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Drip irrigation system saves farmer's crops

published: Thursday | February 9, 2006

George Henry, Gleaner Writer



John Harrison tends to a tomato plant on his farm at Park district in Santa Cruz, St. Elizabeth. - PHOTO BY GEORGE HENRY

MALVERN, St. Elizabeth:

JUST WHEN John Harrison was beginning to lose hope, the former salesman-turn-farmer received assistance in acquiring a modern drip irrigation system that worked wonders for his crops.

Mr. Harrison, after retiring from his sales job at Desnoes and Geddes Ltd., started out with a few heads of cattle, but realised that rearing animals alone was not sufficient. So he decided to start planting callaloo, sweet pepper, cabbage, pak choi, melon and tomatoes on his small farm at Park district in Santa Cruz, St. Elizabeth.

But he soon found out that it was not helping either, as the traditional farming methods did little to produce the desirable yields. This caused him to lose interest in farming.

However, this changed when he found out that the drip irrigation system could improve his production. The farmer said he subsequently sought assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

"I was fortunate to get some assistance from USAID, which has given me renewed interest in farming," said the excited farmer. He stated that the drip irrigation system he currently uses includes the use of soluble fertilisers with low water consumption. The new system he said improved his tomato production by 90 per cent.

FUTURE EXPANSION

With the significant improvement in yield, the St. Elizabeth farmer said he intends to expand his farm. The proud farmer is now encouraging his colleagues to try the



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system, which he advised, can be used on any type of soil, provided proper research is carried out and there is an adequate supply of water available. He said although it is expensive in the initial stage of use, Mr. Harrison said it is a good investment.

In the meantime, Mr. Harrison, like other farmers across the island, complained that the cost of fertilisers and other chemicals was very expensive. He is recommending that farmers be given a subsidy on these items.

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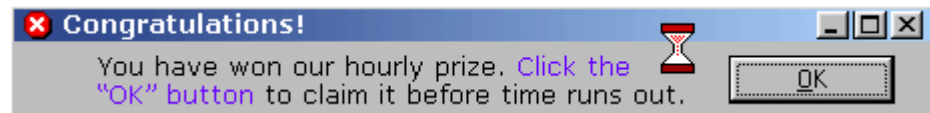
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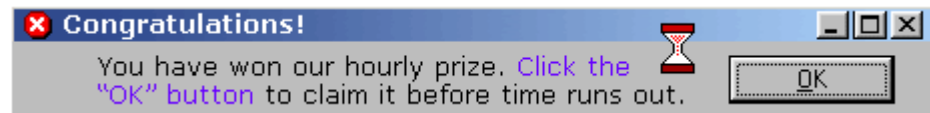
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