

that way in order to protect the traditional family recipes, she said. The would-be expansion in a year's time would necessitate the addition of more machinery and more personnel, but she said a project of that scale would not be something that could easily be copied.

Within five years, she's expecting a more sizable international presence – and a significant volume increase for the cocoa butter product in particular.

“The growth is only due to the demand,” she said. “There is a demand locally and there is a demand internationally, and we want to be able to fit that demand. People are requesting the product out there and we want to get it out there. The quality is really great.

“A year ago it was a project. And I'm happy to say that the project has evolved into the business.” The family began by reaching back into the estate's history to restart a chocolate-making tradition that had begun among the estate's slave labor population. The chocolate made by the slaves had never been sold as a commercial product and it was no longer available in the local market.

“There were not many people locally that were doing anything with cocoa beans at that time,” Saunders said. “We were one of the pioneers into trying to get something more from cocoa than selling and exporting the beans.”

The business initially sold the chocolates – shaped in the form of a cocoa pod or fruit – to local souvenir shops. It was a home-based souvenir business at first, but the buzz surrounding the products soon grew and ultimately drew the interest of local supermarkets interested in getting involved.

Various ministries soon got word of the products as well, which prompted orders from the government to have the products available for island-based events such as conferences and trade shows.



“It was almost immediate that the traditional chocolate became an item,” Saunders said. “I was a bit surprised, because it started off as just sort of a hobby to earn some extra income. And it has turned into a business. It has grown beyond the hobby stage.”



ADB proudly supports our female agri-entrepreneur Ms. Darril Astrida Saunders and her award winning Exotic Caribbean Mountain Pride line of novel chocolate products made from Trinidad's premium cocoa beans.



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