



# The JCLO Monthly

# JAMAICA

YOUR PARTNER FOR RELIABLE WORKERS

July 2025 Edition

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**Photo:** A Jamaican worker in Upstate New York during the peak of apple harvesting.

# We are Reliable!

That is the reason Jamaica continues to stand out in the global labour market. Employers know that when they choose Jamaica, they are choosing workers who arrive prepared, disciplined, and committed, supported by a system that has proven its worth for more than 80 years. Reliability is not only about showing up on time. It is about consistency, structure, and trust. From pre-departure training to the presence of our liaison officers in the United States, Jamaica offers a model that ensures employers have confidence and workers have security.

This is why Jamaica remains competitive. Our edge is not cost — it is quality, dependability, and a partnership built to last.



**Colette Roberts Ridsen, CD**  
Permanent Secretary,  
Jamaica Oversea Employment  
Programmes

## Did you know?

Jamaica is the only country in the H-2A programme that provides formal pre-departure orientation for its workers. Employers call it a "huge advantage" that saves time and ensures readiness from day one.



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# Jamaica's Reliability: The Roots of Northern Orchard's Success

Since 1975, Northern Orchard in New York has depended on Jamaican workers to bring in its apple crop, season after season, without fail. What began as a labour solution has become the backbone of the farm's business model.

At the height of harvest, the family-run orchard employs more than 140 Jamaicans. Some of these men have returned for nearly 40 years, passing on knowledge of pruning, spraying, and harvest rhythms to newer recruits. The continuity has created a workforce that knows the farm as intimately as the Mulbury family itself.

That kind of experience is not easily replaced. U.S. agriculture has



**Photo:** Parnell Charles Jr, Minister of Labour and Social Security (right), bids farewell to farm workers as they board the bus to the airport during a send-off ceremony.

struggled with rising labour shortages, but Northern Orchard has found stability in its Jamaican crew. Their discipline, consistency, and ability to adapt to the demands of each season provide the farm with something local labour cannot guarantee: reliability.

The relationship also runs deeper than economics. Over the years, Jamaican workers have become part of the orchard's cultural fabric. Father's Day celebrations now feature jerk chicken cooked on the farm, while local shops in town stock Jamaican products when the workers arrive. These traditions have created a sense of belonging that blurs the line between "temporary labour" and "long-term partners."

It is against this backdrop that farm owner Jesse Mulbury speaks with conviction about Jamaica's role in his family's livelihood. "We probably wouldn't exist year to year without the Jamaican H-2A programme," he explained. "Our local labour force just isn't adequate. Jamaicans bring skill, pride, and reliability. They know our orchards like the back of their hand."

Mulbury's words echo a wider truth across the agricultural sector: reliability is now the currency of competitiveness. Jamaica's model rooted in worker preparation, loyalty, and long-standing trust, offers employers the assurance they need in an uncertain labour market.



**Photo:** Jamaican workers empty freshly picked apples at an orchard in Upstate New York.

Northern Orchard's story captures that edge clearly. Jamaica is not simply supplying workers; no, it is sustaining businesses, strengthening communities, and planting the kind of trust that grows stronger with each season.

## Jamaica vs. Mexico: The Real Cost of Labour

For years, U.S. employers assumed that sourcing workers from Mexico was the cheaper option. With its scale and geographic proximity, Mexico seemed the natural first choice. But when the numbers are scrutinised, the gap disappears and in some cases, Jamaica comes out ahead.



**Photo:** A Jamaican worker in Upstate New York during the peak of apple harvesting.

Ryan Ayres, Director of Human Resources at FirstFruits Farms in Washington State, has worked with both Jamaican and Mexican crews. His experience is clear: Jamaica's competitiveness does not rest on being the cheapest, but on the system that surrounds its workers.

At FirstFruits, Ayres began hiring Jamaican workers in 2022. What started with 40 men has now grown to 60, with contracts extending over six months. The decision to expand was driven not by price, but by reliability. Jamaica's pre-departure orientation, rapid visa turnaround, and embedded support through liaison officers created a seamless process.

"If you do the math, Jamaica and Mexico are about the same," Ayres explained. "And that doesn't account for the added value Jamaica brings through structure and support. It's absolutely worth it."

Airfare is often cited as the cost differentiator. Yet Ayres points out that moving workers from southern Mexico to Washington State can be just as costly, sometimes more than flying workers from Kingston. Beyond flights, Jamaica eliminates hidden expenses. Workers do not need hotels during processing, as the government provides dormitory-style accommodation at no cost to employers. Documentation and visa submissions are managed centrally, ensuring that the process is streamlined and predictable.

## Beyond Paperwork: The Liaison Officers Who Stand With Workers

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This predictability translates into operational savings. Workers arrive on time, prepared, and equipped with training that reduces early attrition. For employers managing tight harvest windows, the ability to count on a labour force without unexpected delays is worth far more than shaving off a few dollars in airfare.

The difference, Ayres argues, is strategic. "I sat in on the pre-departure orientation in Kingston. No other country does that. The workers came ready, and the whole process was structured. That level of organisation saves us time and money."

For U.S. agriculture, where margins are tight and labour shortages are acute, Jamaica's value proposition is clear. It is not about cheap labour. It is about smart labour a system designed to deliver efficiency, trust, and consistency season after season.

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**Photo:** Kelly Gouge (right), District Manager at SavATree in Denver, shares a photo with Will Lapoint (left) after receiving the John Garvey 2023 Person of the Year award from the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado (ALCC).

# The Heart Behind the Harvest: Baldwin Paddyfoot's Journey

For Baldwin Paddyfoot, the journey to Pennsylvania's New Morning Farm has become more than seasonal work — it is a way to provide stability for his family and contribute to Jamaica's reputation for excellence abroad.

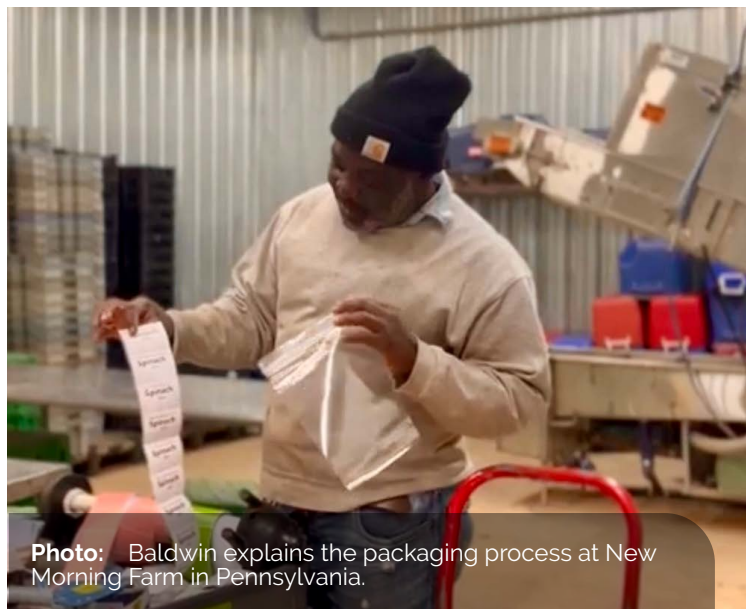
Baldwin first travelled to the United States in 2007. Since then, he has returned five times, each season reinforcing his value to the farm and deepening his understanding of what this opportunity means. The routine is familiar now: the early mornings, the long hours, the change of climate. But for Baldwin, the rewards extend far beyond the orchard rows.

"When you have the money back home ... when you go down, you can put it to use. If you need a car, if you need something, you can get it," he said. For him, this is more than wages. It is progress — the chance to invest in his household, to support his children, and to meet responsibilities that might otherwise remain out of reach.

His advice to younger workers is straightforward: "Just be respectful, do the work and everything will be fine." That philosophy has carried him through years of service and made him a reliable figure among both his peers and his employers.

At New Morning Farm, Baldwin's contribution goes beyond physical labour. His discipline and professionalism create predictability for the farm's operations. In industries like agriculture, where timing is everything, this consistency is priceless. For employers, Baldwin represents what Jamaica offers at scale: a workforce that combines skill with respect, reliability with loyalty.

Back home in Jamaica, the impact is equally profound. Workers like



**Photo:** Baldwin explains the packaging process at New Morning Farm in Pennsylvania.

Baldwin are able to channel their earnings into real improvements, homes built, families supported, and children educated. The ripple effect of each season stretches far beyond the farm, strengthening communities across the island.

Baldwin's story is one of thousands, yet it captures the heart of why Jamaica remains competitive. The country does not export labour in the abstract. It sends men and women whose discipline, pride, and quiet determination sustain farms, fuel economies, and build futures.

Behind every successful harvest is a worker like Baldwin Paddyfoot, carrying the hopes of a family, the pride of a country, and the trust of an employer. That is the true heart behind the harvest.



**Photo:** Baldwin Paddyfoot pauses for a photo at New Morning Farm in Pennsylvania.

**We want to  
hear from you!**

**The Jamaica Central Labour Organisation (JCLC)**

Annex - Embassy of Jamaica  
1812 R Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20009  
Tel: (202) 667-6190 | Mobile: (240) 429-7916  
Fax: (202) 387-0450 | Email: info@jaclo.org