

## Local Bamboo Ketchup Now Available

As the Government moves to further the development of the bamboo industry, Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO) is currently encouraging investors to take advantage of byproducts in the sector.

Already, there is organic bamboo charcoal on the market, and the latest being the Bamboo Tomato Ketchup, which was developed by a recent university graduate, and head of Jamdun's Food Processing, Chevaughn Bowen. Several other value added products are being looked at by the Bamboo and Indigenous Materials Advisory Council (BIMAC), spearheaded by the Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ). Mr. Bowen informs JIS News that he got the idea to make the bamboo tomato ketchup while in discussion with Director of Special Projects at the BSJ, Gladstone Rose, who heads the Government's bamboo programme. He then went to China to have a firsthand look at that country's bamboo industry, and to do further expert research on the properties in the bamboo edible shoots. After he returned, he began producing the bamboo ketchup, which is available locally. The young innovator, who copped the 2010 Jamaica Manufacturers' Association (JMA) top prize for his hot and spicy barbeque fry sauce, says young people who have innovative business ideas, should ensure that they are written, and placed in the marketplace for development. 'Idea on paper is no idea at all. Putting a prototype together, and trying to get it out there in the market is best. Your idea sitting on paper, it makes no sense. I believe that everybody coming from university should have that state of mind, to become innovative,' he said. For State Minister in the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce, Hon. Sharon Ffolkes-Abrahams, the product (bamboo ketchup) is the first of its kind in the world, offering a number of vitamins. 'This is one of the products for diversification, our own bamboo indigenous ketchup. There are several things that we can do with bamboo...there is bamboo pharmaceutical, the bamboo charcoal, bamboo flooring, furniture, bamboo to feed animals, and the bamboo fabric that is in demand, fetching a high price on the world market,' she told JIS News, at the recent opening of the first bamboo charcoal factory, in Pembroke Hall, St. Mary. 'We are looking at the tourism industry, because instead of buying and selling things from other countries to our tourists, we can give them authentic Jamaican products, made in Jamaica. That is what people want when they come on a vacation,' the State Minister said. Meanwhile, Export Development Manager at JAMPRO, Marlene Porter, says the bamboo ketchup will be showcased at an upcoming business show in Montego Bay. 'The Bamboo ketchup is one of the areas where we are working with the BIMAC team, to see how we can push it more. There is significant opportunity for this product. We are looking at inviting the manufacturer to be part of the upcoming linkages event that we are having in Montego Bay, on January 21, where the hospitality sector will be coming to meet with local manufacturers. This is an excellent product that we want to showcase at the meeting,' Miss Porter said. 'JAMPRO's main role now, is to help to identify potential investors to work with (bamboo) products. There are significant opportunities here, and we need to make them happen to realize the extensive benefits that we see from the bamboo programme,' adds Ms. Porter. Chairman of the BSJ, Professor Winston Davidson, lauds the bamboo ketchup as a 'manifestation of a new industry being developed in Jamaica, and an industry which is also sustainable.' 'The product is indigenous to Jamaica, and it is also part of the strategy for decreasing the impact of climate change on the country. It (bamboo) is able to trap carbon in the atmosphere,' the Professor states. The BSJ is spearheading a bamboo development strategy to facilitate the establishment of bamboo factories in four zones across the island. Zone 1 would include Hanover, Westmoreland and St. James. These would produce bamboo board, furniture and charcoal. In Zone 2 (St. Mary, Portland and St. Thomas), factories would produce edible bamboo shoots, charcoal and preserved bamboo sticks. For Zone 3 (St. Andrew, St. Catherine and Clarendon), the factories would produce bamboo saw dust, pellets, shipping pallets, preserved bamboo yam sticks, charcoal, and water and air filters. In Zone 4 (St. Elizabeth and Manchester), factories would produce edible bamboo shoots, charcoal and preserved bamboo yam sticks. 'Inclusive development with bamboo has provided secured livelihoods for many thousands of rural producers on all continents. The same can be done for Jamaica,' Mrs. Ffolkes-Abrahams told Parliament, earlier in the year.