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MEDIA RELEASE

Tobago Agro-Processors Look To Canadian Market

Scarborough, Tobago Thursday 26th January, 2017: SMALL and medium-sized agro-processors in Tobago will get the opportunity to explore the viability of exporting their products to Canada when that country's Trade Facilitation Office (TFO) leads a workshop for businesses interested in penetrating the Canadian marketplace.

The workshop, which takes place on Thursday, February 2, will offer participants information on the Canadian market, intelligence on specific sector opportunities and guidance on relevant issues, ranging from how to connect to Canadian importers and the standards and requirements that products need to meet.

The export initiative is supported by the High Commission of Canada, the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), the Tobago Agro Processors Association, and exporTT. The venue is Rovanel's Resort, with the session taking place from 9 am to 12 noon.

"We are pleased to collaborate with TFO Canada and our partners in Trinidad and Tobago to arrange this seminar for Tobago agro-processors," said Mrs. Carla Hogan Rufelds, Canada's High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago. "There is significant potential among Tobagonian entrepreneurs and we hope this workshop will help position them to launch their products into the Canadian market."

Assemblyman Joel Jack, Secretary of the Division of Finance and Enterprise Development (DFED), explained that the outreach initiative fell squarely within the THA's stated mission to expand market opportunities for the island's growing business sector. "Canada has a large population of Caribbean people, including, of course, Trinidad and Tobago, which offers a sustainable niche market for our agro-processors. We are happy to facilitate this significant initiative which we believe can lead to major growth in Tobago's agro-processing sector, and mainstream agriculture, in general," Jack said.

Founded in 1980, the non-profit TFO Canada promotes sustainable economic development through export information, advice and contact. It facilitates access to the Canadian marketplace and shares Canadian trade expertise for the benefit of smaller male-and female-owned businesses wishing to export to Canada. TFO Canada delivers its trade information, advice and contact services through a team of Canadian-based project professionals and a network of over 40 associates from around the globe. They include experts in a wide range of trade-related activities, including sector-specialists for the Canadian import market, trade trainers, and product development and marketing advisors.

Tricia Beckles, Strategic Business Development Manager, Business Development Unit, DFED, explained the Unit's role in facilitating the workshop: "The Business Development Unit (BDU) is charged with the responsibility of fostering sustainable development of the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector on the island. This involves provision of grants, loans, and support services including training, networking, and exploration of opportunities for growth on the island. This project is another step in the

ongoing collaboration between the Government of Canada and the Tobago House of Assembly, both directly and indirectly through the Caribbean Local Economic Development Project, that has seen support and training provided to agro-processors and other areas of the Division of Finance. It will provide local agro-processors the necessary information and access to networks/resources that will help to facilitate possible export of goods and services to Canada.”

Beckles said the initiative will provide another avenue for access to an external market in keeping with the Division’s mandate of providing opportunities for export, and providing the necessary support to allow producers to take advantage of these opportunities.

Participants at the workshop will receive training that will help them to tailor their products and services for their target markets. They will also be able to interact with officials of Canada’s trade office on a one-on-one basis.

Meanwhile, the BDU has identified a number of support initiatives for entrepreneurs in Tobago to grow their business. These include the Trade and Investment Convention (TIC) 2017, training and support in fashion, social media, and agro-processing, outreach to schools and communities, business incubator support, the Enterprise Assistance Agricultural Grant and the Working Capital Assistance Facility.

PHOTO CAPTION

TobagoExport: Tobagonian agro-processors will benefit from the export workshop facilitated by the THA’s Division of Finance and Enterprise Development.