



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – JUNE 24, 2016**

### **'CHRISTMAS IN JULY' KICKS OFF AT JBDC'S INCUBATOR & RESOURCE CENTRE**

More than 100 micro and small business owners from the gift and craft sector descended on the **Jamaica Business Development Corporation's (JBDC) Incubator & Resource Centre** at Marcus Garvey Drive in Kingston yesterday to have their products assessed for 'Christmas in July' 2016, the corporate gifting and souvenir showcase implemented by the Tourism Linkages Network, of which the JBDC is an integral member. The 'Christmas in July' exhibition showcases locally made products to buyers from corporate Jamaica, the hospitality sector, government entities, embassies, missions and international organizations.

This year's event is shaping up to be bigger than the inaugural staging which saw exhibitions from 80 local producers, with 130 applications received. Newly appointed Chairman of the Tourism Linkages Council, Adam Stewart and Metry Seaga, President of the Jamaica Manufacturers' Association both expressed delight at the turnout at the opening of the session. "I am amazed at the number of persons here this morning. I was not expecting such a large gathering," said Stewart. "I believe we may have to seek a bigger venue soon or place a cap on the numbers for this event, but I encourage the producers to ensure their submissions are of the highest quality because only the very best will be given a spot," said Seaga.

The JBDC's Chief Executive Officer, Valerie Veira says the event is an excellent initiative which provides strong support for the agency's mandate to provide business development services for the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector. "A significant aspect of our services is market access, which we facilitate through our Things Jamaican brand and chain of retail stores because we take very seriously, our mantra 'from concept to market'. We developed this facility (Incubator & Resource Centre) as a key entry point for gift & craft producers as there are certain criterion which must be fulfilled before these products become market ready. So this is where they undergo training, quality testing, product development, design, branding, labelling, packaging, and then further assessment by the Things Jamaican team before they are deemed ready for the shelves. I am absolutely pleased with the immense contribution that the team has made towards the successful staging of this assessment session for the second consecutive year, preparing the venue for a large audience and playing a key role in the assessment process," Veira said.

In order to qualify as a 'Christmas in July' exhibitor, the applicants' products are assessed for quality, design and pricing; aesthetics; functionality; quality of packaging and labeling. The assessment is conducted by representatives from the Ministry of Tourism, JBDC, JAMPRO, Jamaica Manufacturers' Association (JMA), Jamaica Intellectual Property Office (JIPO), Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), as well as, private sector entities.

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**An Agency of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAF).**

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“The team assessed a range of items from categories including aromatherapy, food & drinks, fashion, home accents and entertainment. We are heartened by the influx of young applicants this year, which is an encouraging sign for the creative industry’s future and also that our entrepreneurship message is connecting with the youth,” said Janine Taylor, Manager – Things Jamaican. Youth Entrepreneurship was a major theme at the recently held JBDC Small Business Expo.

‘*Christmas in July*’ is geared at boosting the economy and strengthening the bonds between tourism and other key sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing and the creative industries. The event is sponsored by the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF).

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