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Is Jamaica's ganja industry going up in smoke?

With ganja being the hot topic around the world, it is no doubt that Jamaica is expected to be at the front of the line to reap rewards.

With a strong reputation for the best ganja the world knows, it is often wondered why the country is not already seeing considerable business activity and the ability to not only focus on the medicinal legalization of ganja, but recreational as well.

The reputation Jamaica has for ganja however, goes beyond the quality of the crop, to include the illicit drugs for gun trade that exists.

If Jamaica is to have any real opportunity in the business of ganja, there must first be evidence of the ability to maintain a responsible industry.

What is of importance to trading nations, is that they collaborate with jurisdictions that are respectful of the United Nations treaties and frame and manage the regulation of their industry in accordance with its guidelines.

Licences for Ganja granted but not issued.

Amidst calls to disclose who licences have been granted to, the Cannabis Licensing Authority (CLA) has remained tight lipped on the subject.

In a statement from Hyacinth Lightbourne, Chairman of the CLA she discloses. "There are five licences which have been granted, but not yet issued. There are a few steps involved in the issuing of the licences and the applicants are currently close to getting them, until then, for confidentiality reasons we are unable to disclose who they are."

There has been disclosure however, that the licences are for three Tier 1 Cultivators, a Tier 1 Processor, and a retailer, showing that the smallest category of operators have been the first ones out the gate.

Building an Industry; Cultivating Responsibly

Cannabis Licensing Authority |

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How application delays occur

As Jamaica develops its cannabis industry, of utmost importance has been the establishment and adherence to regulations which have been set with close guidance from the international treaties.

Although thought to be exorbitant, there is a need to maintain transparency and integrity in operations, to assure international confidence. This in turn aids in promoting business efforts, exports and increased confidence within the banking sector.

This transparency and commitment to integrity in the system is also crucial for applicants who wish to successfully operate in the space, and the timeliness of processing applications, is largely dependent on how accurate applications are.

During the first phase of the application process, applicants are required to complete a form, which outlines amongst other things, their business registration and composition. If information is incomplete or inaccurate this delays the process.

Once applicants progress to the conditionally approved stage, some applicants choose to stagger their infrastructural work and are given up to six months to do so, with consideration given for requests for extended time to complete.

Additionally, within the closed loop system, each licensee is required to conduct transactions only with those who are also in possession of a licence. This requires applicants who have been granted licences to agree to business terms amongst themselves, and advise the CLA.

In addressing the status of the industry, Ms Lightbourne stated “Applications are being continually processed with 270 in progress, including 57 conditionally approved and 5 licences granted some of which are close to being issued. The Ministry of Health has been training and certifying doctors in accordance with their stipulation for doctors to be trained for the writing of ganja related prescriptions. These are indicators that the industry is viable and progressing. Although it has appeared to be a long process, we are confident that the medical ganja industry in Jamaica is being developed responsibly and in a manner which can stand the test of time.”

Notes to Editors:

About the Cannabis Licensing Authority: The CLA, which was created by the Dangerous Drug Act, has powers to make and oversee the implementation of regulations for licences, permits and other authorisations for the cultivation, processing, distribution, sale and transportation of ganja, for medicinal, scientific and therapeutic purposes.

About Jamaica’s UN Drug Treaty Obligation: Parties to the 1961 Convention undertake to limit the production, manufacture, export, import, distribution and stocks of, trade in and use and possession of the controlled drugs so that they are used exclusively for medical and scientific purposes. The production and distribution of controlled substances must be licensed and supervised.

Interviews: Interviews with Hyacinth Lightbourne, Chairman of the CLA, and other designated Board spokespersons will be available on request

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