

## **Interview with Maxine Hoffman, the FSPID's Chief Food Storage Inspector**

*Have you spent all your years at the FSPID in the Inspectorate and Disinfestation Unit (IDU)?*

Yes, I started as a Senior Food Storage Inspector (SFSI) in August 2013, which was unusual because SFSIs usually come up through the ranks of the IDU.

*How have things changed over the years in the IDU?*

Things have changed tremendously since I have joined the IDU. When I joined the unit, fortnightly meetings were only discussions, with no minutes or minimal minute taking. I was criticized for finding errors with the minutes and an inspector even commented in jest that "She a behave like is English class". Improvements in the unit have blossomed into well-structured minutes now being generated at every meeting.

Additionally, document control was not being done. There was inadequate record keeping, hence, traceability was a mammoth task. The IDU Procedural Manual, which now contains some eleven chapters and accompanying appendices, was just a few pages in the beginning. Staff morale was low when I joined the IDU, but as the momentum of the accreditation process increased, staff became more eager and involved and there was a boost in morale. In anything in life you will be faced with opposition, as people sometimes do not embrace change. Nevertheless, the inspection team accepted the challenges of the accreditation process and worked assiduously to make it a reality.

*What are the highs and lows in your experience since you being the Chief Food Storage Inspector in November 2018?*

One high point was in 2016 when I was part of a team that visited Belize to attend an ISO/IEC 17020 workshop. When the workshop concluded, Mr. Roy McNeil, the Chief Food Storage Officer, passed me the mantle to spearhead the accreditation process at FSPID. I was not in the capacity of Chief Food Storage Inspector at the time and as such it was an honour to have been given that responsibility.

Another high for me is when I am acknowledged for my input in improving the IDU's system.

One low for me is that, at times, we were hampered by a lack of resources and the pace of the procurement process which served to slow the accreditation programme. Despite this, we continued to and will continue to forge ahead.

*What is the most memorable moment for you?*

The most memorable moment was when I got the email from Jamaica National Agency for Accreditation (JANAAC) stating that all the findings from their assessment were finally closed out, which meant that we were now accredited for ISO/IEC 17020:2012. We were only awaiting the official document. It took some time to really “soak in” that we as a team had achieved something so important to the FSPID.

Knowing that we are the first inspection body in Jamaica to have achieved this accreditation and the first in the English-speaking Caribbean for food and feed makes me very proud. This means we are deemed competent as an inspection body that is conducting inspections according to a recognized standard. I encourage other inspection bodies in the public and private sectors in Jamaica, many of whom are already operating at international standards, to pursue accreditation as well.

*Now that you achieved ISO/IEC 17020 accreditation, what does that mean for the organization?*

This means that we are more motivated to maintain the high standard that we achieved and to continually improvement.

*Where do you see the IDU in the next five years or more?*

I see the FSPID’s IDU as an inspection body that will be the household name in Jamaica and the Caribbean at large, an organization that will a powerhouse for training in inspection activities in the region.