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News

New faces of farming - RYEEP graduates set to revolutionise agriculture

by TIFFANY PRYCE - STAR Writer | June 16, 2025 | Share on [Me gusta](#) 0 Post

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Builder graduates step proudly into the spotlight, representing hope, innovation, and a thriving future for Jamaica's rural economy.

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More than 100 young trailblazers walked across the stage to collect their certificates at the Jamaica Conference Centre last Friday, at the 2005 Rural Youth Economic Empowerment Programme-Builder (RYEEP) graduation ceremony. The youngsters were celebrated as the new face of Jamaican agriculture.

Backed by the Jamaica 4-H Clubs, HEART/NSTA Trust, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining, the RYEEP programme is fast becoming the gold standard for youth entrepreneurial training and empowerment. The theme of the ceremony -- 'Empower. Educate. Excel.' -- came alive through passionate speeches and powerful testimonies of transformation.

"What I was told is that this group is one of the better groups that we have worked with over the years," said Peter Thompson, executive director of the Jamaica 4-H Clubs.

"I don't know whether or not we have done more work in the selection process so that we get better quality candidates who have the interest and have that zeal to carry on beyond the training, but what I do know, graduates, is that the programme was made for you," he added.

Stakeholders emphasised that the youth participants had not only completed rigorous training in life skills, business development, and agricultural best practices, but had already begun transforming local communities through modern agro-ventures backed by \$30 million in start-up support. From field tours at CASE and Ebony Park Academy to hands-on business training at the Jamaica Business Development Corporation's Incubator Resource Centre, the graduates were immersed in the real deal. Guided by expert coaches and 4-H staff, they developed viable agro-enterprises rooted in sustainability, resilience, and profit.

Dr Cheryl McLaughlin of HEART/NSTA Trust, who delivered the keynote address, urged the graduates to seize the moment.



"This is not the end, it is just the end of one phase of the journey. But certainly, it is the beginning of the journey of your life," she said.

McLaughlin said that the graduates are not leaving with just a certificate "but with real pathways to success".

"They are supported, they are seen, and they are set up to thrive," she said.

For his part, Floyd Green, minister of agriculture, fisheries and mining, described the RYEED as "the best youth development programme I've seen across government." He said the programme is already paying dividends, pointing to RYEED alumni who've gone on to win national awards and dominate local markets.

Green announced plans to expand the programme from its current three-year average of 360 participants to 1,000 over the next cycle.

"We have a model that we can scale up. We're seeing more young people choosing agriculture, and that is what we want," the minister said.

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