

# SUMMARY REPORT

## **2<sup>nd</sup> IICA/OAS AGRO TOURISM WORKSHOP** 26-28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2008

ELTHAM TRAINING CENTRE, ST. ANN



Prepared by Jonathan Burke  
Young Americas Business Trust Ltd.  
For C. Rowe & Associates Co. Ltd.

## DAY ONE

### Opening

This OAS/IICA Farmer Training Programme represents a continuation by IICA on the work and achievements of the first Agro-Tourism workshop that took place at the Gran Bahia Principe Hotel on 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007. In her opening remarks, Cynthia Currie, IICA Representative in Jamaica, stated that the challenge of the workshop was to help close the gap between the farming sector and the formal hotel sector. As such, Mrs Currie urged the participating farmers to use the workshop to enhance their commitment to produce good quality products for the hotel sector that can be delivered in a timely manner.

In addition to the presenters who mainly represented the hotel sector, the participating farmers represented the communities of Jeffrey Town in St. Mary, Elim in St. Elizabeth, Dallas in St. Andrew, and Charles Town in Portland.



*Dr. Carolyn Hayle, making a PowerPoint presentation to the workshop*

### **Tourism Consultant – Dr Carolyn Hayle**

Dr. Hayle noted the different types of tourist, types of vacations and tourist themes and their impact on farmers who wished to sell to this market. Hence, farmers should endeavour to understand the 11 vacation themes that are promoted on the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) website. The vacation themes are: Adventure, Beaches, family, Golf, Heritage, Meetings & Incentives, Sports, Spring Break, Weddings and Honeymoons, Villa Vacations and Untrodden. Dr Hayle was of the view that rural communities could create tourist culinary safari destinations which can be classified under the Untrodden theme – “untamed Jamaica” – as described by the JTB website. Hayle further suggested that farmers interested in creating such ventures consider advertising their attraction on the website.

### **Panel Discussion – What the Industry Consumer Needs and How**

Panelists – Dennis McIntosh, President of the Culinary Federation of Jamaica  
Tom Tyler, Owner – Caribbean Producers Jamaica Ltd  
Steven Sowa, Executive Chef – Half Moon Hotel  
Bill Moore, Director of Product Development – Round Hill Hotel

Tom Tyler introduced himself as a businessman who is seeking to fill a gap in the “chain” linking farmers to the major hotels, by supplying hotels with whatever they need whenever they need. Tyler proposes to set up centralised collection depots that would buy, clean and package the produce from surrounding farming communities for the hotel industry. Accordingly, the advantages would be to:

- Allow small farmers (who would not normally qualify to consistently fill a big order for a large hotel) to be able to participate in the larger hotel market.
- Enable the farmer to benefit from a reduced transportation costs as these centres will be located nearer the farms.
- Enable the farmers to benefit from the improved handling and transportation conditions offered by the Centres, as the produce would arrive at the final destination cleaned and in refrigerated trucks.
- Over time develop processing capabilities at the centres for second grade produce that do not meet hotel standards.

Tyler informed that discussions were being held with Minister Tufton, with a start up date and the locations still to be decided.

Mr. Sowa stated categorically that chefs in Jamaican hotels preferred Jamaican grown produce because the taste and flavours are vastly superior to those flown in from abroad, and chefs generally prefer to use fresh food. Mr. Sowa also encouraged the farmers to explore the production of non-traditional produce, especially herbs such as:

- Cilantro
- Basil
- Oregano
- Dill
- Chives
- Rosemary
- Lemons
- Watercress

Mr. McIntosh added to this list, by pointing to hotel demand for broccoli, celery, mushrooms and snap peas.

Mr. McIntosh stressed the importance of the farmer being able to have a sense of the end-product. This in essence, spoke to the heart of the workshop, “how to create a supply chain from the soil to the plate?” According to Mr. McIntosh, any attempt to create this chain must recognise the importance of having each link of the chain fully appreciative of

the necessity and importance of every other link in the supply chain. Therefore, it is necessary for channels of communication to be built between the chefs and the farmers. Farmers must know what produce chefs requires and chefs must know what products are in season and when. For example, if there are no pineapples for the Pineapple Upside-down cake then perhaps in season mangoes will do just as well.

Mr. Bill Moore felt that farmers needed to find a way to “add value” to the product to meet the needs of the hotel sector. Whether this is done through an appropriate middle man or better mechanisation, the point is that the hotels are not interested in problems farmers face in getting the product to them; they simply need to have the products. Farmers needed to be able to get past the various hurdles to create a lasting supply chain that can in turn create a “contemporary Caribbean Cuisine”. This Caribbean Cuisine will entice tourists to come to and come back to the Caribbean, and as is the goal of the hotel chefs, allow the tourist to feel that they have really “tasted” Jamaica.

### **Farmers Response and Plenary Discussion**

During the discussion, the farmers highlighted the various activities that were being undertaken in their respective communities. They are listed below:

The **Jeffrey Town** Farmers Association, represented by Mr. Wordsworth Gordon, reported that the Association was presently completing a two story building for the community. The building will accommodate an internet café and a processing plant for dasheen chips and fruit juice, as well as space for storage for farm produce.

The **Elim** farming community was represented by Mr. Keith Adams. He commented that historically it has been difficult to organise the farmers in the community. He said that his community was presently concentrating on the production of peanut, hot peppers and some sweet corn.

Mr. Garfield McNaughton representing **Dallas** said that his community had received funding from USAID for a greenhouse but was experiencing difficulty finding a suitable location due to the slope of the land. It is expected that a tunnel greenhouse will be erected.

The **Charles Town** community was represented by Mr. Richard Irving and Mr. Philbert McLeary, President of the Charles Town Bee Keeper’s Association. The community has partnered with the Bio-Technology Centre of the University of The West Indies in a pilot project to grow plants that can be used in the nutraceutical industry. IICA has been instrumental in setting up several bee hives in the community. However, the lack of facilities from good roads to product development and storage facilities greatly hampers the expansion of farming for the community.

In response to the presentations, the Farmers showed interest in the collection depots, discussed by Mr. Tyler and indicated an interest in establishing processing plants in their communities. The farmers also pointed to the need for:

- Appropriate mechanisation
- Storage at the community level
- Education focused on developing the mental attitude of the farmer
- Help with the provision of proper infrastructure
- Information on the needs of hotel chefs

Noting the issue of mechanisation, Mr. Tyler emphasised the importance of rational use of technologies to enable farming communities to compete with foreign grown produce. One such application of technology is greenhouse production, which provides a more controlled working environment and allows the farmer to better determine the costs of production and thereby stabilise prices.

Mr. Downie Walker, a member of the Jamaica Greenhouse Growers Association, told the group of the enormous potential in greenhouse production, particularly as it scientifically addresses the concerns of the hotel market with regard to quality, reliability, predictability and stability of pricing. Presently, the Association has 92 members operating 130 greenhouses with sizes ranging from 3,000 ft<sup>2</sup> to 6,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. The growers apply various production methods, for example: planting directly in soil or using non-soil, stacked beds of cover or small pebbles.

Walker said that sales from greenhouse production could range from \$70,000 weekly to \$700,000 weekly. He also noted that it is possible to accurately cost a product in the greenhouse, whereas there is considerable difficulty in establishing a unit cost in the field due to multiple variables. For example, the cost for Romaine lettuce is \$20/lb, whilst its sales price is \$70/lb.

Alongside technology, Tyler said, is the need for proper infrastructure and planning that can lead to processing to add value to farmers' produce. He reminded the workshop that demand for farm produce is constantly growing, noting that four more large hotels will be opened in Jamaica this year.

The issue of the middle-man and trust was raised, with the farmers citing incidents of buyers manipulating the market to push down the price of produce.

## **DAY TWO**

### **Opening Discussion**

Following on the previous day's discussion, the workshop participants addressed the crops that were most needed by the hotel industry. Mr. McIntosh urged the farmers to vary the variety of locally grown produce. For example, give consideration to growing the "Cherry Tomato" which has been known to fetch \$200/lb in the market or even the "Teardrop Tomato" that can fetch as much as \$400/lb.

Mr. McIntosh went on explain the process of determining the type of food to be served in the hotel, which demonstrated to the farmers the substantial weight of the chef in deciding what produce the hotels buy. Thus, the issue of communication between chefs and farmers was reiterated.

Mr. McLeary, from Charles Town, suggested the establishment of a formal relationship between the farmers associations and the Chef's Association. However, uncertainty remained over which farmers association to use and how to establish a formal relationship. After further discussion, the farmers decided to create a network using IICA as the hub to maintain communication. The farmers would work within their communities to improve the farm product and use the network to build on the lessons learned at the workshop and develop linkages with the hotels and each other.

### **Creative Cooking with the Hotel Chefs**

The day's main event comprised the demonstrations on using traditional produce to create unusual dishes. Mr. McIntosh reminded the farmers of the chefs' continuous search for new ways to create the "wow" effect for the tourist. With this in mind, he proceeded to prepare ackee soup, ackee and tomato topping for the brochettes, ackee butterfly pasta and ackee pizza.

He was followed by Mr. Anthony Miller, Executive Chef at Gran Lido Braco, who used peanut – a fruit widely used in Ghana – to prepare a variety of dishes including peanut sauce over fired boneless chicken.

The cooking exhibition provided a unique and memorable experience for the farmers, who were impressed by the creative dishes.



*Ackee topped brochettes*



*Ackee butterfly pasta in the making*



*Mr. Dennis McIntosh,  
President of Culinary  
Association of Jamaica*



*Anthony Miller pours  
peanut sauce over fried  
boneless chicken served  
on bamboo skewers.*

## **DAY THREE**

### **Sunset Grande Ocho Rios**

Store Manager, Mr. Romeo McIntyre, explained the hotel's food procurement process to group of farmers, noting that the hotel received 1,000kg of vegetable produce every day. The participants were able to observe a delivery of local and foreign produce. The Concierge Chef, who oversaw the receipt of produce, stated that the delivery process had to be extremely efficient given the volume of vegetables purchased every day. Using the carrot as an example, he explained that processors who to wash, clean cut and dice an assortment of vegetables cannot waste time cutting cleaning and scraping a carrot with a number of phalanges of different shapes. He noted that the carrots in Jamaica grow the phalanges because they are grown in rocky soil.

Despite the tedious pre-preparation process for vegetables, the Concierge Chef said the hotel would not purchase pre-cleaned vegetables as it needed to keep a firm control on the quality of produce they manage.

Mr. McIntyre advised farmers interested in supplying the hotel, to start by selling to a large supplier. The farmers would gain credibility if they were able to supply on a regular basis, and thus be in a better position to eventually negotiate to sell directly with the hotel. The hotel will only purchase from farmers who meet their standards and can handle their demands consistently.

### **Walkerswood Factory & Farm Tour**

The workshop participants toured the farm and shared notes with farmers in the field tending the crops. The farm comprised a tunnel greenhouse and open-field production. Some of the farmers were being introduced to greenhouse production for the first time and expressed amazement at the size of the produce.

The factory tour demonstrated the possibilities that can be generated from starting small but with a good product, a good work ethic and a solid vision.

## CONCLUSION

The farmers ended the workshop professing to build on the relationships created and to use the information that they have been exposed to throughout the workshop to move their farming businesses to the next level.

Collectively the workshop believed that a revolution was necessary in the minds of the farmers if agriculture was to move to a level where a positive impact can be seen on a national economic level.

Whilst it was clear that tremendous assistance with tools and the building and maintaining of proper roads was needed. It also became clear that the Government of Jamaica did not have a budget that could help every farmer. So the farmers soon realised that they could only depend on themselves.

Given IICA's previous assistance some of these communities, the farmers requested that IICA/OAS examine ways in which the farmers could build on the exposure afforded to them through their interaction with the Agro-tourism workshops. Many have projects that have been inspired by the agro-tourism concept, and further project funding is needed to assist and track the development of these fledgling businesses.

## APPENDIX I

### Participants List

| <b>Name</b>                    | <b>Community/ Organisation</b> |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Dr. Carolyn Hayle              | C. Rowe & Assoc. Ltd.          |
| Mr. Bill Moore                 | Round Hill Hotel               |
| Mr. Tom Tyler                  | Caribbean Producers Ja. Ltd    |
| Mr. Steve Sowa                 | Half Moon Hotel                |
| Mr. Anthony Miller             | Grand Lido Braco               |
| Mr. Downie Walker              | Green-House Growers Assoc.     |
| Mr. Wordsworth Gordon          | Jeffrey Town                   |
| Mr. Livingstone                | Jeffrey Town                   |
| Mr. Joseph Evans               | Jeffery Town                   |
| Mr. Gavin Brown                | Jeffrey Town                   |
| Mr. Garfield McNaughton        | Dallas                         |
| Mr. Lester Hibbert             | Dallas                         |
| Mr. Dolphy Powell              | Dallas                         |
| Ms. Kayon Henry                | Dallas                         |
| Mr. Keith Adams                | Elim                           |
| Mrs. Pamela Turner             | Elim                           |
| Mr. Duet Gayle                 | Elim                           |
| Mrs. Turner's Elder Daughter   | Elim                           |
| Mrs. Turner's Younger Daughter | Elim                           |
| Mr. Joslyn McKenzie            | Elim                           |
| Mr. Richard Irving             | Charles Town                   |
| Mr. Andre White                | Charles Town                   |
| Mr. Raymond White              | Charles Town                   |
| Mr. Philbert McLeary           | Charles Town                   |
| Mr. Melvin Laidlaw             | Charles Town                   |
| Mr. Richard Marsh              | White River                    |
| Mr. Jonathan Burke             | YABT                           |

## APPENDIX II Programme

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| <b>Wednesday March 26<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>Moderator Bill Moore</b>  |
| 8:30 – 8.15 am<br>IICA                 | Welcoming remarks from <b>Mrs. Cynthia Currie</b> , Country Representative   |
| 8:30- 10 am                            | Presentation by <b>Dr. Carolyn Hayle, IICA Consultant</b>  |
| 10- 10:30 am                           | Break  |
| 10:30- 12:30pm                         | Panel Presentation – <u>What the Industry Consumer needs and How</u> ,<br><b>Dennis McIntosh</b> , President of Culinary Federation of Jamaica; <b>Tom Tyler</b> , Owner, CPJ Jamaica Ltd; <b>Steven Sowa</b> , Executive Chef Half Moon; <b>Bill Moore</b> , Director Product for Product Development, Round Hill Hotel |
| 12:30 – 2:00 pm                        | Lunch with discussion  |
| 2:00 pm-3:30                           | Round Table group discussion with facilitators <b>Bill Moore, Dr. Hayle</b> and <b>Dennis McIntosh</b> with like minded farmers  |
| 3:30-4:00 pm                           | Break  |
| 4:00 – 5:00 pm                         | Round table group facilitators report back – recommendation consolidation. Issues identified moderated by <b>Dr. Hayle</b> and <b>Bill Moore</b>   |
| <b>Thursday March 27<sup>th</sup></b>  | <b>Moderator Dennis McIntosh</b>   |
| 8:30 – 10:00 am                        | Review of Day One and evaluative discussion Jonathan <b>Burke/ Bill Moore</b>  |
| 10:00 – 10:30 am`                      | Break  |
| 10:30 – 11:30 am                       | Demonstration of creative ways of preparing Mango – <b>Chef Kevin Broderick</b> , Executive Chef, Rock House, Negril.  |
| 11:30 – 12:30 pm                       | Demonstration on creative ways of preparing breadfruit – <b>Chef Kevin Broderick</b> , Executive Chef, Rock House, Negril.   |
| 12:30 – 2:00 pm                        | Lunch  |
| 2:00- 3:00 pm                          | Demonstration on creative ways of preparing Ackee – <b>Chef McIntosh</b> , President of Culinary Federation of Jamaica.  |
| 3:00 – 4:00 pm                         | Demonstration of creative ways of preparing corn and /or Ground Nuts, <b>Chef Anthony Miller</b> , Executive Chef, Grand Lido Braco.   |
| 4:00 – 5:00 pm                         | Group discussion/ Conclusions, Moderated by <b>Dennis McIntosh</b>   |
| <b>Friday March 28<sup>th</sup></b>    | Visit to area hotel to view receiving practices – Sunset Grande Ocho Rios TBA; lunch and Factory tour at Walkerswood – <b>Jonathan Burke</b>   |