



European Union Grant for Rural  
Diversification and Enterprise  
Development in the Traditional Banana  
Growing Communities of Jamaica



## Development of an Agro-Tourism Industry in the Buff Bay Valley Area

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) has received funding under the European Union-Government of Jamaica Rural Diversification Programme to undertake an Agro-Tourism Project in the Buff Bay Valley of Portland. The project seeks to provide new income earning opportunities for residents in the target communities by developing tourist attractions in the Valley and establishing marketing linkages between the farmers and the hotel sector. We hope to use this project as a model for rural development in the banana belt and other communities across Jamaica.



Situated in the foothills of the Blue Mountains, the Buff Bay Valley is picturesque with hills on either side and a river running through. The area comprises caves, springs, waterfalls, picnic areas, historic buildings, some of which date back to the slavery period, and a lively Maroon culture. Residents say the valley is ideal for development into a tourist strip.

Like most rural areas the valley is largely agricultural. Originally a heavy banana producing area, coffee and a range of other crops are being cultivated as well as some livestock and bee-rearing. The Agro-Tourism project seeks to re-energise farming in these communities through establishment of new market channels.

## Main Activities of the Buff Bay Agro-Tourism Project

- Assess the places of interest, infrastructure and attitudes toward tourism in the valley
- Select certain places, trails etc. that can be packaged as tour attractions based on the current assessment. Attractions based on the natural environment, historical background and farming livelihood of the communities
- Conduct a study of the historical background of the valley
- Construct facilities for the attractions/ tours, such as tourist halt, bathroom facilities, clearing of trails, erecting signage
- Undertake training of community members to improve their capacity to manage the activities, for e.g. training in hospitality, environmental and security management, tour guiding, organizational strengthening and business management
- Guide and train selected groups of cottage agro-processors and craft-makers to improve their standards such that items for sale are available to visitors
- Work alongside the farmers to forge a marketing relationship with the hotels. This will include strengthening farmers organization, collecting data on what and how much is being grown, reviewing crop selection and assisting with good agricultural practices



*Members of the Buff Bay Valley communities and stakeholder agencies at a November Town Hall meeting in the Buff Bay Valley to discuss the project. A wide cross-section of stakeholder agencies, including the Water Resources Authority, Fire Services, Social Development Commission, National Water Commission, Blue Mountain Bicycle Tours, HEART Trust*