



## BUSINESS PROFILE



### CARITA JAMAICA LIMITED

<http://www.caritapremium.com/>

Jamaica

## ABOUT CARITA JAMAICA

- **Company status:** Limited company
- **Year of registration:** 2011
- **Number of employees:** Over 30 employees
- **Business sector:** Fresh and processed fruit, vegetables and spices



#### Rita Hilton, Founder and Managing Director

Rita Hilton is an entrepreneur passionate about agriculture and developing new business opportunities. She is the founder and Managing Director of Carita Jamaica Limited, a company in the fresh produce and processed

food sectors. Over 35 years of experience in the business, Rita has made a name for her company in the export industry in Jamaica, and for herself. She has been the President of the Jamaica Exporters Association (JEA) and works continuously on empowering rural communities, including by providing training programmes to (potential) farmers producing for export.

Prior to her career as an entrepreneur, Rita Hilton worked for 20 years as a high school teacher in Kenya and in Jamaica. She holds a master's degree in geography from the University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, and a graduate teaching certificate from the University of London, United Kingdom.

#### Mission

To be the first Jamaican exporter of high-quality local packaged and/or processed products, using sustainable and profitable practices to empower rural communities by establishing long-term relationships with producers and farmers, and collaborating with international distributors to expand market reach.

#### Vision

To take the taste of Jamaican foods to the world.

This series of events is organised by IICA and COLEACP.

COLEACP operates within the framework of development cooperation between the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and the European Union (European Development Fund – EDF), with the support of the French Development Agency (AFD).



## CONTEXT

### Background

In 1984, Rita Hilton turned to the food export sector and created the company Marketing Developments Limited to export Jamaican-grown products to New York, USA. The company started exporting fresh – not canned – produce to meet the growing US demand for products like those consumed in Jamaica. This business generated an additional source of income for Rita, and enabled her to provide for her family, including paying her children's university tuition fees.

Over the years, the one-person business became a well-known export company with dozens of employees, supplying fresh fruit and vegetables all year round on international markets.

In 2011, the company registered under the new name of Carita Jamaica Limited, Carita being a contraction of the word "Caribbean" and the founder's name "Rita".

### Position in the market

Carita Jamaica Limited is the first provider of freshly grown produce from Jamaica, and one of the market leaders in the Jamaican fruit and vegetable export sector.

### Relationships

The company sources fresh produce from various local small-scale farmers to ensure that the amounts requested by its customers are constantly available. Carita Jamaica Limited is always looking to work with new local farmers to broaden its network of suppliers.

## PRODUCTS AND MARKETS

### Main products

Carita Jamaica Limited exports locally grown fresh vegetables, including various sorts of yam, cocoyam, sweet potato, peppers, pumpkin and dasheen. Sweet yam, a traditional Jamaican crop, is the most exported product.

The company also has a wide range of fruit, including banana, soursop, breadfruit and avocado, as well as fresh spices such as ginger, turmeric and thyme.



Sweet Yam



Yellow Yam



Sweet Potato – Quarter Million



Moruga Red Peppers



Scotch Bonnet Peppers



Pumpkins

In addition, Carita Jamaica Limited has a line of processed products including natural teas, coffee, canned fruit and vegetables. The company also produces gluten-free breadfruit flour, Curry

Goat seasoning and frozen Bammy (a traditional Jamaican cassava flatbread), sold in vacuum-sealed pouches.







The ready-to-eat range of products also includes soups.

### Main markets

Carita Jamaica Limited mostly exports to the Jamaican diaspora in the USA, Canada and the UK. The company also supplies Caribbean markets to a lesser extent, particularly the Cayman Islands, the Bahamas and the Eastern Caribbean.

### Main services

The company exports fresh produce. It also processes local fruit, vegetables and spices into convenient and/or ready-to-eat products.

### Certifications

Carita Jamaica Limited holds various certificates which ensure its products' quality and safety. The company is HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) certified and meets the requirements of the Jamaica Factories Act (JFA), Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ), and the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) certification.

The company is also approved by the US Food and Drug Administration.

## INNOVATIONS: MILESTONES AND EXPANSION PLANS

### Milestones

At the end of 2017, Carita Jamaica Limited acquired new premises to scale up its exports and start value-addition activities by processing local produce. In 2018 it launched its line of processed convenience products under the brand Carita Premium. This includes gluten-free products prepared with local starchy tubers like cassava, yams, sweet potatoes and breadfruit. Carita's baking flours, made from breadfruit, cassava and sweet potato, have become popular value-added gluten-free products. These processed products are also easier to export to remote markets as their transport is less subject to short time constraints.

Since 2018, the company's expanded variety of products is available on its online store, increasing its visibility and market reach.

### Needs for upscaling

Carita Jamaica Limited works towards upgrading its international food safety standards accreditation, notably with the Global Food Safety Initiative (GSFI) certification, the US Food Safety System Certification (FSSC) and the Safe Quality Foods & British Retail Consortium (BRC) certification.

The company is also looking to invest in materials and equipment to continue expanding its activities, as well as to train and support its supplier farmers to comply with food safety regulations.

Carita Jamaica Limited plans to reach new markets at both regional and international levels. This will be achieved through further product diversification, by adding value to local produce, and through investments in promotion and e-commerce.

## SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED

One key to the success of Carita Jamaica Limited is its capacity to consistently provide high-quality products at fair prices. The company also continuously analyses new market demands, and works with wholesalers to identify what products are needed on the market from season to season.

Carita Jamaica Limited is committed to supporting rural communities, and works closely with local farmers to provide them with a reliable source of income. As an entrepreneur, Rita Hilton is also devoted to supporting others and to sharing information, resources and contacts with her network and those working in related industries.

Rita values knowledge sharing and mentorship, which have contributed to expanding her farm community network and achieving improvements within the sector that benefit all farmers. In addition to her position as Managing Director, she mentors young farmers and women business owners.

Carita Jamaica Limited offers a mentorship programme and school items to its employees' children, and provides a breakfast and lunch subsidy to its employees and their children.

The success and social impacts of the company have been acknowledged by several awards. In 2018, the company was named Best Import/Export Company at the ActionCOACH Regional Business Excellence Forum Award, recognising the company's outstanding performance. In 2019, Carita Jamaica Limited was one of the 33 finalists of the Manufacturers & Exporters Awards Gala organised by the Jamaica Manufacturers and Exporters Association (JMEA), recognising the company's contributing to promoting Jamaica's image.



In September 2020, Carita Jamaica Limited participated in the CARIFORUM-EU Business Forum and in the Authentic Caribbean Expo in Frankfurt, Germany, to promote its products to potential buyers and distributors. The same year, Rita Hilton received the Pioneer Award from the Jamaican magazine *Flair*.

Carita Jamaica Limited seized new business opportunities during the Covid-19 pandemic by adopting new strategies, in particular regarding

exports. With the suspension of airfreight, the company used sea freight and so was able to export larger volumes than by plane and to meet the increased demand for Jamaican produce in diaspora markets. The company also maintained its staff's income despite operational and logistic challenges due to the pandemic.