

# WHY LEMON GRASS - WHY NOW?

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When the news broke that Jamaica was importing herbs such as Mint, Cerasee, and Lemon Grass to fill the growing herbal market, it also signaled a new era oozing with opportunities for entrepreneurs to zoom in on.

The time is right for the Scientific Research Council, having invested quite a bit of energy and time investigating several plants in preparing the country for entering the nutraceutical market. Lemon Grass was one of the plants identified with nutraceutical promise and as such the technical support by way of information and expertise is available at the SRC. Market intelligence also indicates that the essential oil industry is also a steady and lucrative option for such plants. This is a “low hanging fruit” for Jamaica which in the past had been the largest exporter of allspice essential oil, ginger oil and orange oil. This, in spite of the physical limitation of our size. Their absolutely superior aromas and flavours are undisputed, and so far not replicable.

Many years have gone by - and investments soared mainly in the major export commodities - Banana, Sugar, Bauxite. Now as a cornered animal - we need to come out fighting. Lemon Grass is in and of itself is not the solution; however it can help to prepare a blueprint for the establishment of an extractive industry (e.g. essential oil, nutraceuticals). With Rosemary, Vetiver, Ortanique and Mint, among numerous plants - many yet untapped, Jamaica can methodically plan for executing an informed strategy for the growing group of bright, innovative, young entrepreneurs. Whether entering the agro-industry as a new comer or returning to claim a piece of the pie, we have to ensure that we have information to back our claims. We know our products are superior. The power of Brand Jamaica is founded on a combination of mystique, appeal and marketing. In order to sustain the appeal and grow our market share, substance is

needed. This is the beauty of science. It can provide objective, indisputable evidence on the quality of products for buyers and consumers...as well as guide producers in the manufacture of consistent products.

Simple technologies such as tissue culture can ensure the production of large quantities of clean planting material on demand, while chemical and physical analyses can aid the preparation of Certificates of Analyses, rapidly becoming a standard requirement for entry of products such as essential oils in the international market.

Lemon Grass otherwise known as Fever grass in Jamaica occurs locally as two main varieties - the short fluffy variety and the tall willowy type. Each has excellent prospects due to the presence of components which are valuable in the food, household and personal products industries. Products on the market range from beverages and cosmetics to insect repellants. It is a hardy, easy-to-grow, versatile grass that proliferates on most soil types and is suited for our "sugar lands". It has been used for centuries in the eastern countries for its soothing, calming and refreshing properties. Claims of its therapeutic value are rife and as such demand internationally is spiraling. Good reasons for investment, wouldn't one think?