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## Jamaica Ornamental Fish Cluster off the mark

**Kingston, Jamaica** – The Competitiveness Company (TCC) has partnered with local ornamental fish growers and breeders to form the Jamaica Ornamental Fish Cluster. The cluster was formed with the purpose of connecting local suppliers in the ornamental fish business with growing international markets. On June 26, 2014, Compete Caribbean (CC) provided grant funding in the amount USD 500,000 to bolster the Ornamental Fish Cluster's exporting capacity of quality ornamental aquatic products to international buyers, at competitive market prices.

The end of October marked the successful closing of the project and first international shipment of ornamental fish from the cluster's now operational exporting facility. One of the cluster's crowning achievements has been to demonstrate the revenue generating potential of the ornamental fish industry and its capability to generate income for residents of underserved/vulnerable communities, especially women and youth.

Since the project's inception, a number of results have been objectively captured to reflect the project impact – sales have increased by an astounding 1300%; the cluster is now exporting to 5 major cities in the United States and Canada, as compared to before the project when they were only exporting to 1; employment within the sector has risen by 134%, creating 86 jobs in the process and the average monthly income of ornamental fish breeders/ growers has risen by approximately 400% .

Additionally the new exporting facility supported by the project, assisted the cluster to address logistical constraints and improve their procedures for conditioning and packaging the fish for

travel. With CC's support, the facility has been retrofitted with the necessary equipment and fixtures to meet international standards in bio-security. Overall the improvements have led to significant reduction in the mortality rates of the exported fish, with pre-intervention mortality rates as high as 37%, to 3% during the course of the project. The current mortality rate for the cluster's exports is now on average 1%; a boost in customer satisfaction and the capacity to absorb greater levels of production from farmers within vulnerable communities.

Current importers have demonstrated such confidence in the quality of the product that the cluster has recently received an order for 3.6 million fish a year from international buyers.

With the project coming to a successful conclusion, The Jamaica Ornamental Fish Cluster is now poised to work together with local government institutions, namely the Veterinary Services Division (VSD) within the Ministry of Agriculture to maintain its progress and grow as a resilient, competitive, niche exporter.

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