

H2K AGRO COLLABORATION IN JAMAICA

Research on All Natural Bio-Stimulant to Boost Crop Production

By Douglas McIntosh March 3, 2014

Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Hon. Roger Clarke (left), greets Director of International Marketing for Vitazyme, Robert Haduk (centre), during a stakeholders seminar at the Agriculture Ministry's Research Station at Bodles, Old Harbour, St. Catherine, in January. Mr. Clarke was guest speaker at the sensitization forum which was held under the theme: 'Improving Crop Production, Increasing Productivity'. Looking on is Director of Latin American and Caribbean Operations for the product, Dr. Juan Carlos Diaz. + Photo: JIS Photographer

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is to lead a series of research on a new all natural bio-stimulant formulation, Vitazyme. The exercise, slated to commence this month (March), will entail extensive field trials to determine Vitazyme's potential to enhance soil composition and boost crop output. The Ministry's consideration of Vitazyme is consistent with the Government's strategic priority of job creation and economic growth.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is to lead a series of research on a new all natural bio-stimulant formulation, Vitazyme, being considered for introduction in the agricultural sector.

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Manufactured by the United States-based firm, Vital Earth Resources Incorporated, Vitazyme is an organic/all-natural liquid growth formulation which, when applied to the roots of crops, such as fruits, vegetables, and small grains, improves their yield and quality.

Vitazyme, which contains approximately 12 biological activators, is described as a safe, non-toxic solution for usage in modern agricultural practices. Its properties include: vitamins, enzymes, and other powerful but gentle growth stimulators, such as B-vitamins, triacontanol, glycosides, brassinosteroids, and porphyrins.

Its introduction in Jamaica is being pursued in light of the significant success it has recorded in countries such as Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

The Ministry's consideration of Vitazyme is consistent with the Government's strategic priority of job creation and economic growth, focusing on development and growth of key productive sectors, such as agriculture; and to achieve food security.

Vitazyme is being distributed across the Caribbean through a partnership between Vital Earth Resources and a Canadian entity, Health 2000 Canada, Incorporated, with the regional office of the latter's agricultural division, Health 2000 Agro (H2K Agro), doing the distribution.

Director General in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Don McGlashan, tells JIS News that discussions were initiated between Portfolio Minister, Hon. Roger Clarke and representatives of H2K Agro, during which they presented data on the successful results of Vitazyme's application in other countries.



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"The technology appeared 'sound' in its application for Jamaica, and looking at reports from work done in Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, and as far away as Vietnam and the Philippines, there were enough testimonials...which suggested Vitazyme can be an important tool for use in Jamaica's agriculture," he points out.

Subsequent to the meetings, he says Mr. Clarke requested that the necessary correspondence and follow-ups be undertaken to determine the feasibility of introducing Vitazyme in Jamaica. The Director General informs that activities, to this end, have been planned and are slated for roll-out by March.

Mr. McGlashan says the research and trials will be spearheaded by the Ministry's Research and Development Division, and its Soil Health Technical Working Group; as well as the Sugar Industry Research Institute (SIRI).

He tells JIS News that the Working Group's membership comprises representatives of the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA); International Centre for Environmental and Nuclear Sciences (ICENS); the Rural Physical Planning Unit; Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), and farmers.

The Director General informs that several short-term projects will be implemented, spanning six-month periods, initially involving vegetable farmers. Additionally, he says trials involving fruit trees will also be conducted, pointing out that these will span a longer duration, ranging up to two years.

Noting that trials will be "multi-locational," Mr. McGlashan says several farmers have already been identified, with at least two on-farm trials slated for New Forrest/Duff House, Manchester; and Bog Walk, St. Catherine. He advises that dialogue is continuing with other farmers to ensure a "greater level of participation."

He explains that farmer selection is based on registration with RADA, and "having a track record of participation in on-farm trials/demonstration plots."

"Farmer participation is critical and several of the trials will be conducted on farmers' holdings with supervision from the Ministry," he notes.

The Director General says SIRI will also initiate trials involving sugarcane, while the College of Agriculture, Science and Education (CASE), in Portland, have confirmed that they will be participating in the trials.

"If the experiments with Vitazyme are successful, the Ministry's role would be to provide the data and technical guidance, so that farmers can make informed decisions regarding the usage of Vitazyme in their production inputs," he says.

To heighten stakeholder awareness, Mr. McGlashan tells JIS News that the Ministry has started a sensitization programme, particularly targeting farmers. The first seminar was held in January at its Research Station in Bodles, Old Harbour, St. Catherine.

That seminar was attended by the Minister, representatives from Health 2K Agro, Vital Earth Resources, CASE, fertilizer and farm suppliers, and farmers, all of whom made presentations. The Director General says other fora are slated for later this year.

Mr. McGlashan informs that the overseas representatives and other stakeholders were taken on field trips to farms in St. Elizabeth to interface with farmers, to observe local farming practices, "and to get first-hand knowledge of what obtains in Jamaica's agriculture."

Regarding distribution, Vitazyme's Jamaica Country Manager, Donovan Brown, advised stakeholders at the seminar that the product is currently available only for trials, and confirmed that H2K Agro has the necessary inventory to supply Jamaica.

Meanwhile, Mr. McGlashan assures that the Ministry will continue its stakeholder sensitization activities, to include inputs from RADA's Extension Service, to ensure that "our farmers are exposed to the latest information and modern technological innovations."

This should boost Jamaica's agricultural output and, in the process, reduce the country's nearly US\$1 billion annual food import bill, and safeguard the nation's nutrition and food security.