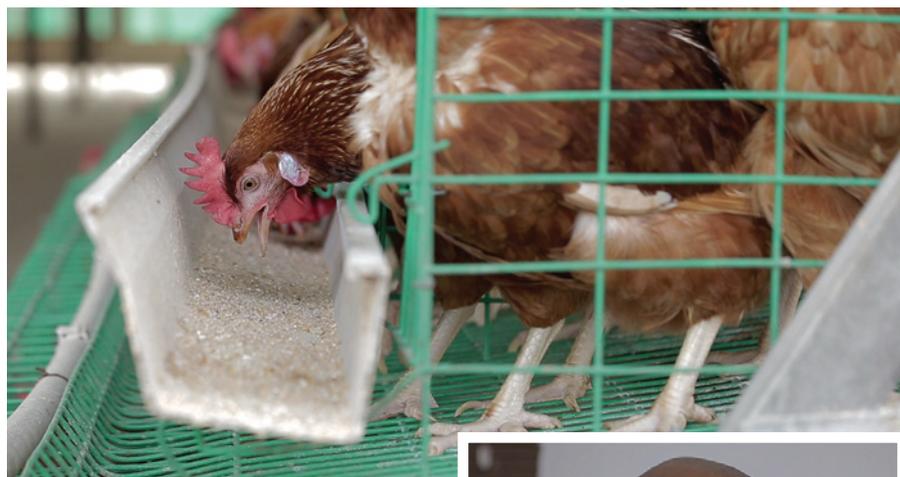


# Reaping the benefits in sub-Saharan Africa with new livestock initiative

In a hotel in Kampala, Uganda, a group of poultry farmers, producers and veterinarians are gathered to hear about ways to control and identify coccidiosis safely through feed. The seminar they are attending is being run by animal health company Zoetis, and they are listening to Dieter Vancraeynest, Senior Director of Commercial Development and Lifecycle Management, Poultry at Zoetis.

Meanwhile in Ibadan, Nigeria, smallholder farmers and the veterinary community are looking forward to the opening of a new diagnostics centre, which should ensure correct diagnosis and treatment of poultry and, as a result, reduce the mortality rate of their birds.



## ALPHA initiative

These activities – aimed at improving poultry health, increasing production and boosting the incomes of smallholder farmers – are a result of the role being played by the African Livestock Productivity and Health Advancement (ALPHA) initiative.

Launched last year, ALPHA brings together veterinarians, poultry industry representatives, producers, suppliers and farmers, with the aim of establishing sustainable veterinary diagnostic networks and animal health infrastructures in Uganda, Nigeria and Ethiopia.

Funded by a \$14.4 million grant from the

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, ALPHA is a three-year initiative that sees Zoetis providing and coordinating on the ground support and expertise in each country.

## Positive impact

One year into the project, the company has facilitated the establishment of the main hubs and basic framework required to ultimately improve poultry health and positively impact on the livelihoods of farmers in sub-Saharan Africa.

To do this, Zoetis has built a team to address regulatory and technical issues, increase the supply and reliability of quality veterinary medicines, diagnostics and services, and engage with local farmers, veterinarians and government stakeholders to understand local needs and develop sustainable solutions.

“We have made good progress and have been applying our learnings to achieve pioneering results in our first project year,” Dr Gabriel Varga, Regional Director Africa for Zoetis, and the leader of the project, told International Poultry Production.

For poultry farmer Kasujja Abdu, who attended the seminar in Kampala, the ALPHA initiative means being able to access good quality veterinary medicines and services, as well as practical training.

“ALPHA has helped farmers get more knowledge about how we keep our poultry



**Dr Godwin Abonyi, Nigerian Veterinary Medicine Association.**

and how to prevent infections on our farms,” he says.

Dr Atedu Pius, Zoetis Field Veterinarian for ALPHA, says the challenges facing poultry veterinarians in Uganda are primarily the lack of diagnostic tools, which leaves most veterinarians with the options of basic guess work, assumptions and post-mortem reports to reach a diagnosis.

“We also lack the appropriate medication for all the disease conditions in Uganda,” he says. Similar issues are being faced in Nigeria, where Dr Godwin Abonyi, President of the Nigerian Veterinary Medicine Association says veterinarians and farmers alike are trying to ensure production in disease-free environments.

Dr Abonyi says the importance of ALPHA

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## Kasujja Abdu, Ugandan poultry farmer.



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cannot be over-emphasised, as it offers experience based on better developed veterinary practices, superior technological information and diagnostics as well as husbandry practices.

“We are in the tropics, where there are a lot of disease-causing agents so accurate diagnosis of disease is key,” he says. He adds however that “even with the right medications we often have the challenge of having the right drugs at the right time.”

As a result, Zoetis has been working to increase the reliable supply of quality veterinarian medicines by submitting registrations in Uganda for poultry and livestock vaccines and has applied for product registrations in Ethiopia and Nigeria.



### New diagnostic centre

Based on discussions and support from ALPHA, the Nigerian government will open a brand new diagnostic centre in Ibadan, the country's main poultry production area in June, while ALPHA will provide technical expertise as well as materials and equipment for education and training.

Martin Middernacht, CEO of Lagos-based poultry supplier Chi Farms, has been working closely with Zoetis to develop a network of diagnostic centres around Nigeria, and says

ALPHA will have a big impact on its own operations as well as the industry when the new diagnostic facilities open.

“The new laboratories will help our clients and general farms in Nigeria through the correct diagnosing of the health status of birds so that the correct medication and vaccinations can be given,” he says.

For Dr Gabriel Varga of Zoetis, seeing first-hand the dire animal health situation in sub-Saharan Africa has meant working on all possible fronts to quickly establish the framework for success of the ALPHA initiative.

“Key to our approach is the ownership we can create with veterinarians, authorities, distributors and farmers, which starts with awareness, education and training.

“Looking ahead we will continue to build the infrastructure needed to improve animal health and productivity across the sub-Saharan region.” ■

The first anniversary of the ALPHA initiative was marked with the production of a short video which can be viewed at: <https://vimeo.com/ketchumstudios/reviiew/264652850/72f80384fa>