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ASIA EDITION

Puerto Rico's Global Comeback: How Lilly's Expansion Strengthens the Island's Biopharma Future

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Invest Puerto Rico's CEO, Ella Woger-Nieves, reflects on how Eli Lilly's expansion is driving industrial renewal, workforce empowerment, and the island's emergence as a resilient life sciences hub for the world.



Puerto Rico’s transformation into a powerhouse of advanced biopharmaceutical manufacturing is gaining new momentum. **In this exclusive interview, Ella Woger-Nieves, Chief Executive Officer of Invest Puerto Rico, shares insights on how Eli Lilly’s landmark expansion is set to shape the island’s industrial and human capital landscape**. From invigorating supplier networks and academic partnerships to positioning Puerto Rico as a cornerstone of secure, U.S.-aligned drug manufacturing, she discusses the island’s strategic rise as a trusted hub for global life sciences.

The project is also described as one of the largest private-sector investments in Puerto Rico’s history. Beyond job creation, how will this investment strengthen the island’s industrial ecosystem — for instance through supplier partnerships, workforce development, or collaboration with local academic and R&D institutions?

Lilly’s expansion reinforces Puerto Rico’s position as a cornerstone of global biopharmaceutical manufacturing. Beyond the direct jobs it will create, the project can generate a powerful ripple effect across the island’s industrial ecosystem, strengthening local supplier networks, expanding demand for specialized services, and attracting complementary investments. It can also deepen collaboration between industry, academia, and workforce development programs, ensuring that Puerto Rican talent continues to evolve alongside the most advanced technologies in the sector. Ultimately, this investment not only expands manufacturing capacity but also fortifies the interconnected ecosystem that sustains Puerto Rico’s global competitiveness.

From a policy and supply-chain perspective, this investment has been described as a “vote of confidence” in Puerto Rico’s role within the U.S. pharmaceutical landscape. How do you see the island’s role evolving in the next decade in ensuring secure and resilient drug manufacturing for the U.S. and global markets?

Puerto Rico plays a strategic role in U.S. pharmaceutical security. It ranks as the #1 pharmaceutical exporter in the U.S., shipping over $54 billion in life sciences products annually and hosting facilities from 7 of the top 20 medical device companies worldwide. Lilly's expansion underscores that strength and points to a future where Puerto Rico continues to anchor secure, resilient, and U.S.-compliant supply chains. As reshoring accelerates, we expect the island to serve as a key node for high-value manufacturing, innovation, and logistics within the U.S. ecosystem, combining world-class life sciences infrastructure, regulatory alignment, and an unmatched pool of STEM talent.

Lastly, on a more human note, Lilly has spoken about its gratitude for the Puerto Rican workforce and community partnerships. What does this expansion mean for your people on the ground — in terms of upskilling, career growth, and the long-term development of advanced manufacturing talent on the island?

Puerto Rico's workforce has been the backbone of the biopharmaceutical industry for more than six decades. Lilly's decision is a testament to that talent, to the skill, resilience, and commitment of Puerto Rican professionals. This expansion means more opportunities for career advancement, new technical training, and exposure to cutting-edge manufacturing processes. It also contributes to our broader goal of positioning Puerto Rico as a center for advanced manufacturing excellence within the U.S., where local professionals can build lifelong, high-value careers without leaving the island.