

CASE STUDY

Breaking new ground with the first tropical poultry research facility in the Americas

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In a major step for agricultural science in the Caribbean, CB Group and Devenish Nutrition have launched a first-of-its-kind tropical research and development (R&D) facility designed to optimise poultry production for high-temperature, high-humidity conditions.

With a $1 million investment, the facility opened on October 25, 2024, at The Nest, CB Group's eco-industrial park in St. Catherine. It represents an effort to generate data specific to tropical climates, where farmers have long relied on research from vastly different environmental conditions, often leading to inefficiencies and higher operational costs. The House has 48 pens and has been designed in a way that allows for up to six different dietary treatments to be evaluated during each trial.

Jamaica's poultry sector, which has seen 25% growth over the last decade — primarily through small-scale farmers who now comprise 40% of the industry — has faced persistent challenges tied to its climate. Research protocols in the Caribbean have traditionally borrowed from colder regions, with limited applicability to local realities. The facility is designed to close this gap, testing variables such as feed formulations, housing set-ups, and poultry breeds to isolate what works best for tropical farming.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, CB Group Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Lyn explained that the facility is aimed at pioneering research and development in order to improve local efficiency, productivity and competitiveness within a global industry.

> *"Poultry is an extremely competitive industry worldwide, and we must do everything we can to be as efficient as possible and do what's best for our country," Lyn told International Poultry Production. "We're excited about this partnership because of the significant potential to enhance performance, not only for Jamaica but for all farmers operating in similar environmental conditions."*

The R&D centre will facilitate experiments and data collection such as feed formulations, housing conditions, and breeds to determine the best combination for Jamaica's tropical climate, with findings expected to help drive both local and regional improvements in poultry production.

Beyond improving production practices, the project signals a push towards greater agricultural self-reliance and food security in Jamaica. According to Tony McEntee, CEO of Devenish Nutrition, the research partnership represents a response to global supply chain disruptions and geopolitical tensions, such as the Russia-Ukraine war, which have impacted food prices and availability.

> *"This is a step toward food security, self-sufficiency, and improving the export potential for Jamaica — a game changer for the poultry community worldwide. "The science-based approach in our Performance House model supports the development and introduction of new feed and management solutions that can maximise animal performance and producer profitability by optimising cost/kg gain. By conducting the research in tropical conditions, the research developed will not only be relevant for Caribbean Broilers, but our other customers in the region and beyond."*

McEntee believes the R&D centre will enable farmers to streamline operations, lower costs, and improve product quality, making Jamaican poultry potentially more competitive in export markets as well. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Mining Floyd Green attended the launch and welcomed the initiative, noting its potential to support Jamaica's agricultural sustainability goals. Green emphasised that while government backing for agrarian R&D is strong, results must be rooted in data collected locally.

> *"If we are going to continue growing and if we are going to be sustainable, then it has to be based on research that is not done abroad and imported here, but research done here for us."*

The Government's commitment to agricultural development comes amid recent calls from the private sector for policy reform that will make it easier for farmers to access technological resources and R&D findings.

Although the minister did not elaborate on any new funding programmes, he acknowledged that Jamaica's small-scale poultry farmers have played a substantial role in the sector's growth, and facilitating their access to the R&D centre's insights is crucial.

The facility's establishment is a strategic move that could redefine poultry production in tropical regions across the Americas. With its specific focus on high-temperature and high humidity conditions, the centre holds the potential to drive innovation in farming practices that can scale to other countries with similar climates. By using data applicable to local conditions CB Group and Devenish seek to cut down on inefficiencies and reduce the risks associated with adapting research conducted in non-tropical environments.

While CB Group has not specified how widely it will distribute its findings, Lyn hinted at plans to share results with local farmers, indicating that the facility's research could help improve production efficiency beyond the group's operations. ■

