

Jamaican Firms Bid To Enter The Dominican Republic Market

During the period 11-13 September 2013, Caribbean Export Development Agency, assisted 20 Caribbean firms, the majority of whom were from Jamaica (14 firms), in their effort to explore trade opportunities with the Dominican Republic (DR). Other participating firms included those from St. Lucia, Grenada, Guadeloupe and Haiti.

The initiative was executed within the framework of the EU funded 10th European Development Fund Regional Private Sector Development Programme and was geared towards the promotion of stronger trade and investment relations between CARICOM and the Dominican Republic.

The trade mission was a collaborative effort, executed with the support of Jamaica Promotions Ltd. (JAMPRO), (represented on the mission by Ms. Berletta Forrester, Export Promotions Manager), the Centre for Export and Investment in the DR (CEI-RD) and the Chamber of Commerce in Santiago, Dominican Republic.

The launch of the mission was officiated by Mr. Cesar R. Dargam Espillat, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs with responsibility for Economic and Commercial Negotiations in the DR Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The mission also received support from Ms. Leela Ramoutar, Private Sector Specialist with the CARICOM Secretariat and Mr. Kelvin Kerr, CARICOM officer in the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce of Jamaica.

The initiative sought to, among other things, explore opportunities for increased trade between Jamaica and the DR through public/private sector dialogue, the execution of Business to Business meetings; establish relationships between the key Business Support Organisations (BSOs) on the mission, including JAMPRO and the Jamaica Manufacturers' Association with their counterparts in the DR including the Chamber of Commerce and Production of Santo Domingo (CCPSD), the Dominican Association of Industries (AIRD), The Dominican Agro-industrial Council (JAD) and the National Enterprise Council (CONEP); and advance the implementation of the CARICOM-DR Free Trade Agreement.

While addressing the delegates in an opening dialogue attended by representatives from the DR Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the DR Centre for Export and Investment (CEI-RD), Vice-Minister Dargam expressed that "Our market represents a great opportunity for CARICOM business persons; we are not competitors...rather we are partners as we seek a strategic alliance that will provide greater opportunities for all...We want products of both the Dominican Republic and CARICOM be part of a value chain that will allow our countries and our entrepreneurs to be more competitive in the world market".

More than 35 Business to Business meetings were coordinated by Caribbean Export in Santo Domingo during the period 11-12 September.

The firms were taken to supermarket tours in the city to allow for an evaluation of competitive products currently in the market and participated in a private dialogue with the Jamaican Embassy in the DR. On 13 September, the participants took part in Expo Cibao, which is an annual trade fair that is held in Santiago, the Dominican Republic, focused on the promotion of the agro-industry and construction sectors. Approximately 25 business meetings were coordinated at the fair providing support to Caribbean firms seeking to source raw materials and/ or other products from that market.

"It is our aim to model this approach in the remaining period under the 10th EDF by facilitating missions to the DR by the private sector in other CARICOM countries, as well as facilitating missions of the DR private sector into CARICOM markets of interest," notes Mr. Oliveira, Deputy Executive Director, Caribbean Export. "The advantage we bring as an Agency to firms in the region is the ability to make the necessary first introductions, opening doors so that firms can begin the process of negotiations."

Participating companies included: (From Jamaica) Wynlee Trading, Crimson Dawn Manufacturing Company, West Indies Gypsum Company, Federated Pharmaceutical, Jamaica Fiberglass Producers, EdgeChem Jamaica, GK Foods & Services, Honey Bun, Falcom Marketing, Paramount Trading, Sun Island Jamaica, Honeykist Apiaries, Bio-Tech R&D Institute, Isratech Jamaica. (From Grenada) West Indies Spices ; (from Haiti) Signa Haiti; (from St. Lucia) Renwick & Company; (From Guadeloupe) Kisale, Naturels Cosmetiques.