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Jamaican Government Attracting More Illicit Growers of Marijuana into Medicinal Industry With New Program

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Jamaican man shows his illegal patch of budding marijuana plants during a tour of his land. By. DAVID MCFADDEN/AP

JAMAICA — Minister of State in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Floyd Green, says emphasis will be placed on increasing the number of community groups of traditional growers participating in the Alternative Development Program, according other the Government of Jamaica.

The program aims to prevent and eliminate the illicit cultivation of marijuana and channel the process through legal streams.

The 1998 Action Plan, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, provides for the inclusion of such a program through specifically designed rural development measures consistent with sustained national economic growth.

“What we will be doing in 2020, is looking for more community groups of traditional growers that we will engage and provide the technical support for them to transition into the medicinal marijuana industry,” Mr. Green said, as he addressed the House of Representatives on January 1.

“Already, we have a group from St. Ann that has approached us and a group in Kingston and a group from south west St. Elizabeth,” he added.

Mr. Green also mentioned that a cannabis pilot project has started in Accompong, St. Elizabeth.

“We have gone in there with the team to provide technical support. The program focuses on community groups, so it starts with a group of ganja farmers, and we would have gone in and provided the seeds, provided reduced requirements and we have gone through a learning process. I would say the pilot has been a success,” he said.

The state minister noted that from the pilot in Accompong, new guidelines have been developed for the initiative.

“Some of the things that we have realized is not because we have traditional growers; it means they are growing to the specifications and the standards that are needed for the medicinal marijuana industry. And, as such, we have taken those learnings and we have now developed some guidelines for the alternative development program,” he said.

Mr. Green further informed that some 44 pounds of marijuana have been sold from Accompong into the medicinal marijuana industry.

“We are now looking to move from the one acre that we started with to go into 10 acres of cultivation. We also met with the farmers from Orange Hill in Westmoreland. Again, we had some challenges getting the pilot off the ground, largely because of identifying suitable land that can be used and land that is owned that we can utilize for the purpose of planting ganja,” Mr. Green said, referring to marijuana by its Jamaican name.

The Alternative Development Project is being implemented as a strategy to transition traditional cannabis farmers from an illicit framework into the regulated environment as a means of promoting sustainable economic development and poverty eradication.

It is also aimed at providing access to quality-controlled cannabis for medicinal purposes, in keeping with government policy.