revenue deposit receipt. On exit from the country, the Customs authority refunds the entire amount paid as security. When importing machinery for between three and six months, the above procedure applies in addition to a completed Customs Form C25. Laptop computers can be brought in duty free.

## **Investment Climate Statement**

The U.S. Department of State Investment Climate Statements provide information on the business climates of more than 170 economies and are prepared by economic officers stationed in embassies and posts around the world. They analyze a variety of economies that are or could be markets for U.S. businesses.

Topics include Openness to Investment, Legal and Regulatory systems, Dispute Resolution, Intellectual Property Rights, Transparency, Performance Requirements, State-Owned Enterprises, Responsible Business Conduct, and Corruption.

These statements highlight persistent barriers to further U.S. investment. Addressing these barriers would expand high-quality, private sector-led investment in infrastructure, further women's economic empowerment, and facilitate a healthy business environment for the digital economy. To access the ICS, visit the U.S. Department of State [Investment Climate Statement](#) website.

## **Political and Economic Environment**

For background information on the political and economic environment of the country, please click on the link to the U.S. Department of State [Countries & Areas](#) website.