

The Development Bank of Jamaica Facilitates High-Value Agricultural Cluster Focused on Strawberry Innovation

Kingston, Jamaica – A bold step forward for Jamaican agriculture was commemorated today at the Strawberry Cluster Open Day, hosted at Abbey Garden Farms in Mandeville. The event marked the official showcase of the Jamaica Strawberry Cluster, a pioneering initiative supported by the Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ) under its Boosting Innovation, Growth and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem (BIGEE) Programme, which is funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the European Union (EU).

Through funding from the Jamaica Business Fund valued at J\$43M, the initiative has achieved several important milestones. These include conducting a study tour to explore global best practices, developing a technology pack suited to Jamaican growing conditions that can facilitate replication of the model throughout the local strawberry industry, constructing new greenhouses and retrofitting existing ones with advanced cooling systems powered by solar energy, and introducing a high-yield strawberry variety which has adapted well to Jamaica's climatic conditions.

Speaking at the Open Day, Dr. David Lowe, Managing Director of the Development Bank of Jamaica stated ***“this is not just a win for the crop, this is a win for Jamaican agriculture. It proves what’s possible when technology, finance and vision align. By investing in high-value crops like strawberries, we are not only creating new economic opportunities for local farmers but also taking concrete steps toward reducing our reliance on imports through smart, export-ready solutions. We want to implement a new approach for funding specific opportunities for MSME pioneers - this is a working model for proof of concept in agriculture sector”***

With the global strawberry market valued at over US\$22B, this project positions Jamaica to take a significant step toward entering that space, by establishing a high-tech, climate-resilient strawberry industry capable of producing both fresh fruit and value-added products for local consumption and international export

Honourable Minister Floyd Green, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining, who was the keynote speaker at the event stated ***“What we’re seeing here is the future of Jamaican agriculture; smart, modern and inclusive. This strawberry cluster project shows how we can transform the sector by introducing the right technology and supporting the right people. We’re especially proud to see young people and women taking the lead, using tools like greenhouse cooling systems to boost production and adapt to climate***

challenges. It's proof that with the right investment and vision, agriculture can be a dynamic space for innovation, income generation and national growth. This is the kind of transformation the Government is committed to driving across the island."

The project serves as a model for innovation in agriculture, demonstrating how Jamaican SMEs can build competitive, export-ready industries with the right tools and support. For the four cluster farmers involved, Family Pride Farm, Abbey Garden Farm, Jikoni Table of Jamaica and Adam's Valley Farm; the Jamaica Strawberry Cluster represents more than a project, it is the result of years of hard work and a shared commitment to transforming agriculture in Jamaica. Their collaboration and willingness to push boundaries have been instrumental in laying the foundation for what could become a game-changing export industry. Mr. Derron Grant of Family Pride Farm and the Cluster lead noted ***"the DBJ BIGEE grant will enable the cluster farmers to scale up their production output of strawberries by extending the growing season well into the summer months. The evaporative cooling system installed in the greenhouses is a first for Jamaica and represents a major step in adapting to the higher temperatures being recorded as a result of climate change. Strawberry is a high valued crop with unsatisfied local demand. This cluster model has facilitated resource and knowledge sharing among greenhouse farmers who see themselves as collaborators who will continue to work together beyond this project. We are thankful for the work of the DBJ and its BIGGEE grant fund because we were able to transform our big ideas and dreams into reality."***

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About the Development Bank of Jamaica:

The Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ) is a leading financial institution that was established by the Government of Jamaica in 2000, through mergers with other development-related institutions, including the Agricultural Credit Bank of Jamaica, the National Development Bank of Jamaica, and the National Investment Bank of Jamaica in 2006.

It operates as a pivotal catalyst for private sector led economic development, primarily focusing on providing financial and technical support to various sectors within Jamaica. DBJ's primary objective is to stimulate economic growth and development by facilitating access to financing and business support services for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and growth of strategic sectors. As a development finance institution, DBJ plays a crucial role in supporting the growth and expansion of local businesses, financing and business support options, promoting entrepreneurship, and fostering innovation.

DBJ is an Agency of the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation.

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