

# LIFE SCIENCES



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## URUGUAY OFFERS ATTRACTIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFE SCIENCES COMPANIES

Uruguay provides a compelling proposition for companies operating in the life sciences sector, encompassing pharmaceuticals, medical devices, animal health, and biotechnology-based industries.

The country is recognized for its stability, institutional robustness, high quality of life, access to a skilled workforce, and attractive tax incentives. These key attributes establish Uruguay as a trusted and dependable choice, exemplified by its

successful history as a business hub for multinational and multi-Latin pharmaceutical companies. Many companies have chosen Uruguay for their regional distribution centers, global service centers, and production facilities.

With its 3.5 million inhabitants, Uruguay efficiently meets domestic demand while maintaining a harmonious balance with the broader regional supply chain.

### #1 IN LATAM AT:



**DEMOCRACY INDEX**  
(Economist Intelligence Unit, 2024)



**RULE OF LAW INDEX**  
(World Justice Project, 2024)



**LOW CORRUPTION**  
(Transparency International,



**SOCIAL MOBILITY**  
(World Economic Forum,



**CIVIL LIBERTIES**  
(Freedom House,



**E-GOVERNMENT  
DEVELOPMENT INDEX**  
(United Nations, 2024)



**LOGISTICS &  
DISTRIBUTION**



**COMMERCE  
& SERVICES**



**MANUFACTURING  
& INNOVATION**

### UNIQUE COMBINATION OF ATTRIBUTES

#### STABILITY, TRANSPARENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY

##### #1 IN LATAM

- Democracy & Rule of law
- ESG performance
- Quality of life

#### CERTAINTIES AND EASINESS FOR BUSINESS

- Small and export - oriented country
- Outstanding tax incentives
- Government support

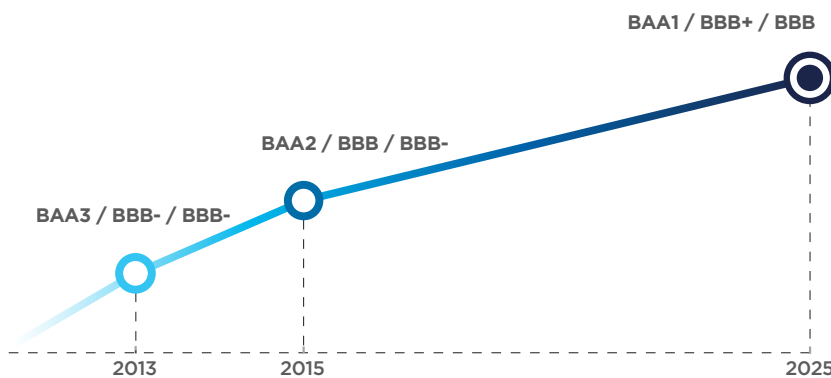
#### TRACK RECORD AS A PHARMACEUTICAL HUB

- +20 Regional Distribution & Services Centers
- +30 manufacturing sites
- World class tech & cold chain infrastructure
- Support & innovation ecosystem

## URUGUAY VS EUROPE



## 13 CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF INVESTMENT GRADE

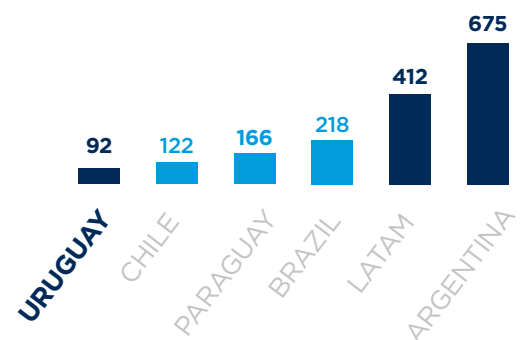


MOODY'S

STANDARD  
& POOR'S  
The McGraw-Hill Companies

FitchRatings

## THE LOWEST COUNTRY RISK IN THE REGION / 2025





## LEADER IN TELECOMMUNICATION

### #1 IN LATAM AT:



**INTERNET PENETRATION  
- FIXED BROADBAND**  
(International Telecommunication Union)



**% OF HOMES CONNECTED  
BY OPTICAL FIBER**

**ADOPTION OF IT**  
(World Economic Forum)



**% OF COMPANIES  
CONNECTED BY OPTICAL FIBER**



**DIGITAL NATIONS MEMBER  
(WORLD'S LEADING DIGITAL  
GOVERNMENTS)**



**E-GOVERNMENT  
DEVELOPMENT INDEX**  
(United Nations, 2024)



**DIGITAL  
INCLUSION**



**MULTILINGUAL  
TALENT**



ONLY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD  
TO ACHIEVE ONE LAPTOP PER  
CHILD FULL IMPLEMENTATION.

Source: ETI 2019, ECH 2018 - 2019

**#1** IN TOEFL IN  
SOUTH AMERICA

GENERAL  
POPULATION

ENGLISH

**56%**

PORTUGUESE

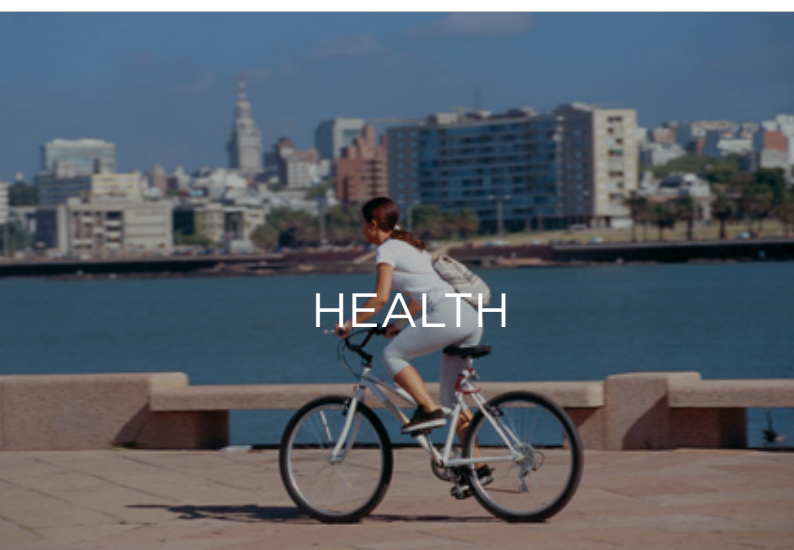
**30%**

TECHNICAL  
AND UNIVERSITY  
STUDENTS AND  
GRADUATES

**82%**

**43%**

## #1 THE BEST QUALITY OF LIFE IN LATIN AMERICA



[liveinuruguay.uy](https://liveinuruguay.uy)

## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Uruguay presents various complementary services and investment prospects within the life sciences sector. From pioneering drug development initiatives to the most advanced services along the value chain, including regional distribution, back-office administration, and top-notch customer service, Uruguay has cultivated a dynamic cluster predominantly comprised of multinational and multi-Latin enterprises.

The country has fostered an environment conducive to success, drawing the presence of numerous multinational pharmaceutical and medical device companies. They have established a strong foothold in Uruguay, leveraging it as a pivotal trade and global services hub. This entails the establishment of regional distribution centers,

trading facilities, and essential support services.

Furthermore, Uruguay has evolved into a significant production hub, marked by the construction of state-of-the-art facilities and strategic acquisitions of local enterprises within human and animal health sectors. Additionally, Uruguay has gained recognition as a robust hub for research and development services. It is home to Contract Research Organizations (CROs), diagnostic ventures, and innovative startups that collectively contribute to the advancement of the life sciences sector.

This multifaceted landscape underscores Uruguay's commitment to fostering innovation and progress in the life sciences industry.







**+170**  
COMPANIES

**75%**

HUMAN PHARMA AND  
MEDICAL DEVICES

**25%**

ANIMAL HEALTH



**+7800**  
JOBS

**82%**

HUMAN  
HEALTH

**18%**

ANIMAL  
HEALTH

**+4700**

EMPLOYED  
EXPORTS

**+1600**

EMPLOYED  
HUBS



## 1 TRADE AND GLOBAL SERVICES HUB

In addition to Uruguay's overarching advantages, activities associated with the trade and global services platform enjoy specific, targeted benefits. In 2024, 60 companies actively participated in the dynamic landscape of the pharmaceutical hub operations in Uruguay. This number has steadily risen over the past three years, marked by the inclusion of prominent multinational corporations such as AstraZeneca, CSL Behring, and GSK. In 2024, most of these foreign multinationals collectively employed almost 2000 individuals. Uruguay presents promising growth prospects for

companies opting to establish their operations within the country. It's a common trajectory for international firms initiating regional logistics operations in Uruguay to incorporate service-oriented activities as a key facet of their expansion strategy. Likewise, global enterprises primarily focused on the domestic market often integrate trade and service hub operations. Additionally, companies engaged in production activities tailored for the domestic market frequently leverage exports as a pivotal driver of their growth strategy.

### 1.1 SUPPLY CHAIN HUB

Uruguay has a long track record in logistics and distribution activities for the region, positioning it as a logistics hub of reference. The sector includes various operations carried out in the country's free trade zones, ports, and airports.

Pharma companies are the leading players in this ecosystem, operating as captive distribution centers or through specialized logistics operators.

In addition, a series of providers complete the chain: carriers, freight forwarders, customs brokers, and specialized cold chain suppliers. These operations are carried out directly by international pharma companies or through third-party logistics operators (3PLs).

**ADVANTAGES OF  
HAVING A REGIONAL  
DISTRIBUTION CENTER  
IN URUGUAY**

**MINIMAL INVENTORY**

**REDUCING DELIVERY TIMES**

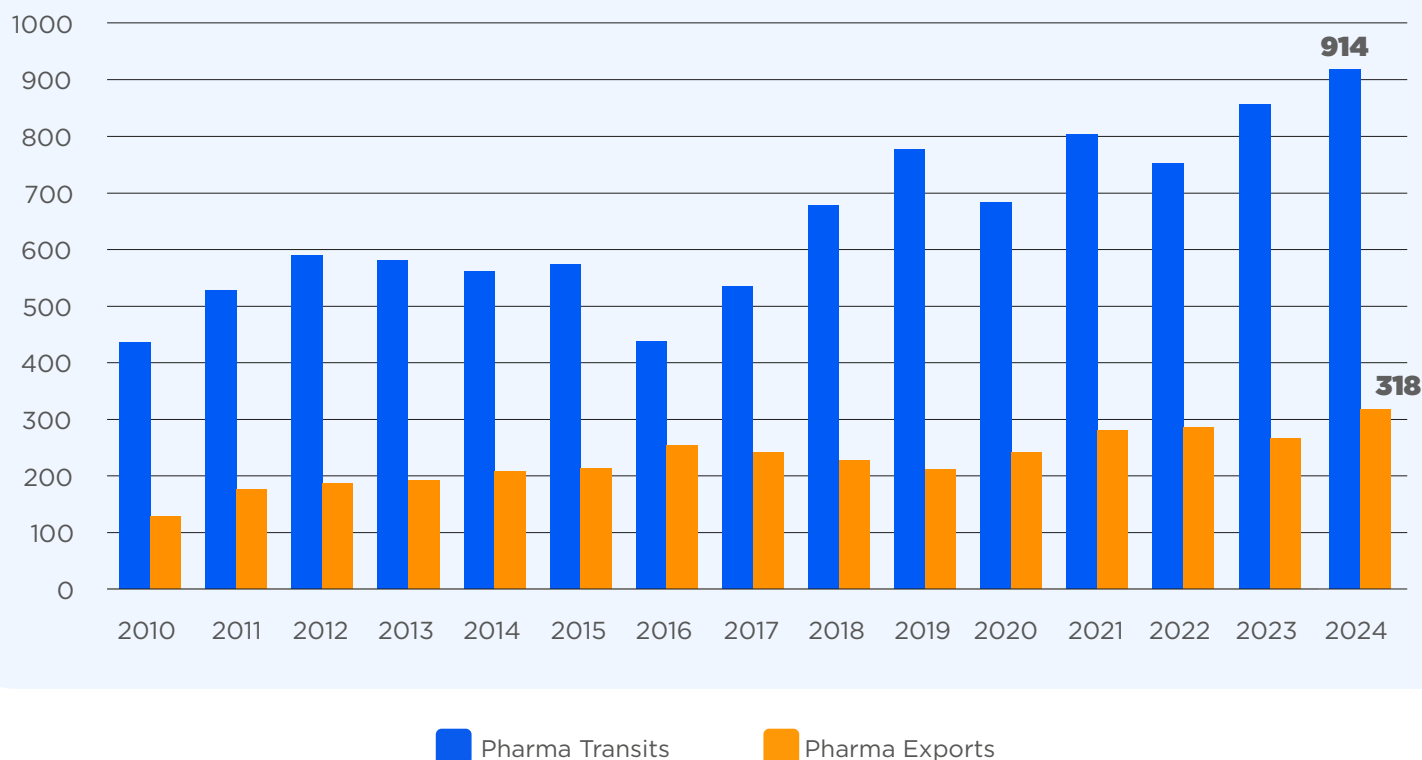
**DEFERRING IMPORT  
DUTIES & TAXES PAYMENT**

**LOWERING LOGISTICS RISKS,  
E.G TEMPERATURE  
EXCURSIONS**

Over the past ten years, the pharmaceutical industry has charted an impressive growth course, with exports nearly tripling in volume. This resilient business model has firmly established itself as a standout option for companies serving the sector throughout the region. In 2024, pharmaceutical exports reached an impressive milestone, totaling USD 327 million (excluding medical equipment). This figure represented almost 3% of the country's overall exports. It's a testament to Uruguay's significance as a pivotal distribution hub within the industry.

Notably, in 2024, pharmaceutical transits reached a remarkable USD 914 million, nearly tripling the value of pharmaceutical sector exports. These pharmaceutical transits primarily originate from Europe and the United States, with their ultimate destinations being the large markets of Argentina and Brazil. This remarkable growth underscores Uruguay's integral role in the pharmaceutical supply chain and its vital connection between global pharmaceutical sources and the thriving markets of South America.

### LOCAL SALES AND EXPORTS - HUMAN USE MEDICINES (USD MILLIONS)



Source Prepared by Uruguay XXI based on National Customs Authority (DNA).

## 1.2 REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION CENTERS & PROVIDERS

### FREE ZONES



### LOGISTICS OPERATORS



### FORWARDERS



### COLD CHAIN



### PACKAGING



Various business platforms and specialized service providers are available to cater to the establishment and growth of trade and service hub operations. Within this thriving ecosystem, a comprehensive range of business and

support services is readily accessible and tailored to the specific requirements of companies operating in the country. These services cover the entire logistics chain, ensuring businesses receive the specialized assistance they need.

## 1.3 TRADING AND PROCUREMENT

Consolidating trade and procurement operations in Uruguay, whether involving the transit of goods or not, offers a strategic advantage in optimizing tax expenditures related to the purchase and sale of products.

This holds true for intra-firm trade and procurement activities, encompassing the supply of manufacturing facilities and other regional entities.

## 1.4 HEADQUARTERS & SHARED SERVICES CENTERS

Uruguay offers advantages for developing business-related service activities. It creates opportunities for establishing captive operations as regional headquarters or service centers (e.g., foreign trade, supply chain, finance and accounting, human resources, customer service, and research and analysis) to support regional and global business.

The country provides a reliable platform for providing high-quality services at competitive costs.

These are some of the reasons why multinational companies choose Uruguay to establish their service centers, improving their business processes, and regional insertion.

In the pharmaceutical field, in particular, several multinational companies with regional distribution centers in Uruguay have chosen to incorporate support and commercial service activities, while others chose the country to locate their service centers alone.





## SUCCESS STORIES



In 2016, AstraZeneca implemented a strategic logistics operation in Latin America Cargo City to distribute finished products imported to Argentina and Brazil. The products transit through Uruguay after long-haul sea and air transport to be consolidated and shipped by truck to Buenos Aires and São Paulo. This project delivered significant results (e.g., stable travel time, damage, and temperature excursion reductions), for which the company was awarded a Distinction in Global Temperature Control and an honorable mention for Best Network Design Strategy at the 2017 LogiPharma Awards.



Merck was established in Uruguay in 1996. Operating from the Zonamerica free trade zone, the company develops logistics, trade, and shared services centers led by regional and global managers. Following Merck's development in Latin America, the operation has grown steadily, and currently employs almost 200 people working on all platforms. In terms of logistics, Merck packages and distributes biotechnology products manufactured in Europe, which are shipped to various countries in the region. Regarding business services (Merck Business Services LATAM), the company established a Shared Services Center that includes trade, procurement, M&A, supply chain, and regulatory support activities for the region.



Roche established a Supply Chain Center in Uruguay that coordinates all logistics activities in Latin America by taking advantage of the free airport system of Latin America Cargo City (LACC). This center manages the entire supply chain from the manufacturing plants to all regional subsidiaries, taking care of a wide range of activities such as order management, invoicing, and customer service. The center is divided into three departments: Inter-company Operations, Supply Chain, and Transportation. Each of them works in alignment with Roche's regional interests and requirements. Currently, 48 people are employed in hub related positions.



Abbott is a global healthcare company devoted to discovering new medicines, new technologies, and ways of managing healthcare. Its products range from nutritional and laboratory diagnostics to medical devices and drug therapies. In 2015, the firm established its regional supply chain office in Uruguay, in the Zonamerica free trade zone, providing support to the Latin American region in finance, procurement, supply chain, and distribution.

## 2 MANUFACTURING

Uruguay emerges as a highly appealing location for establishing manufacturing facilities geared toward servicing the broader region. These operations seamlessly integrate with regional distribution centers and the centralization of vital services.

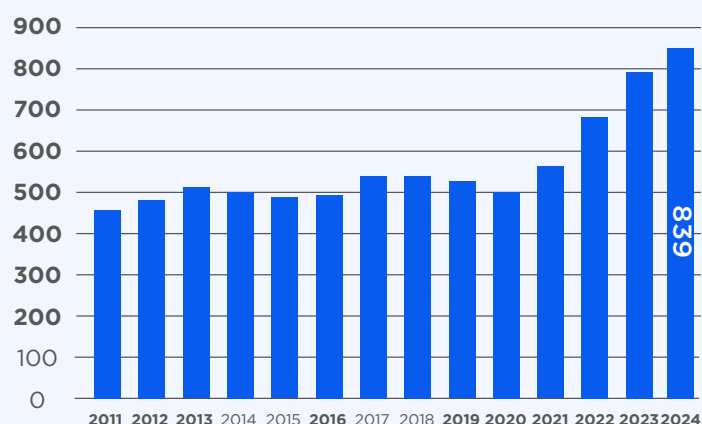
Many companies from various sectors choose Uruguay as their base for manufacturing, drawn by the benefits afforded by the temporary admissions regime for input imports. This strategic advantage is further amplified by an export tax rebate program, where pharmaceuticals, in particular, enjoy a 3% exports rebate.

### 2.1 HUMAN HEALTH

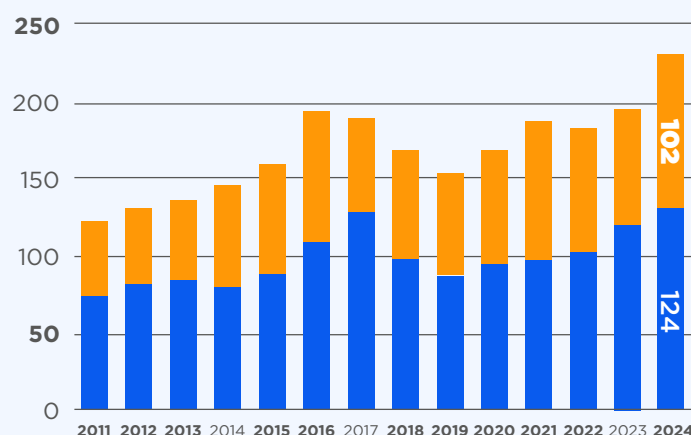
Within the pharmaceutical industry, the production of drugs for human use commands a significant share, accounting for nearly 80% of the total output. As of 2024, approximately 40 companies were actively engaged in pharmaceutical manufacturing within the country. Among these, 24 were dedicated exporters, while the remainder exclusively served the domestic market. Uruguay's pharmaceutical exports for human use have witnessed notable growth, surging from USD 87 million in 2010 to USD 226 million in 2024, representing 1,7% of the country's total exports.


South America stands as the primary destination for these pharmaceutical exports. Over the past three years, the number of exporting companies has increased, even though nearly 93% of exports in 2024 were concentrated within the portfolios of just five companies. The pharmaceutical sector is a significant employer in Uruguay, with almost 6100 individuals gainfully employed. Of this workforce, over 3600 are engaged in roles within exporting companies, underscoring the sector's substantial contribution to the nation's employment landscape.

#### LOCAL SALES AND EXPORTS - HUMAN USE MEDICINES



 Local Sales



 Exports from  
customs territory

 Exports from  
Free Trade Zones

Source: own compilation based on CEFA and DNA (National Customs Directorate)

## SUCCESS STORIES



Megalabs is a pharmaceutical company with 17 plants and 7 R&D centers in Latin America. In 2011, the company began the process of establishing its campus in the Parque de las Ciencias free trade zone, which consists of a pharmaceutical plant. This development center carries out R&D projects for the entire region, a quality control sector, and a corporate center from where the administrative, financial, and technology tasks related to the company's operations throughout Latin America are conducted. These facilities allow Megalabs to continue its consolidation and expansion with an almost unlimited growth capacity and under a stable and reliable legal system. In Uruguay, Megalabs expanded its presence by acquiring local laboratories such as Celsius, Spedar, Icos, and Haymann. They all develop manufacturing activities focused on the domestic and regional markets.



Eriochem is a pharmaceutical company dedicated to synthesizing active pharmaceutical ingredients and producing liquid and lyophilized injectables. The company was created in Argentina and eventually expanded to produce cancer drugs for Latin America, Asia Pacific, Europe, and North America, including the United States. In Uruguay, Eriochem performs secondary packaging and analysis of cancer pharmaceuticals for export to several countries. The company has a prefilled syringe plant in the Parque de las Ciencias free trade zone, and it has administrative and operational offices for the region.



Virbac Uruguay's (until 2010, Laboratorio Santa Elena S.A.) main activity in the country is producing, distributing, and exporting animal health products. In addition to its vaccine production facilities, Virbac Uruguay has a research and development center for biological products (vaccines). In 2023, it began the construction of a third plant for biological production.



MSD - Prondil S.A. is a biotechnological laboratory specializing in developing and producing vaccines for veterinary use. With a clear export profile (its products are marketed in more than 20 countries in Latin America, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East), Prondil has adopted the most relevant and demanding international standards in the field of biologics (U.S. CFR, Ph. Eur., OIE, WHO, and Mercosur's GMPs). Its production plant in Montevideo has state-of-the-art equipment and facilities that guarantee biosafety and environmental care.

## 2.2 ANIMAL HEALTH

In Uruguay, the veterinary pharmaceutical sector predominantly focuses on the manufacturing and distributing versatile - broad spectrum treatments- products designed for a wide range of applications. These products play a crucial role in serving both the companion animal market and the vital livestock industry, the cornerstone of the country's primary production sectors. This includes livestock such as cattle, horses, and sheep, the base of the meat and wool industries. Uruguay's animal health industry is primarily driven by 37 companies. These companies encompass a broad spectrum of offerings, ranging from medicines and vaccines to serums and proteins, all tailored for animal use.

As of 2024, this segment employed approximately 1,360 individuals. Notably, only two companies boasted a workforce exceeding 100 employees, with the majority employing between 10 and 30 individuals. In the same year, 28 companies actively contributed to exports, amounting to USD 91 million. Furthermore, veterinary pharmaceuticals from Uruguay reached over 63 international markets. Over half of these exports reached South America, with Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina serving as the primary destinations.

## 3 R&D SERVICES

Uruguay boasts a well-established innovation ecosystem characterized by globally recognized research groups and a mature technology industry dedicated to crafting high-value solutions for global markets. A dynamic innovation support ecosystem is in place to bolster production-related activities in the pharmaceutical sector.

This ecosystem actively promotes the introduction of new product lines and the execution of innovation projects through partnerships between companies and research groups. These activities span various domains, including biotechnology, diagnostics, clinical research, medical equipment, and additives. They are further enriched by the involvement of startups and research collectives that actively contribute to research and development endeavors.

Within this thriving landscape, over 160 dedicated research and development groups have assembled, uniting over 1600 highly skilled researchers with the expertise to design processes and products conforming to international quality control standards.

Furthermore, a dynamic biotechnology-based ecosystem plays a pivotal role in advancing innovation, fostering collaborations between enterprises and research entities. This ecosystem has paved the way for the establishment of more than 20 biotechnology-based startups, with a predominant focus on enhancing human health.



## TECHNOLOGY PARKS & FREE ZONES



## SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS



## EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS



## RESEARCH CENTERS



**900**  
RESEARCHES



**+160**  
RESEARCH  
GROUPS

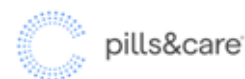
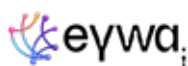


**+30**  
STARTUPS

The country also has a vast network of research institutions and incubators with state-of-the-art technology platforms and qualified human resources at competitive costs. These organizations include the Institut Pasteur of Montevideo (IPMon), the Pando Science and Technology Park (PCTP), the Institute for Biological Research Clemente Estable (IIBCE),

the Biomedical Research Center (CEINBIO), the Uruguayan Molecular Imaging Center (CUDIM), the Technological Laboratory of Uruguay (LATU), the Institute of Hygiene and the Research and Innovation Biotechnological Center (CBI+I), and the National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIA).

## START UPS



## INCUBATORS, ACCELERATORS, AND FUNDS



## AVAILABLE R&D CAPABILITIES

### **Special regime for entry and exit of biological samples (Decree 392/2011). Digitalized process through the Single Window for Foreign Trade (<https://vuce.gub.uy/mbio2>)**

Biopharmaceutical quality control platform  
(Pasteur Institute of Montevideo - IPMont)

[www.pasteur.uy/servicios/laboratorio-de-control-de-biofarmacos](http://www.pasteur.uy/servicios/laboratorio-de-control-de-biofarmacos)

Tissue and animal culture platforms for the research of new drugs for cancer, cardiovascular, and neurological diseases, among others (IPMont complemented with laboratories of the University of the Republic [UdelaR] and the Clemente Estable Institute of Biological Research [IIBCE])

[www.pasteur.uy/servicios/biotecnologia-animales-laboratorio](http://www.pasteur.uy/servicios/biotecnologia-animales-laboratorio)

Extensive capacity and experience in the development of diagnostic tools (IPMont, UdelaR, IIBCE) and companies producing diagnostic solutions.

Vaccine distribution capabilities for the region. GSK uses Uruguay as a hub for the distribution of human vaccines to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

Research Lab Biological Safety - P3

Quality control and chemical characterization laboratories for small molecule drug discovery (UdelaR). Pilot plant for research of GMP-certified batches of small molecule drugs (UdelaR).

[www.fq.edu.uy/?q=es/node/933](http://www.fq.edu.uy/?q=es/node/933)

Bioinformatics capabilities for both molecular modeling and genomic and metagenomic analysis (UdelaR, IPMont, IIBCE).

[www.pasteur.uy/unidades-tecnologicas/bioinformatica](http://www.pasteur.uy/unidades-tecnologicas/bioinformatica)

Production of recombinant proteins for animal health at different scales (UdelaR, IPMont, and private companies).

[www.pasteur.uy/unidades-tecnologicas/ingenieria-de-proteinas](http://www.pasteur.uy/unidades-tecnologicas/ingenieria-de-proteinas)

A unique nationwide integrated health system combining public and private sectors, ideal for clinical research studies.

[www.gub.uy/ministerio-salud-publica/sistema-nacional-integrado-salud](http://www.gub.uy/ministerio-salud-publica/sistema-nacional-integrado-salud)

Coworking spaces and incubators for the installation and development of startups.

## SUCCESS STORIES



Integer Montevideo (formerly CCC Medical Devices) designs, develops, and manufactures implantable medical devices to serve primarily the U.S. market. The company currently employs 436 people, 102 of whom are engineers (electrical, software, mechanical, and chemical) involved in research and development activities. In Uruguay, the company has been operating since the 1970s, producing pacemakers. Until 2014, CCC focused entirely on developing special electronic and software engineering projects, including prototype design and development of implantable and

non-implantable devices, as well as manufacturing for its customers. In August 2014, CCC was acquired by Greatbatch™, a medical device outsourcing company supplying components for implantable devices. In 2016, Greatbatch acquired Lake Region Medical™ and rebranded to Integer™. With the merger of CCC and Lake Region Medical, Integer expanded its capabilities from components to fully integrated systems to better meet the needs of original equipment manufacturers (OEMs).



Translational Research in Oncology (TRIO) is a clinical research organization specializing in global oncology trials. The company combines the strengths of an international group of researchers, experienced clinical research professionals, and expert laboratory scientists to guide the development of innovative and biologically sound therapies. Based in Edmonton (Canada), in 2009, TRIO

established a regional office in World Trade Center Montevideo (Uruguay), where the company carries out activities related to the operational development of cancer clinical trials, from inception to data validation. TRIO currently employs 22 scientists and professionals with solid backgrounds in oncology, biochemistry, biotechnology, and bioinformatics, among others.



## SUCCESS STORIES



Founded in 2018, the drug design and development startup created by researchers and entrepreneurs from the Institut Pasteur de Montevideo (IP Montevideo) and the University of the Republic (Udelar) is dedicated to developing new molecules for the treatment of human diseases. As a result of this effort, the company currently has a pipeline of 60 compounds aimed at treating metabolic, neurodegenerative, and autoimmune diseases. One of these molecules is SANA, a drug developed for the prevention and treatment of obesity and its metabolic complications, such as type 2 diabetes. After successfully passing in vitro and animal testing for safety, efficacy, and

toxicity, the compound recently completed its first human clinical trial (Phase I). The study—randomized, double-blind, and placebo-controlled—demonstrated that the compound is safe and well tolerated, and it led to reductions in body mass index and blood glucose levels among the 44 participants. These highly encouraging results were published in June 2025 in *Nature Metabolism* and represent a milestone for Uruguayan and South American science.



ATGen is a leading biotechnology company in Uruguay. It was founded in 2001 as the first spin-off of the Faculty of Science (University of the Republic) with strong links to the national and international academic system, as well as public and private R&D institutions. ATGen covers a 700 m<sup>2</sup> area, including a 330 m<sup>2</sup> manufacturing area designed with a Biosafety Level 2. Its facilities are cGMP and

ISO 13485 certified for the manufacture of recombinant subunit vaccine antigens and in vitro diagnostics for human and veterinary use with the approval of the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries of Uruguay.



DECISION PROCESS



LANDING



AFTERCARE

- CUSTOMIZED INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT
- AGENDA PREPARATION
- INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ACTORS
- RECRUITMENT AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT
- POLICY ADVOCACY
- CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT
- ACCESS TO INVESTMENT PROMOTION TOOLS

## CONTACT OUR SPECIALIST



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