

As Jamaican as Blue Mountain

The Jamaica Intellectual Property Office (JIPO) executive director Carol Simpson that over the years, unscrupulous entities have been exploiting the name Jamaica and brand Jamaica products and they intend to put a stop to it.

Simpson said these infringements would have to be seriously addressed as they deprived Jamaican producers of earnings from their genuine products and damaged Jamaica's reputation; not to mention it discouraged Jamaican producers and created confusion in the minds of consumers.

As such, the JIPO head said they were moving to provide Geographical Indications (GIs) protection for authentic Jamaican brands such as Blue Mountain Coffee, Jamaica Jerk, and Jamaica Rum, in a move that would pave the way for registration of these products in other parts of the world, such as within the European Union.

"GIs will allow genuine authentic Jamaican products to be more easily identified locally and internationally. The introduction of GIs is a major step forward for Jamaica as we seek to protect our reputation and to identify new markets for our niche products," Simpson remarked recently as she addressed a meeting of the Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO).

Simpson used the meeting to inform local producers about GIs as a strategy to protect their products against international "copycats". She noted that over the years, the exploitation of brand Jamaica products has occurred "with little or no recourse to our people and country as a whole".

Simpson said the reason for starting with those three products was based on the fact that they had already developed an international reputation as quality Jamaican products and were already being exported all over the world.

"It's not difficult to identify those three products with Jamaica," she stated.

"It doesn't mean that we have limited ourselves. The idea is that we hope to extend the work that we have done with other products as well, such as our pimento, ginger, scotch bonnet pepper, Jamaica peppermint, thyme and scallion," she added.

The JIPO head noted that Jamaica was currently in the process of negotiating a bilateral agreement with the Swiss government in an effort to get Jamaica's GIs recognised in that region.

"What this means is that we have agreed with Switzerland that we will protect their GIs products in Jamaica, as they will protect our products in their markets." A geographical indicator is a sign used on goods that connotes a specific geographical origin and is indicative of the product's high quality and reputation. The quality and standard of the good is attributable to its place of origin. Examples of well-known GIs products include Basmati Rice from India, Champagne from France, and Havana cigars from Cuba.