



JAMAICA SOCIAL INVESTMENT FUND

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17 million project to strengthen Irish Potato seed programme.

The Christiana Potato Growers Co-operative Society (CPGCS) sought the assistance of the JSIF's REDI project assistance to fund a project to establish the first Irish Potato seed programme and a consultancy in tissue culture from a specialist to build the capacity of their membership in the new techniques in tissue culture operation.

The overall scope of services was to conduct a GAP Analysis on the local use of In-vitro production in the development of local Irish potato seeds. It also includes recommendations on the way forward with the use of this technology.

Speaking at the presentation of findings related to phase one of the project, Loy Malcolm General Manager Project Management, outlined that "the research was to assess the current technical, administrative and infrastructure capacity of identified organisations such as CPGA, Bodles Research Facility, Scientific Research Council, UWI Biotechnology unit and the Northern Caribbean University."

The research covered an assessment of organisations on their knowledge and capacity in the use of invitro production of plants. Identify strengths, gaps and weaknesses of current organisations.

Following on the study, Phase II of the project will address the design and delivery of training in current in-vitro production methodologies to personnel from identified entities as well as the provision of equipment and associated support.

Reasons for JSIF's Investment

The Fund, approved this project based on the potential of strengthening the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries drive towards food security, in that the project will establish the country's first Irish Potato seed programme. This will enable local Irish Potato farmers to have disease free nuclear and first generation seeds available all year round. A total of 400 farmers who are members of CPGCS, RADA and JAS will benefit directly from the seeds. The technology and techniques can be used to mass propagate other crops such as; sweet potato, yam and ginger.

Malcolm further stated that the project can contribute ultimately to the reduction of the country's import bill and its' contribution to support the Ministry of Agriculture's vision to cut dependency significantly of the importation of Irish Potato seeds which costed approximately US\$2million in 2013.

Over the last 4 years, JSIF through the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) a US\$15 million loan from the World Bank has assisted 76 small groups in obtaining knowledge of market needs, market demand and also improve product quality and production techniques in the areas of agriculture.

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