

Exporting Non-traditional Produce



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Plantains, watermelons, limes, pineapples, pumpkins and other locally-grown non-traditional crops have made headway into a large number of Regional and extra-Regional markets. The non-traditional crops export for 2002 was recorded as G\$721 million.



Fresh fruits and vegetables

Export of non-traditional crops to both Regional and extra-Regional markets increased from approximately 2,997 tonnes of produce in 1997 to 4,111 tonnes in 2002.

Exports to Regional markets have increased significantly each year from 883 tonnes in 1997 to 1,861 tonnes in 2002 while export to extra-Regional markets increased from 2,113 tonnes to 2,249 tonnes.

The Regional markets include Barbados, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Kitts and Nevis, Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Extra-Regional markets include Canada, France, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Suriname, the Netherlands and West Germany.

Guyana exports more than 35 non-traditional products to Barbados and at the same time Canada is importing more commodities from Guyana than any other extra-regional country.

From January to December 2002, Canada imported 389 tonnes of non-traditional agricultural produce, which includes both fresh and processed products. Some products exported to Canada last year are genip, awara, banana, bora, boulanger, mango, hot pepper, saeme, sapodilla, squash, poi, breadfruit, dried thyme, plantain and pineapple.

In 2002, Canada imported 222 tonnes of mangoes, 40 tonnes of bora, 19 tonnes of saeme, 16 tonnes of hot pepper, 12 tonnes of pineapples, 9 tonnes of genip, 7 tonnes of squash, 6 tonnes of boulanger, 5 tonnes of sapodilla, 5 tonnes of awara, 5 tonnes banana, 3 tonnes of poi calaloo, 3 tonnes of mamey and 3 tonnes of dried thyme among other items from Guyana.

Barbados imported 663 tonnes of produce from Guyana last year which include watermelon, cucumber, coconut, cabbage, bora, avocado, eddo, lime, cassava, coffee beans, grapefruit, orange, passion fruit, pumpkin, tomatoes, tangerine and plantains.

During 2002, Barbados imported 286 tonnes of plantains, 127 tonnes of pineapples, 90 tonnes of watermelons, 63 tonnes of limes, 38 tonnes of pumpkins, 10 tonnes of cucumbers, 7 tonnes of oranges, 6 tonnes of bora, 6 tonnes of eddoes, 4 tonnes of passion fruit, 4 tonnes of tomatoes, 4 tonnes of dry coconuts and 3 tonnes of boulanger among other items from Guyana.

It is anticipated that the export of non-traditional crops will continue to grow during this year.

Some 293 tonnes of fresh fruits and vegetables were exported from Guyana to Barbados for the first four months of last year while for the corresponding period this year, 320 tonnes were exported, which shows an increase of 27 tonnes.

General Manager of New Guyana Marketing Corporation (NGMC), Mr. Nizam Hassan said that plantain has been ranked the highest on the list of non-traditional crops exported from Guyana to Barbados in 2002. He explained that out of the 699 tonnes total exports to Barbados of non-traditional crops, 315 tonnes were plantains. In 2001, out of the overall export of 498 tonnes 281 tonnes were plantains.



Fresh fruits and vegetables

He added that plantains still remain at the top of the list for the first four months of this year, with 320 tonnes exported for this period to Barbados.

Mr. Hassan pointed out that watermelon is now the second-ranked fruit produce to be exported from Guyana to Barbados while lime is in third place. It was noted that during 2002 watermelon was ranked third while limes were in the fourth place. In 2002, pineapples were the second-ranked commodity to be exported from Guyana but for the first four months of this year, it has moved down to the fourth place.

It was noted that one factor that contributed to the increase of non-traditional crops exports was the establishment of the Central Packaging Facility (CPF). The facility, which was established in 2001 at the Sophia Exhibition Centre, is being managed by the NGMC.

Several exporters are using the facility to process and package fresh produce for export on a weekly basis.

Mr. Hassan explained that the building which houses the CPF had to be upgraded to meet specific standards to be used as the pack-house for the fruits, vegetables and ground provision.

He added that the building was rehabilitated to control rodents and insects. Draining tables and wash basins were also constructed and the roof was raised to allow better ventilation.

Mr. Hassan noted that the export of non-traditional crops has attracted substantial investors.

Public exhibitions and awareness programmes also helped to boost exports. The buy local campaign, which promotes products that are grown and made in Guyana, helped to increase exports. The buy local campaign has become an annual event whereby several exhibitions are held in different parts of the country to promote locally-grown and locally-made produce.

Mr. Hassan pointed out that a number of seminars were held with farmers and exporters to educate them about proper handling of commodities to prevent damages. He added that technical training programmes were also held with farmers and exporters.

The technical projects were conducted by NGMC in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Guyana Economic Opportunities (GEO) project.

He noted that proper post-harvest techniques were introduced to farmers and it is being put into practice in several areas. Some post-harvest techniques that were introduced include sleeving of banana and plantain, waxing of fruits and vegetables, and de-greening of all types of citrus.