

Yam in crisis

The agriculture ministry says it's moving to address a potential crisis in the yam industry after 11 shipments of the produce were rejected by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The ministry says the shipments were rejected during the period since December with the FDA citing trace amounts of CarbendazimThiophanate Methyl and Azoxystrobin.

The ministry says the US has not accepted these chemicals as post harvest treatments for yams and therefore has a zero tolerance approach.

But the agriculture ministry insists the trace amount of these chemicals is not a threat to public health.

Yams are Jamaica's largest non-traditional export with the United States accounting for approximately 75 per cent of such exports.

The ministry says the value of yam exports to the United States in 2011 was more than US\$27.7 million.

The ministry says as it moves to avert a crisis in the industry, it has set up a task force to identify the source of the problem and provide technical support to both farmers and exporters to address the concern.

The government is also reportedly working to immediately bolster the country's capacity to allow for local testing for these chemicals to minimise losses when containers are shipped.

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