

Soon common Mangoes won't be so common

Santa Cruz, St Elizabeth - Little thought of common or hairy mangoes will soon take on added value if Agriculture and Fisheries Minister Christopher Tufton has his way.

"We (Ministry of Agriculture) are developing a programme which hopefully will see us establishing collection points for common mangoes in particular (and also) Number Eleven," Tufton told a recent St Elizabeth Homecoming Foundation Agriculture forum at the Sharon Baptist Church in St Elizabeth recently. Plans underway to create mango concentrate.

The Minister said he was hopeful that the new initiative would be up and running for the 2010 mango season. Mangoes ripen aplenty in the second quarter to middle months of the year.

"We will hope to buy the mangoes, take them to a central facility and juice them to create mango concentrate," Tufton said.

"As a country, we waste our mangoes and the juice of the common, stringy mangoes can be used," he said to loud applause.

"It (mango juice project) won't make you rich if you have a mango tree in your yard, but it probably can send you children to school for a week," he said.

Tufton also announced that Jamaica Exotic Flavours and Essences in Bull Savananah, South East St Elizabeth, would be among the processing points for natural juices to service the school feeding programme as recently approved by the Cabinet.

Tufton said other processing points would be Jamaica Citrus Growers and Trade Winds in St Catherine. The products are melon juice, june plum juice and orange juice.

"In the past we have imported all of those artificially flavoured drinks (for the school feeding programme). The school feeding programme worth approxi-mately \$2 billion - most of it imported and what we sought to do is to link the activities of our farmers and integrate that into the school feeding programme.

"It is healthier and of course it puts our farmers to work. Cabinet has signed off on it so negotiations are going to take place now, so in a short while we are going to be talking to farmers. Those melons that you use to throw away. those are going to be the best ones to be taken to the factory in Bull Savannah to extract the flavours. It won't be sold as expensive as the better (higher grade melons) but it will create a market for farmers," he said.

The Minister said it was expected that in the first year about 1.5m kilograms of concentrate made from local juices, would be available for the school feeding programme.