

Credit Bureaus Get BOJ Green Light

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CRIF NM Credit Assure Limited and Creditinfo Jamaica Limited have received final approval from the Bank of Jamaica (BOJ), clearing the way for the credit bureaus to begin issuing credit reports.

The approval followed audits of the systems put in place, including the security of data collected by the bureaus.

"It's a validation," said CRIF NM CEO-designate Terrence Cooper, regarding the central bank's sign-off on his operation.

CRIF NM is a joint venture partnership between Neal & Massy Holdings of Trinidad and CRIF, a global credit bureau company founded in 1988 and which has operations in parts of Europe and Asia, and now the Caribbean.

Creditinfo Jamaica is a joint venture between local partner Coalesce Credit Solutions Limited and international credit bureau Creditinfo Group, an international service provider for credit information and risk-management solutions, currently operating in 14 countries worldwide.

market pioneers

Creditinfo says its credit reports will be based on credit information provided by institutions with which it has formal agreements for data sharing through its Credit Bureau System (CBS).

"We have cleared the final hurdle of over one year of rigorous evaluation and inspection by the Bank of Jamaica, the supervising authority for credit bureaus," said Creditinfo Jamaica CEO Megan Deane in a statement announcing that the bureau was now ready to go live.

"We have successfully demonstrated the capabilities of the CBS using real data, and now, it's all systems go," she said.

The two operations, both of which were licensed in early 2012, are pioneers in Jamaica's nascent credit bureau market.

CRIF NM said it spent US\$2 million over the past year to put its systems in place, in line with stipulations of its licence. It has established a data centre, whose security measures include 24-hour surveillance cameras and keypad access doors for all main entry points.

The company operates from the Winchester Business Centre in Kingston.

"We look forward to being able to start providing credit reports to both financial institutions and consumers within the next 60 days," said Cooper.

"The establishment of the CRIF NM Credit Bureau will empower both businesses and consumers to better assess credit risk and lending/borrowing practices, which will contribute to sustainable economic growth for the entire country."

CRIF NM maintains a "full file" credit database, which includes what the company describes as both positive as well as negative data on consumers and companies.

credit information providers

The bureaus' information sources under law include banks, building societies, insurance companies, microfinanciers, credit unions, securities dealers, hire purchase companies, as well as agencies such as the Students' Loan Bureau, National Housing Trust, among others.

These entities are designed as 'credit information providers' (CIP).

Deane said Creditinfo has recruited an overseas specialist in credit bureau systems and risk management to undertake technical training of its CIP partners who have signed up with her bureau, starting in early June.

Outside of its core business of individual and corporate credit information, Creditinfo also plans to develop "value-added products from publicly accessible data sources, packaging them and making them easily accessible to users," said Deane.

CRIF NM is also planning ahead.

"In the near future, CRIF NM will be offering value-added products, such as fraud-detection solutions, authentication products, as well as portfolio management strategies," said Cooper.

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