

Meats and Dairy Products integration into Agrotourism and community Enterprise Activities promoted by the Caribbean Broilers Group of Companies

–Donald Keith Amiel, Head of Corporate Affairs CB Group, Jamaica

The CB Group is associated with the production of 48:00kg per year of chicken meat per head of Jamaican population. This translates, to the marketing of 2.7 million kg of product every 7 days, enough to afford every member of the population two pounds of chicken and to supply all the needs of the Jamaican Tourist industry. As the biggest pork and commercial egg producers, we contribute to the provision of 10 kg of pork per person and the marketing of 16 million dozen table eggs. The company partners with Nestle, the biggest food trader, to promote the drinking of more milk. The dairy farmers are supported with the provision of cattle and small ruminant semen and embryos in an effort to grow the industry to supply the 40 million pounds of ‘milk equivalent,’ representing the country’s annual needs for dairy products.

Our production of crops utilizes the ‘mother farm’ and ‘agro-park cluster’ structures. We supply the seedlings from our propagators to small farms that number up to 200. Nothing is produced that cannot be marketed. Farmers are currently growing Scotch bonnet peppers, onions, sweet potatoes, sorrel, and sweet corn. Our mother farm is currently the biggest producer of Sea Island cotton in the Caribbean. The latter product is sent to Europe to be yarned into high-end garments for elite travelers. A team of technical extension officers work in the field to ensure that quality standards are met. All our facilities are GAP, HACCP and ISO certified. The ready products are brought into our central processing facility on our mother farm to be graded, weighed, packaged and delivered to supermarkets and hotels directly, or sold to ‘higglers’, who make their way back to the parish markets and villages. In this way losses are minimized and the delivery of fresh produce on a consistent and predicable basis is assured.

Our Poultry Processing plant is well advanced, at our ‘Imagination’ farm location, to becoming one of the biggest and most modern in the CARICOM. Similarly the Pork processing plant at Copperwood in Hanover, just outside of Negril, produces most of the ham, bacon sausages and fresh pork for the general population and tourist industry. (COPPERWOOD Farms in Hanover walked away with three awards at the recently concluded National Quality Awards organized by the Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ). A wide variety of convenience foods are fabricated. The incorporation of our herbs and spices go towards the creation of ‘jerk products’ that every tourist must taste to verify that he has done something Jamaican. It should be noted that small farmers produce approximately 30% of all the chicken and pork on the island. We have found creative and innovative ways to present our spiced cuisine to the world with the full involvement of the villages and communities across the island. Road side kiosks will normally offer curried goat, jerked chicken and pork and ackees with corned pork. Numerous festivals have been created during which culinary skills are pitted against each other in fierce and spirited competitions. The following are the ones for which we can claim responsibility.

- **The Pan Chicken competition** starts at village level. Barbecues are made out of oil drums slit long ways into two parts and fitted with a grille. They are usually painted in the CB’s colors as are the aprons

and caps handed out to all the participants. Both men and women participate in a cook-off to see who will be selected from amongst them to advance to the regional and then the national finals. The Festival takes on the texture of a garden party that increases to thousands at the regional cook-offs on the beaches of Montego Bay, Folly or Boston Bay in Port Antonio and the waterfront on Kingston Harbor. Stage shows and reggae concerts are integral to each event. The finale usually on the waterfront or at the National Stadium will show off all the winners in a massive barbecue extravaganza involving up to one hundred kiosks. The event climaxes with fireworks at midnight. We promote sustainability by training participants in book keeping and accounting and general agribusiness principles. They get to keep their barbecue pan aprons and caps. They set themselves up in locations across the country and do very well serving those who pass through.

- **The Devon House** caper is billed by the Jamaica Observer as “The Caribbean's Premier Culinary Experience”. They explained that: ‘Twenty-one years ago, The Jamaica Observer Table Talk Food Awards sought to make a statement that food in Jamaica was worthy of recognition. Our statement then, as it is now, is that there is a world of creativity and excellence in food. Back then, there was one important element missing - there was no vehicle to applaud the efforts of the hundreds of thousands of people who work in the food industry. Since then, Jamaica Observer has helped shape, redefine and develop the local food industry with its marquis event - the Table Talk Food Awards.’ Our CB products have occasionally featured in the Observer Awards at Devon House in Kingston.

- **“Jamaica Food & Drink Festival (JFDF) is regarded by CB as their premier event. As explained by a journalist:** Over a 9-day span late each October, the city transforms, taking a complete departure from the ordinary to extraordinary. The Jamaican Food and Drink Festival comprise seven entirely-unique and unforgettable themed-events hosted at seven iconic venues, including a formal capstone affair at the palatial residence of Jamaica’s Prime Minister, Andrew Holness. More than 50 acclaimed domestic and international chefs are selected to lead the festival in collaboration alongside a series of cicerones, sommeliers, and spirit experts. Together with the support of elected officials, national celebrities, local media and volunteers by the hundreds – this collective prepares for months with a distinct, energetic sense of urban grit, delivering fusions of regional and international cuisine, and an experience unlike any other on this side of the Atlantic or the next.

This grand celebration commences with an extravaganza appropriately-coined, “Pork Palooza.” Affectionately-speaking, this is Jamaica’s “Jack Daniels,” “American Royal” and “Memphis in May” rolled into a single winner-take-all event – a competition-style food fiesta enticing attendees with whole hog as ado by the campfire, creative servings of crisp pork belly, slowly smoked, fall-from-the-bone pork shoulder, and tender-to-the-touch baby back ribs smothered in sweet and spicy homemade barbecue. While the public most covets the pork, teams of chefs prepare all year for the opportunity to be awarded the prize of “Top Hog,” the distinction of Jamaica’s top pit master.

Over the days following, thousands of folks will enjoy events ranging from a Master Chef wine and delicacy pairing, complete with awe-inspiring, panoramic cityscape views, to an exotic east greets west affair called, “Chopstix,” which is a cornucopia of Asian-Caribbean fusion hosted in Kingston’s Zen Gardens. The largest event in the series is street fare-inspired “Meet Street & Market” in Historic Downtown, with food trucks galore lining the waterfront, live bands jamming into the late hours of the evening and families from all walks enjoying a fun-filled night of friendly entertainment.

But, my two favorite events were undoubtedly, “Crisp” and “Picante.” Held on back-to-back evenings, the former is an escape of gluttonous indulgence, hosted Oceanside and fueled by DJs bumping the best of 80’s pop and rock music. Nearly a dozen chefs prepared juicy pan-fried tenderloin, sweet scotch bonnet-glazed crispy chicken, deep fried lobster skewers, and fish tacos dusted with the perfect balance of spice and seasonings – all washed down by a near infinite offering of local and regional beers. The latter whisked its guests to a fairy tale-like Moroccan-themed event hosted in a stone walled castle-like setting called, “The Ruins.” Here the heat turned up with hot dance beats, stylish attire and fiery dishes, both savory and sweet, complimented by Jamaica’s finest mixologists pouring creative cocktails and smooth, locally-crafted rum. It’s sincerely incredible.

This year’s event takes place from the 25th October to the 3rd November 2019

- **Denbigh Show** is our largest agribusiness show in the Caribbean that attracts visitors from across the region. It sees us promoting youth in agribusiness throughout the country. Our technical service team competes in cattle and small ruminant judging. They are the current champions in sheep and goat production. They train small farmers in artificial insemination and embryo transfer technology in an effort to increase local goat production. We sponsor the National Farm Queen competition, when over 100 young females parade their skills, supported by the rural communities. Fourteen Parish Queens, one for each parish, are selected. The national farm queen is chosen from the fourteen to be crowned Miss Jamaica Farm Queen at Denbigh. We further support the champion small farmer competition and select the top six to help with development of their businesses. The company donates a Roger Clarke Scholarship to the college of Agriculture, Science and Education when four students are in different stages of pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Agriculture. They are expected to work in the rural communities for a period.

- **CB Sponsors the annual Minard livestock show** in Browns Town (birthplace of Harry Belafonte) above the north coast. The show facility was created by the Jamaica Livestock Association for the Duke of Edinburgh’s Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth exposition, which he attended, many years ago. It is now used to showcase the tropically adapted four Jamaica breeds of cattle, developed from Dr Thomas Lecky’s work, as well as goats. Some 6000 school children doing agriculture are entertained along with interested visitors. They are treated to steak from bullocks roasted by rotating whole carcasses over an open wood fire.

Whereas the management systems utilized to produce meats are amongst the most modern in the region and would be interesting to tour, biosecurity considerations render them out of bounds to strangers who may unwittingly carry disease agents on their cloth or general person. Jamaica is literally a 'notifiable disease' free country. Serious problems such as Avian Influenza and African swine fever could effectively sink us. The same applies to plants such as coffee, cocoa, coconuts and ginger that are important to us. This means that farm tours have to be carefully managed to safeguard these entities. Ways need to be found to sustain alternative tourism treks through our fascinating countryside.

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