



JAMAICA SOCIAL INVESTMENT FUND

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JAMAICA'S HONEY PRODUCTION RECEIVES BOOST

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The Jamaica Social Investment Fund's (JSIF) Board has approved three Agricultural projects valuing \$14,835,724 under the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) project. The projects are: the Porus Entrepreneurial Group Beekeepers Marketing Strategy Training and Development in Manchester; the Middlesex Beekeepers Honey Production in St. Elizabeth and Farmers Training to be carried out by the Jamaica Exporters Association.

Both beekeeping projects are geared towards increasing the production of honey in Jamaica. More specifically, the Middlesex Beekeeper's Group objective is to produce in excess of 3,800 kg of honey annually while expanding its product offerings through value added goods such as pollen, honey wine, cosmetics and wax-based products. The Porus Entrepreneurial Group aims to achieve an 83.5% increase in sales over five years, moving from \$2.270 million in year one to \$4.166 million by year five simultaneously increasing its production of pure honey and expanding its market for bee pollen and honey comb.

The bee-keeping industry is one of eight priority areas identified by the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries for development to generate employment and export earnings under the Agricultural Development Strategy. Due to disease outbreaks and loss of hives and apiaries to hurricanes in 2004 and 2005, the number of bee farmers, and consequently, output in honey production, has been on the decline. Notwithstanding, there still remains a significant demand for honey, with the industry unable to meet neither domestic nor overseas markets.

Statistics from the Ministry of Agriculture's Data Bank and Evaluation Division show that honey production grew by 42% increasing from 117,548 gallons in 2005 to 166,522 gallons in 2008. The number of hives and production per hive also doubled over the same period. The latter increase could be attributable to modernization of the apiculture industry and governmental support.

Despite the increase in production, however, honey is still being imported to meet an increasing local demand. Data from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica show that 170 kg valued at US\$18,631 of honey was imported into Jamaica in 2009 compared with 14 kg valued at US\$4,785 in 2006.

Furthermore, Jamaica's beekeeping industry has the potential to earn approximately \$400 million annually from honey production. The local and international markets are growing considerably as consumers are becoming more health conscious. Jamaican honey is renowned for its high quality and unique flavour as the indigenous herbs that the bees draw from and put into their honey makes it distinct.

The third agricultural project approved by the JSIF Board under REDI is the Jamaica Exporters Association Farmers Training project which will provide business training and capacity building to farmers groups in the targeted parishes of Manchester and St. Elizabeth. The selected groups are drawn from applicants to the REDI project with a need to strengthen their ability to manage their projects and to improve the business side of activities.

The Rural Economic Development Initiative is a project geared towards executing small-scale agriculture and tourism community based projects in rural communities. Its main objective is to improve the earning potential of groups engaged in the business of agriculture and tourism. Examples of these groups include farmers, agro-processors, fisherfolk, higglers, exporters, horticulturalists, tour guides, tour operators, bed and breakfast operators, food providers among others.

To achieve this goal, small grants of up to US\$50,000.00 are available to implement projects of a business nature in either agriculture or tourism; while larger grants of up to US\$200,000.00 can be accessed for community projects that will benefit the agricultural and tourism businesses in the community.

REDI is financed by a loan of US\$15m from the World Bank and is being implemented by the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) on behalf of the Government of Jamaica. REDI is slated for completion in 2016.

Since January 2010, the JSIF Board has approved a total of 84 projects valuing over J\$884.9 million ranging from Agriculture & Tourism; School, Road, Health Centre Construction and Rehabilitation as well as equipping and organizational strengthening.

Additional information on the JSIF and its projects can be found on the JSIF's website at www.jsif.org

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