

GMSA AND MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND WATER CONDUCTS FIRST JOINT TECHNICAL WORKING

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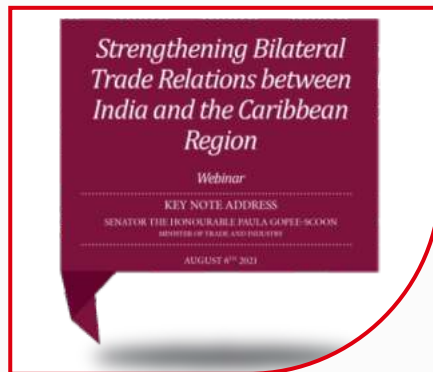


**GMSA
NEWSLETTER**
www.gmsagy.org

July/August, 2021
ISSUE # 71



**PSC, GMSA & GCCI
Meet with The Resident
High Commissioner
for the UK to Guyana**



**Strengthening Bilateral
Trade Relations with India
and the Caribbean Region**



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GMSA and Ministry of Housing and Water Conducts First Joint Technical Working Group Session: Initiatives to Promote Local Content for Housing and Construction



The first Joint Technical Working Group session was held virtually on August 10, 2021 between the Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association (GMSA) and the Ministry of Housing and Water (MOHW). The GMSA Secretariat was represented by President of the Association, Mr. Rafeek Khan, Executive Director Mr. Jason Allcock, Secretary Ms. Nerissa Thornhill and Business Analyst Ms. Tynisha Niles. Other GMSA Executives included Mr. Peter Pompey of BACIF and Chairman, GMSA Forestry Subsector, Mr. Denishwar Bisessar. The Ministry's team included the Director of Operations Ms. Denise King-Tudor and Deputy Director of Projects Mr. Intakabi Indarjeet.

The meeting was centered on promoting local content, with representatives from both the GMSA and the MOHW presenting potential avenues for finding opportunities to grow and develop key local businesses and sectors. The meeting saw the initiation of the

framework which will guide the working group and the areas of concerns to be addressed by the parties present.

Further discussions ranged from shortages and price increases of building materials, utilizing lesser used species of wood, ways of improving standards for conformity and security (building codes) and the availability of the necessary skill-sets to efficiently support the rising construction industry locally.

The meeting concluded with much enthusiasm for future working group activities and fostering a better way for businesses in the Construction, Forestry and Wood Products sectors to improve on productivity, quality, price and product availability for the local market.

The GMSA looks forward to future collaborations with the Ministry of Housing and Water in promoting our local content for the benefit of all Guyanese.

PSC, GMSA & GCCI Meet with The Resident High Commissioner for the UK to Guyana



On July 27, 2021, a delegation led by the Chairman of the Private Sector Commission (PSC), Mr. Paul Cheong met with Her Excellency Jane Caroline Miller, Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE), Resident High Commissioner for the United Kingdom to the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

The cordial and fruitful discussion focused on several areas of mutual interest to the United Kingdom and Guyana, inclusive of matters pertaining to governance, electoral reform, local content, joint ventures, ease of doing business, enhancement of technical skills, and the overall enhancement of business activities.

The Chairman in closing remarks thanked H.E Jane

Caroline Miller and underlined the need for the establishment of a strategic productive relationship with the United Kingdom in an effort to strengthen bilateral relations with Guyana's private sector.

The High Commissioner expressed her gratitude for the meeting and expressed hope for continuous engagements of this nature.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce (GCCCI), the Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association (GMSA), and other Executives of the Private Sector Commission.



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GMSA Participates in Webinar: Strengthening Bilateral Trade Relations with India and the Caribbean Region



The Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association (GMSA) Services participated in a webinar on August 6, 2021, titled "Strengthening Bilateral Trade Relations with India and the Caribbean Region". The strategic session was hosted by the World Trade Centre Mumbai (WTC), and was intended to inform stakeholders of the upcoming "Trade and Business Opportunities Between India and Caribbean Countries" Online Bilateral Exhibition commencing on August 16, 2021. Presentations were made by: Mr. Vijay Kalantri, Chairman, WTC Mumbai, H.E. Mr. Arun Kumar Sahu, High High Commissioner of India, Trinidad and Tobago, Ms. Diane Edwards, President, Jamaica Promotion Corporation (JAMPRO), Mr. Richie Sookhai, President, The Chaguanas Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Trinidad and Tobago, and Mr. Paul Cheong, Chairman, Private Sector Commission (PSC), Guyana. Participants in attendance ranged across a multitude of sectors from various countries.

The Caribbean Region was cited as an important trade block in Latin America with the present economic value of over USD 1B in trade between India and the Region. To assist in facilitating bilateral trade relations, participants were informed that WTC Mumbai has developed an "Online Trade and Exhibition" platform to support Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Start-Ups and Women Entrepreneurs, which can be accessed at: www.wetrade.org. Further, with guidance from the esteemed presenters, participants learned of several opportunities for ease of doing business, trade and commerce, not only with India, but with the wider CARICOM and Latin American Region inclusive.

H.E Mr. Sahu commenced the presentations and shared

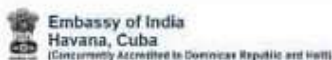
key information on where greater potential to enhance economic links through trade in multiple sectors existed. Those key sectors highlighted were: Plastics & Chemicals, Information Technology, Pharma, Ayurveda & Wellness, Agri & Agro-biotechnology, Wind and Solar Energy, Textiles, Garments & Home Décor, Higher Education, Auto and Engineering.

The webinar continued with other presentations being made by representatives of respective countries on their various sectors for potential international investment (India, Jamaica, Guyana, and Trinidad).

- Jamaica identified Agribusiness, Manufacturing, Global Digital Services, logistics, Infrastructure, film and Animation, Mining and Tourism as their sectors of opportunities. Several projects were also included namely Northern Parish Non-Revenue Water Project, Soapberry Waste Water Treatment Plant Project, Caymanas Special Economic Zone, JFVL Agricultural Project, Bamboo Bioproducts Project and Grand Ridge City Project.
- Guyana highlighted Infrastructure Project opportunities inclusive of the Georgetown to Brazil link road and Deep-Water Harbour. In addition, Large Scale Agri Farming, Productions of Cheaper electricity, Garment and Textile Manufacturing, Pharmaceuticals were mentioned as other areas of investing opportunities.
- Trinidad highlighted Maritime and Port Privatization, Natural Harbours, Free Trade Zones and Transshipment areas, specifically to Latin America, which will redound to reduced cost of



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Webinar on
**Strengthening Bilateral Trade Relations
 between
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WEBINAR

Date – August 6, 2021 | Time- 8.00 pm India

YouTube Live

shipping, Manufacturing Pharmaceuticals (Technology, New Markets and Labour force), Tourism - Medical (Workforce and Eco) and Cultural (Film Industry and Indo Trinbagonian Fusion) as key areas of trade opportunities

In closing, discussions and invitations were extended to participants to be part of the upcoming 4th Bilateral Online Exhibition hosted by India, which will showcase opportunities and projects in the various sectors that

may be of interest to potential investors. The Online Exhibition will be held for a three-month period from August 16 - November 16, 2021.

The GMSA remains committed to working with India and strengthening bilateral trade relations between its members across all subsectors and is committed to assisting in enhancing the scope of their businesses on the regional and international markets.

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GETTING TO KNOW OUR MEMBERS

Last month, we took our readers on an informative and exciting journey with Denmor Garments (Manufacturers) Inc. In this month's edition of "GETTING TO KNOW OUR MEMBERS" our Feature Member is:

AMY'S POMEROON FOODS INC. (APFI)



Second to water, coffee is the most consumed drink in the world. For most of us, a steamy cup of coffee in the morning is the only thing that can jump-start our day. GMSA President, Mr. Rafeek Khan and his team, made their way down to South Railway Embankment, Liliendaal, Georgetown to meet with Mr. Louis Holder, CEO of Amy's Pomeroun Foods Inc. (APFI), to learn about the company's role in the coffee arena.

Q: Tell us a little about the history of APFI and how the company got its name

A: APFI is an agro-processing Company, established in 2013, after Chairman and CEO, Mr. Louis Holder returned to Guyana from the U.S. While the factory is located in Georgetown, the foods processed at APFI originate from the agricultural regions of Guyana, especially the Pomeroun River, Essequibo, an area that is part of the Amazon Basin.

Despite the region being rich in resources, farmers were disadvantaged by lack of processing and transportations costs to get their products to various markets. Its coffee production was further hampered by

lack of a market. In 2015, APFI decided to assist farmers by processing the major crops produced – starting with coffee.

"Amy" in the Company's name was that of Mr. Holder's mother, whose contribution to the welfare and wellbeing of the family he wanted to recognize.

Q: Tell us about the history of coffee in Guyana

A: According to Mr. Holder, coffee was first introduced in the colonies of Dutch Guiana, Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo, by Dutch settlers in the early 18th century. The coffee plants were originally brought to South America from Yemen, via Java, Indonesia, and distributed throughout these four Colonies, making them the first to cultivate coffee in the New World. Coffee grown by the Dutch settlers was of the *Coffea Arabica* variety, and by the turn of the 19th century, British Guiana, which had incorporated the former Colonies of Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo, was associated with fine coffee and became one of the largest exporters of coffee in the world.



Consequently, the coffee industry started to decline due to low yields from planting the Arabica variety on low elevations, coupled with high labour costs. Many coffee estates then started switching to sugar cultivation, a more fruitful crop. The exception was the Pomeroon region where coffee continues to be cultivated. It remains the only place for coffee production today, except for small quantities grown in the Mabaruma area. By the start of the 20th century, Arabica-type coffee grown worldwide and along the riverbanks of the Pomeroon was under threat from the Leaf Rust disease. Farmers then turned to a new variety out of West Africa, called *Coffea Liberica*, a variety that was resistant to the disease. In addition, this Liberica variety was more suited to the low elevations of the Pomeroon and deemed preferential. Liberica variety is the rarest variety in the World, occupying less than 1% of its supply because of its low yields (the recovery of the Liberica yield is only 10%, whereas the yields from some Arabica varieties can be as high as 40%). The low yields/higher costs deterred commercial interests from its use despite Liberica being described as the sweetest and most aromatic coffee worldwide.

Q: Who are your main clients of APFI coffee?

A: Banks DIH, the largest local beverage companies in Guyana, not only distributes Amy's Pomeroon Coffee (APC) across the nation, but uses it exclusively in its restaurants and fast-food outlets. Additionally, other local restaurants and hotels that carry APC, include Atlantic (Marriott) Hotel, Ramada Georgetown Princess Hotel, Java Coffee Bar, Beacon Café, Newrest Catering, Petit Four, The Pantry, JR Bergers/Rent-A-Tent as well as the restaurants at St. Joseph Mercy and Woodlands

hospitals. Government Agencies and Departments supporting APC are Guyana Forestry Commission, GOINVEST, and Ministry of Agriculture.

In December 2015, Amy's Pomeroon Foods Inc. received FDA Approval for exporting its packaged products to the continental United States. AFC is also available for online purchasing and can be bought worldwide, with major markets such as Canada, USA and the UK at <https://www.guyanacoffee.ca/>.

Q: What different types of coffee do you offer?

A: Roasted coffee beans – Coffee roasted to full darkness to optimize flavor and taste and used in coffee shops and locations, and by individuals where in-house grinding is available.

Ground coffee – Roasted beans ground to coarseness for French Press brewing

Green coffee beans – For customers who prefer a different roast profile and have the means to roast.

Mocha blended coffee – Mocha coffee is available in coffee cafes where chocolate syrup is added to latte coffees. But APC offers its Customers mocha out of a pack and which can be prepared the same way as any other coffee brew. It is probably the only Company worldwide offering a mocha blend out of a pack.

Q: Tell us about the factory operations

A: APFI's factory houses storage bins and bays,

processing equipment, and offices. The factory has the capacity to supply both the local and regional export markets, with the most sophisticated roasting and grinding equipment in Guyana. The factory utilizes modern technology from Turkey for coffee processing, along with sophisticated grinding and semi-automatic packaging machines. It also houses a 10-ton storage bay for finished goods.

Upstream processing, which includes washing, pulping, fermenting, drying and hulling, is done at its factory, Nova Zeelandia Coffee Mill, in the Pomeroon River. This factory buys hand-picked cherries from Farmers for upstream processing. Green beans produced from this process are then transported to the Georgetown factory for downstream processing, which includes roasting, grinding and packaging.

Q: Tell us about the challenges you face given the current economic climate

A: Local Demand: There is a lack of local demand for APC mainly because Guyanese have a preference for imported instant coffee. The Company tried to overcome this characteristic by recognizing that Guyanese Consumers didn't have the means to prepare brewed coffee and giving away over 2,000 French Presses (a passive coffee brewing appliance) and over 100 40-cup percolators. But demand still remains a challenge. Given the current pandemic, reduced household incomes also translated into lower demand for coffee, coupled with cafes and restaurants being unable to open in the early stages of the pandemic. Moreover, there is lack of presence of local products on shelves which needs urgent attention from Retailers, and lack of support from Government Agencies which also needs urgent attention. Government procurement preference for local content has become more critical as the World move away from globalization strategies to illiberal ones such as "America First".

Raw Materials: Due to the desirable characteristics of Liberica coffee beans, the Company has the opportunity to export its coffee for the specialty market. Unfortunately, International Clients which are requesting quotations for a 20' container load, cannot be satisfied because of supply restrictions. The Company's total green bean production is 6 tons whereas a containers load is between 16 and 20 tons. Further, flooding in the River this season will undoubtedly curtail supplies further. Even more restrictive are supplies of cocoa beans which were previously sources from the Mabaruma area. APFI

needs cocoa beans for its mocha blended coffee and its planned new products of chocolate and breakfast spread production. It is in discussions with other Stakeholders to form a venture to produce cocoa beans. But since this is a long-term solution, it must source beans internationally.

Transportation Costs: APFI is an SME implying that its shipments of raw materials/finished goods to and from Guyana are in quantities less than a container can carry referred to as Less Than Container Load (LCL). Guyana does not offer LCL services meaning that shipments from Guyana utilize a full container or be made by air, both very costly options. Further, unless importing from Countries with high export trade such as China, and which offer consolidation and trans-shipment services, similar restrictions apply. Accordingly, SME, like APFI, face high importation and exportation costs from exorbitant freight charges, which puts their business at an uncompetitive position.

Q: Where is APFI Today?

A: APFI realizes that it must innovate and expand its product line to be viable. It has invested in technology to expand its product line and hopes to have two new products on the market during 2021, a dark chocolate bar and a spread, Choc "N Nut, made from coconut butter, cocoa and honey. It is also experimenting with a coffee creamer made from powdered coconut milk.





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A PRO-DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE TO FRONT OF PACKAGE LABELLING

by Dr. Patrick Antoine,
Principal Consultant and Interim Head, CARICOM Private Sector Organization



The issue of Front of Package Labelling is a priority on the CARICOM Private Sector Organization's (CPSO) Strategic Agenda. The CPSO is committed to the objectives of Front of Package Labelling (FOPL) as part of a group of measures impacting consumer behaviour with regard to reducing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in our Caribbean Community.

Our singular concern remains identifying an appropriate FoPNL model and the most effective approach to implementing, for the benefit of all our consumers within the Region.

Now in terms of Context

The CPSO is deeply committed to the United Nations-Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs), to which the Private Sector has contributed, and in many instances, have mainstreamed into its ethos. The strategic and business plans of a significant proportion of the private sector, including many "global giants" have incorporated the SDGs. CPSO Members have also increasingly incorporated the SDGs into their business models. By its actions, the private sector is demonstrating its commitment to 'Walk the Talk'.

The Political Declaration of the 'Third High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases', envisaged clear roles for the 'private sector'. Paragraph 16 of the Political Declaration (PD) joins the Private Sector with Civil Society and Governments in pursuing "whole-of-society" approaches, as well as "health-in-all-policies" approaches, "equity-based" approaches and "life-course" approaches, in responding to the challenge of NCDs. This, by developing adequate national

multisectoral responses for their prevention and control and promoting and protecting the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

The CPSO recognizes that the private sector is joined in a perpetual social contract with our People, Civil Society, and Governments to address NCDs and the FOPL model that we endorse as an important component of this partnership.

It is in this context, among others, that the CPSO is committed to urgent action that addresses the high incidence of NCDs which ranks as a leading cause of death and morbidity among our Caribbean People.

The CPSO's commitment to supporting measures that will effectively address NCDs among our People is unwavering. A multi-faceted and multi-dimensional strategy will be required in order to adequately address the myriad casual dimensions of NCDs.

With respect to the FOPL in particular, and labelling more generally, the CPSO believes that all stakeholders should resist the pull, no matter how tempting, to reduce these extremely critical discussions and decisions to a level of simplification, that causes our CARICOM society to underperform on the target NCDs related to harm and morbidity reduction.

The Private Sector has been, and remains concerned about labels and labelling, in many instances, demonstrably more so than others, and well before these concerns became 'in vogue'.

By market practice, the private sector within CARICOM Member States has been co-existing with and has

already adopted the FOPL 'models' and 'thresholds' of our major trading partners, for example the 'UK Traffic Light', 'US Facts Up Front' and 'EU GDA'. There are also other FOPL models which form market practice, to the extent that they exist within the market of Member States, even in the absence of formal adoption at national or regional level.

So, the discussion that is taking place in CARICOM among Members and Stakeholders of the CARICOM family, is purely and exclusively about the most appropriate FOPL model (and in some sense the 'thresholds') to be adopted and successfully implemented by every one of our Member States, as we converge towards the objective of policy harmonization.

After examining the available evidence on the implementation and performance of FOPL Models across the Hemisphere, premised on the record of successful public policy experiences in CARICOM; and having regard to the WHO's Guideline Document on 'Guiding Principles and Framework Manual for Front of Pack Labelling for Promoting Healthy Diet' (2018), the CPSO holds the position that the NCDs challenge is best addressed through an integrated approach. That approach should include components such as public education and awareness, affordable and healthy food choices, and a labelling scheme and arrangement which is most appropriate and effective for CARICOM.

Premised on the 'whole of society' approach, the UN-SDGs, and regional harmonization, the regional private sector's position is that the appropriate model of FOPL must consider the health, trade, development, and other implications which accompany this decisive shift for the Community, having regard to its broad trade, economic and other implications.

We hold the position that, where it can be avoided, CARICOM Stakeholders must ensure that we do not promote policies that will result in an undue burden, and deleterious impact on product innovation, production, trade, and to the recovery of our economic and social indicators, including employment, poverty, revenue, and market expansion. Crucially, policies that contribute to a further weakening of the integrity of our regional common market, that is the CSME, must be avoided.

The CPSO is also of the view that the institutional architecture for standards development in this area, at the national and regional level, must be underpinned by the World Health Organization (WHO) 'Guiding Principles and Framework Manual for Front of Pack Labelling for Promoting Healthy Diet' (2018), which establishes best practice.

After considerable deliberation, the Regional Private Sector came to the consensus view that a CARICOM Impact Assessment Study of the various FOPL Models is essential in order for the Community to avoid adopting an FOPL model, which visits unintended consequences on the productive and services sectors as well as consumers, without achieving the intended objective. That objective is to provide consumer information, which changes consumer behaviour towards the consumption of healthier types of food, but which does not overly restrict consumer choice, with implications for overall consumer welfare and well-being.

Following presentation to the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) of CARICOM, the CPSO secured the support of the Community for the time and space to be provided for the undertaking of the Study – "CARICOM Impact Assessment: Determination of An Appropriate FoPNL Scheme and the Identification of a Harmonized Approach for Implementation".

The Study will be conducted consistent with the highest standards of professional integrity, and with adherence to sound, well-established, norms and scientific evidence, so that we, as a Community, may together embrace the challenge of instituting the best and most appropriate FOPL Model for CARICOM.

The CPSO counts itself as a major player in this partnership and collaboration. We are all working towards a common good for our Caribbean Civilization. It is necessary, however, to re-emphasize that the path taken to arrive at our goals must be grounded in analysis, sound scientific evidence, and evidence from other Hemispheric States. This is why, the CARICOM Impact Assessment, as the foundation of the "whole of society" approach to FOPL policy development in our Region, is an imperative at this time.

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ISO Implementation and Certification on the Rise in Guyana



(Georgetown, June 23, 2021) Over the past five years, Guyana has seen increased awareness and interest across local companies for ISO compliance and certification services, particularly as the oil and gas industry emerges with market demands for businesses to be certified and accredited.

The pursuit of ISO compliance, certification and accreditation by many local companies is a voluntary decision usually taken by top management, which highlights strategic commitment toward delivering consistency, confidence, and competence in processes and systems implemented. These are also driven by consumers who are cognizant of the multiple benefits.

Deryck Omar, Chief Executive Officer of CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ), recently shared that “the economic operators of trade within the Caribbean and extra-regionally are demanding that imported goods be certified to international or national standards before entry is allowed as a means of adhering to WTO rules, as well as safeguarding the health and safety of the region's consumers.”

Furthermore, data from ISO surveys of management system certification worldwide during 2015-2019

revealed that in Guyana, ISO Certification was acquired for three main management systems, which are Quality Management Systems – Requirements ISO 9001, Environmental Management Systems – Requirements with guidance for use ISO 14001, and Food Safety Management Systems – Requirements for organizations in the food chain ISO 22000.

The numbers of ISO 9001 certificates issued for this five year period was 46, 41, 40, 20, and 27, respectively. The total number of certificates issued was 174. There was also no organization in Guyana that attained ISO certification in other certifiable management systems standard. For the ISO 14001, Environmental Management System Standard, certificates issued during 2015 to 2019 were 1, 2, 2, 2, and 1, which was a total of 8 certificates issued. Meanwhile, certificates issued for ISO 22000 were 1 in 2015, 1 in 2016, 3 in 2017, 3 in 2018, and 3 in 2019. A total of 11 ISO 22000 certificates were issued to local businesses.

A number of local companies sought ISO compliance and certification to the ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems Standard during this timeframe as a measure to improve internal systems and continue consistent delivery of good-quality products

and services that meet customer expectations. Moreover, there are a number of contributing factors which may impact the decreased number of certificates issued compared globally. For instance, suspension or withdrawal of interest, or a company voluntarily canceling its certification.

The ISO Survey of Certifications is an annual survey of the number of valid certificates to ISO management system standards worldwide. The providers of data are the certification bodies accredited by the IAF MLA Members. This survey shows the number of valid certificates to ISO management standards (such as ISO 9001 and ISO 14001) reported annually for each

country. This also provides information about countries and their implementation of standards, the sectors, and the sites. The certificates indicate that the respective countries have businesses that are conforming to the specified management system standards.

Nonetheless, there is optimism that more companies in Guyana will become certified to other management system standards such as ISO 45001 Occupational Safety and Health Management System, ISO 50001 Energy Management System, and ISO 27001 Information Security Management System.





BULKAN TIMBER WORKS INC.

Bulkan Timber Works Inc. (BTW), located at Yarrowkabra, on the Linden / Soesdyke Highway, has now opened a Showroom at **8 Smyth Street, Werk-en-Rust, in Georgetown** (obliquely opposite the Licence Office).

The company had decided earlier this year to place an emphasis on the local market and in this regard, invested significantly in upgrading their plant & equipment, as well as the physical infrastructure of their facility. As a result, the company has total confidence in all of their products, with the attention to detail that takes place in the manufacturing process.



Apart from their multifaceted skills to build an entire home, BTW can also supply **Flooring, Outdoor Decking, Mouldings, Doors, Roofing Shingles, Kitchen Cupboards, Windows, Outdoor Play Sets, Clothes Horses, Clocks, Pantries, Bar and Bar Stools, Coffee Tables, Customized Carvings**, and many more.



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ADVISORY

Validity of TIN Certificates

The Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) has been receiving numerous requests from taxpayers to renew their TIN Certificates because of the refusal by some business entities to accept the old version of the Certificate. This is not only costly to the taxpayer but also puts undue strain on the resources of the GRA in this period of COVID-19.

The Revenue Authority wishes to assure the public that a TIN Certificate, whether old or new, remains a **VALID** document and should be accepted by businesses during any transaction. Businesses should therefore **DESIST** from misleading taxpayers in this regard.

The GRA has redesigned the image of the TIN Certificate to coincide with the launch of the Optimal Revenue Management System (RMS) and commenced issuance to first-time applicants and those seeking reprints due to loss or damage or changes in name or address. Notwithstanding, the update did not relinquish the validity of the previous version.



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Join the GMSA and let us help you gain that competitive
edge you need to succeed in business today in
ADVOCACY, NETWORKING, MARKETING, TRAINING

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