

Ackee exporters make FDA green list

The 10 Jamaican food facilities which export ackee to the United States have been included on the Food and Drug Administration's 'green list'.

"This gives the entities exemption from detention of their products without physical examination and intensified surveillance," said State Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce, Sharon Ffolkes Abrahams, during her Sectoral Debate presentation on Tuesday in the House of Representatives. The Bureau of Standards Jamaica has aided in the facilities making the list through significant efforts to assist producers and exporters under the National Food Safety Modernisation Task Force, which is working to achieve compliance with the US Food Safety Modernisation Act (FSMA).

The FSMA is an amendment to the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. It provides a legislative mandate, requiring a science-based preventative control across the food-supply chain, rather than a reactive approach to food-safety problems. Ffolkes Abrahams gave the assurance that the task force and secretariat continued to provide guidance and support to food exporters to satisfy the requirements of the FSMA. The state minister is encouraging food entities to take advantage of available financial assistance to improve their operations. She said that 20 food firms were approved for grant funding in October 2012 under Caribbean Export, which is the regional trade and investment promotion agency in the African Caribbean Pacific group. Additionally, the EX-IM Bank approved and issued \$20.5 million in loans to two entities. "This left a balance of \$79.5 million in the EX-IM Bank's FSMA total loan window of \$100 million. I encourage more of our food firms to utilise this facility," she said. Ffolkes Abrahams said that the ministry was working with a number of stakeholders to facilitate the line of credit. These are the Development Bank of Jamaica; the Jamaica Exporters' Association; the Ministry of Health, Veterinary Services Division; and the Plant Quarantine Division, the Bureau of Standards Jamaica; the Scientific Research Council, Food Storage and Prevention of Infestation Division; and the Jamaica National Agency of Accreditation.