

Jamaican Food Products In High Demand In Canada

As the demand for Jamaican food continues to increase in global markets, six Jamaican exporters found success on a trade mission that was held from September 28 to October 2, 2015 in Toronto, Canada.

The Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO) led the Jamaican delegation on the trade mission to identify and pursue more export opportunities in the Canadian market. The mission, which resulted in initial orders of Jamaican food products valuing close to J\$4M, included Jamaican agro-processing and fresh produce exporters, Honey Bun Limited; Carita Jamaica Limited; Rio Grande Farms; Southside Distributors Limited; EG Wellness Brands & LASCO Manufacturing Limited. The companies participated in a networking forum with Canadian buyers and retailers and B2B meetings during the mission. The exporters also visited Canadian retailers and importers to get a better understanding of their competition and the demands in that market. The mission yielded positive results for the exporters, with some already receiving orders while others are in negotiations with buyers. LASCO Manufacturing, which has recently experienced a spike in its profits due to the introduction of its iCool products and other initiatives, participated in the mission to identify potential distributors for the LASCO range of products. Marjorie McCalla, Export Manager at LASCO Manufacturing Limited, said "We have been exporting to Canada for several years and there is good potential for our Jamaican food products in Canada. We are now seeking to identify a distribution partner that has the necessary resources and facilities and is committed to establishing the LASCO brand throughout Canada." Ms. McCalla said the company received positive feedback and that LASCO was able to identify potential distributors for its products, which would assist them with expanding in the market. She said, "Positive responses were received from all the companies with regard to product quality and packaging and the strength of the LASCO brand. Once a distributor has been selected, our focus will be on targeting the consumers through on-going promotional activities." Winsome Crosdale, General Manager of Rio Grande Farms Exporters, said the experience was an encouraging one, as the company was able to secure shipments of its products to Canada. She said, "It was indeed a success. I was able to build a network from this mission and gather market intelligence and the team was able to meet with some of the major distributors of fresh produce and agro-processed products. We were also given the opportunity to visit some of these distribution facilities. The buyers were excited about Jamaican fresh produce and products and there is high demand for these commodities, however, the Canadian market is quite price sensitive. I had the opportunity to access new market and to date I have done seven (7) shipments to Canada." President of The Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO), Diane Edwards was satisfied with the overall outcome of the mission. The agency has improved its market development strategy and has been working with more international private and government partners to support local SMEs that aim to export to global markets. JAMPRO has also revamped its Canadian market development programme to focus more on exporters's needs; the agency hosted capacity building seminars to educate exporters on Canada's new Food Safety requirements and has been targeting distributors and buyers in that country to provide outlets for Jamaican food products. "While the economic climate poses many challenges to our small and medium-sized exporters, we believe that there are amazing opportunities available to them in global markets. In the financial year 2014/2015, we facilitated eight international missions to increase the export of Jamaican products, and we are aiming to do more to increase the presence of Brand Jamaica in international retailers. We will be monitoring the progress of the companies that participated in the mission to Canada and will assist them with any other needs to ease the export process," Edwards explained. The recent trade mission forms part of JAMPRO's strategy to foster sustainable growth of non-traditional exports to Canada.