



PHOTO & CAPTION

Preparing Poultry for Export Markets



Photo: USAID/GTIS

The poultry market in the Caribbean Community's 15 member countries is valued at an estimated \$350 million. The size of this market signals exciting prospects for the growth of Guyana's poultry sector. But, Guyana's poultry farmers cannot begin exporting poultry until they meet strict sanitary and health standards and regulations imposed by other member states.

Before a single chicken can land in Trinidadian or Barbadian supermarkets, it must first undergo a comprehensive disease survey in Guyana that guarantees its safety for export.

To conduct this survey, which

includes testing for avian influenza and other diseases that may affect poultry, Guyana needed to equip its laboratories with specialized equipment and train technicians and veterinarians.

To help Guyana reach this goal, USAID funded training workshops and provided laboratory equipment valued at \$40,000 for the Ministry of Agriculture's new Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. USAID allocated an additional \$30,000 for future training needs and laboratory supplies to ensure that the lab's capacity continues to grow.

The lab training courses were attended by technicians from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Department, and the University of Guyana. Participants tested 900 blood samples for the bird flu virus. As the poultry farmers expected, they were all negative. The next challenge is to conduct a countrywide survey so technicians can certify that Guyana's entire poultry stock is free of infectious diseases. The day that happens, Guyanese poultry farmers will be in a position to start exporting poultry products, finally tapping into that \$350 million market.

Technicians at Guyana's new Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in Georgetown test blood samples from commercial poultry farms for the bird flu virus. The 900 preliminary tests that were carried out all proved negative.