

# BHTA CEO: Linkages between tourism, agriculture being strengthened

By Regina Selman Moore

**THE Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA) has been working with local farmers, in an effort to strengthen the linkages between tourism and agriculture, and to see more local produce being utilised in the tourism sector.**

Word of this has come from Rudy Grant, CEO of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association. Whilst lending support to the Barbados Culinary Team, ahead of the highly anticipated Taste of the Caribbean 2018 event to be held in Miami, Florida in the USA later this year, Grant spoke to the efforts being made to strengthen these linkages.

"I am happy to report

that at the BHTA, we are collaborating with the farmers. There is an IDB Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) Project that is being undertaken and that project has been created to strengthen the linkages between tourism and agriculture, and to facilitate a good quality consistent supply of products, from farmers to the hotels and to restaurants. We are extremely happy that the project has been progressing well," Grant remarked.

"We are looking to expand the number of hotels that are participating in that activity, but it signals in a very significant way, that if you are strengthening the linkages, then you can certainly effect a win-win for everyone. A win for the hoteliers and the restaurateurs, a win for the

farmers and a win in terms of ensuring that there is less foreign exchange used, in terms of the importation of goods," Grant further commented.

He meanwhile had high praise for the Barbados Culinary Team, headed by manager Henderson Butcher, for the work being done so far to make a mark on the international stage and for efforts to also use local produce, in the dishes presented overseas.

"Last year when we went to the Taste of the Caribbean, I was blown away with the manner in which the team used Barbadian ingredients, in order to display the delicacies that they did. I remember when we were going up, the manager said to me that he was going to take up some red herring and I said, red herring? Red herring is something that has a really strong smell and I really wondered how he was going to utilise that red herring. But on the night when the red herring was served, it was very delightful, it was very tasteful and the manner in which it was presented was truly exotic, and it is amazing to see how the chefs are able to take our



**Rudy Grant, CEO of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA), as he spoke about the IDB Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) Project that is being undertaken, to strengthen the linkages between tourism and agriculture.**

local produce and display it in the way that they do," Grant pointed out.

He added, "Of course there is an even stronger message that the team is displaying when they go to the competitions

and utilise Barbadian products – It is the strong linkages between tourism and agriculture".

"There has been a significant amount of reference to our foreign reserves and the reality

is, if we are able to decrease the number of imports which we have, we can effect less foreign exchange going out of the country," he said of the use of more local goods.

## Transportation headache

PUBLIC transportation remains a major headache for the disabled community in this island.

Applauding the Transport Board's "Dial and Ride" programme, which allowed persons with disabilities to call and request transport to and from appointments, Administration Project Officer of the Barbados Council for the Disabled, Rose-Ann Foster-Vaughan said that with only two buses specifically outfitted for this task, challenges remained.

She was speaking recently at the University of the West Indies Open Campus and Central Bank of Barbados' presentations of the March Community Lunchtime Lecture called "An Accessible Future is a Sustainable Future".

Foster-Vaughan was joined by Operations Manager of the Council Roseanna Tudor who used the opportunity to point out that the island's infrastructure also created several issues for these vehicles.

"These kneeling buses are great, but realistically we have to consider our network of roads and the environment. Buildings were built very close to the roads so you have very small kerbs and a lot of people who need this transport live in gaps, so for them to get out of the gap to come up to the main road is a challenge. There may be a way to start it by making the main roads accessible roads... because right now you have to have a small sized bus to get into the gaps," she said.

In addition, she pointed out that the buses should be outfitted with lifts at the back and not at the side of the bus.

She therefore urged government to ensure that when roads were being reconstructed that consideration was given to the disabled.

"I hope that with this road refurbishing coming up, they consider that. It is futuristic. It is inevitable," she stated.

The event was held in the Courtney Blackman Grande Salle. (JMB)

## Tudor: Disability can affect anyone

ANY person can acquire a disability at any point in his or her life.

Operations Manager of the Barbados Council for the Disabled Roseanna Tudor said that this fact must be considered seriously, especially regarding the need to create a more accessible Barbados.

Pointing out that the country has an ageing population, she highlighted that many older persons suffered from mobility issues created by conditions like arthritis, and therefore accessibility would become an issue later in life.

Delivering the Community Lunchtime Lecture entitled "An Accessible Future is a

Sustainable Future", she highlighted that there were still many challenges faced by persons with disabilities every day.

"When you acquire a disability, you will have the same health care needs as others, but you are two times more likely to find inadequate health care providers and accessible facilities, and three times more likely to be denied health care," she remarked.

Tudor therefore insisted that individuals and businesses must play their part in creating an accessible environment as it would prove sustainable towards the inclusion of most people.

Speaking on the recent

passage of legislation on parking for disabled persons, she said that the issue was about more than easy access to services, but also creating an awareness that persons with disabilities are a part of wider society and should be able to enjoy the country's offerings.

"So seeing that disability parking is just one victory for us, because it sends a message to the public as well that we have a right and we are going to start using those rights," she stressed.

Addressing a modest audience at the Courtney Blackman Grande Salle, she noted that while over the past 14 years over 2 500 parking identifica-

tion tags had been distributed, the minority of these had gone to wheelchair users, suggesting that persons should not be judged by their appearance.

"You will be amazed that there are people that look like anyone of you here that come into us for parking IDs and unless we have seen that the doctor has said that 'yes, you have a prosthesis, replacement limb, et cetera' you would not know that that person has a disability," she added.

The event was hosted by University of the West Indies Open Campus in Collaboration with the Central Bank of Barbados on Thursday. (JMB)