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New agri method boosts crop yield

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Abraham Tugman shows the fruits of his labour to Karen Turner, mission director of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), who was on a visit to his farm at Bodles, St. Catherine recently. - Contributed

FARMERS WHO have benefited from training and technical assistance in integrated crop management (ICM) are reporting a significant boost in crop yield on their farms.

Some 507 farmers across the island have so far received assistance from the Jamaica Business Recovery Programme (JBRP).

The best practices approach being promoted by the JBRP involves the use of raised beds, hybrid seeds, seedling nurseries, and integrated pest management. This also encompasses the use of drip irrigation, which allows the farmer to use as much as 40 per cent less water on crops, more efficient fertilisation, better control of crop diseases, and the opportunity to introduce crop calendarisation - a schedule of year-round plantings.

RESULTS

"I had decided to get out of farming, but now with the results under the JBRP, I will be seeking more land to expand," one farmer, Abraham Tugman, said. Mr. Tugman, whose operations are based in Bodles, St. Catherine, is one of the many beneficiaries who have received assistance under the horticultural component of the one-year US\$5.8 million Jamaica Business Recovery Programme.

Another farmer, Samuel Frazer, has adopted the non-chemical approach to controlling insect and pest infestation on his farm. Mr. Frazer now uses live corn barriers and sticky traps around the borders of his watermelon plot on his three-acre farm located in Nightingayle Grove, St. Catherine. This he says, has resulted in an increase in the number of fruits per plant.

BEST PRACTICE METHODS

He and other JBRP farmers expect that these best practice methods will result in a 100 per cent increase in yield in the first harvest cycle of the fruits and vegetables they plant.

The JBRP is part of the United States Government's US\$25.5 million Hurricane Recovery Programme, for Jamaica. JBRP focuses on restoring small and medium-size enterprises to pre-Hurricane Ivan production levels or better through technical assistance, training, and in-kind grant financing, with special emphases on



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