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Regional

St Lucia to revitalise honey industry

By: Nationnews September 4, 2019

CASTRIES – St Lucia is moving to revitalise its honey industry after the island's honey cluster development plan has been successful in securing funding.

A government statement said that the apiary industry has great financial potential and Export St Lucia and the Ministry of Agriculture with assistance from Compete Caribbean have initiated a plan to develop and grow the industry.

"We welcomed this initiative as it provided invaluable capacity building for St Lucia. It also brought about funding which will assist in the development and growth of the Apiary Industry, a very potent industry, one which is growing globally, especially with the health conscious," said Export St Lucia chief executive officer, Sunita Daniel.

"Our desire is to increase production of high quality natural honey which is export ready and globally competitive. We are extremely thankful to all the stakeholders for their hard work and especially Compete Caribbean for this initiative," she added.

Apiculture, the more technical term for beekeeping, is the maintenance of bee colonies, commonly in man-made hives. The honey produced in the hives is harvested and used by various sectors including food and beverage, cosmetics and health and wellness.

The statement said that the by-products of honey production are also very valuable. "Apitoxins and bee-venom are used in the treatment of many nerve-borne illnesses; flower pollen and royal jelly are used by men as aphrodisiacs; beeswax is used a lot by cosmetologists.

Earlier this year, Export St Lucia said that some regional Business Support Organizations (BSO's) and private sector businesses were the beneficiaries of a cluster development training programme by Compete Caribbean that was designed to increase the capacity of the attendees towards the development of clusters in industries that showed the potential to benefit from clustering.

The statement said that following the exercise, seven regional projects, including St Lucia's Honey Cluster Development Plan, were successful in securing funding.

A beekeeper from the Horizon Broth beekeeper from the Horizon Brothers Honey Producers says he is excited about the project, particularly the implementation of standards for honey producers.

"We try to bring in an educational component, because it's no longer an under the bush trade. It calls for proper knowledge and application of apiculture standards, to ensure that we have a product that is a proper representation of St. Lucia. Doing this project in collaboration with various entities like the Saint Lucia Bureau of Standards and Export St Lucia we know that it will bring about success."

Another critical component of the project is the implementation of a solid governance structure for the industry.

The Mille Fleurs Honey Producers' Cooperative Society Ltd has been chosen to undertake this governance task and president of the Mille Fleurs, Uraline Alphonse, says she is excited about the plans moving forward.

"With the project we're hoping to see Mille Fleurs as the structure for beekeepers, where they could come and get the necessary input and insight on their business. So, we're using the cooperative to put everything in place to better facilitate the beekeepers." **(CMC)**