



U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS LOCAL FOOD AND FARM COUNCIL
Advancing Agricultural Sustainability and Food Security in the USVI

BUDGET TESTIMONY

PRESENTED BY

DR. USMAN ADAMU,
CO-CHAIR DESIGNEE

V.I. LOCAL FOOD AND FARM COUNCIL
ON BEHALF OF

AUGUST 7th, 2026

DR. SAFIYA GEORGE, CO-CHAIR
DR. LOUIS E. PETERSEN, CO-CHAIR

BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON BUDGET, APPROPRIATIONS,
AND FINANCE

**THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF THE
VIRGIN ISLANDS**

FRITS LAWAEZ
LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Table of Contents

OPENING & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
I. THE AGRICULTURAL PLAN AT WORK	2
II. PROGRESS UNDER THE AGRICULTURAL PLAN.....	2
A. Mandate Nos. 1 and 5 — Policy Review, Coordination, and Oversight	2
B. Mandate No. 2 — Strengthening Agricultural Businesses	2
Agriculture Business Center	3
Territorial Agricultural Plan (TAP) Grant Academy and Fellowship	3
Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund.....	3
Organic Agriculture	3
C. Mandate No. 3 — Local Food and Farm Coordinator	4
D. Mandate No. 4 — Local Food and Farm Fund and Supporting Nonprofit.....	4
E. Mandate No. 6 — Virgin Islands Local Food Symbol.....	4
F. Mandate No. 7 — Preparing the Next Generation	4
G. Mandate No. 8 — Strengthening Data and Accountability	5
H. Additional Recommendation No. 5 — Grant-Writing Capacity	5
III. FISCAL YEAR 2027 RECOMMENDATIONS	5
Requested Legislative Actions.....	5
SUMMARY OF REQUESTED FY2027 APPROPRIATIONS	6
IV. CLOSING REMARKS.....	7
APPENDICES.....	8
Appendix A — Act No. 8716.....	8
Appendix B — Agricultural Plan Implementation Progress Report	8
Appendix C — Agriculture Business Center Performance Report.....	8
Appendix D — TAP Grant Academy and Fellowship Update.....	8
Appendix E — Sustainability and Agriculture Education Report.....	8
Appendix F — Agricultural Data Collection and Analysis Report	8
Appendix G — PPPIF Investment Update	8

OPENING & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr., members of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance, and the people of the Virgin Islands.

My name is Dr. Usman Adamu, Dean and Director of the University of the Virgin Islands School of Agriculture. I appear today as the Co-Chair Designee of the Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council, on behalf of the Council's Co-Chairs, Dr. Safiya George, President of the University of the Virgin Islands, and Dr. Louis Petersen, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture, as well as the members of the Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the implementation of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan and to present the Council's Fiscal Year 2027 budget recommendations. The Council recognizes the difficult choices before this Committee as it balances competing needs with limited resources. Accordingly, our recommendations focus on sustaining programs that are producing results, addressing critical implementation gaps, and protecting the Territory's prior investments in agriculture.

I. THE AGRICULTURAL PLAN AT WORK

At Pleasant Valley Farm on St. Croix, wildlife pressure, unreliable irrigation, and the absence of a tractor limited production. Through the Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund, the farm obtained equipment, irrigation, durable hives, and fencing. Vegetable and honey production increased, and two workers were hired. This example demonstrates what implementation of the Agricultural Plan can accomplish: targeted public investment can increase production, strengthen local businesses, and create employment.

Direct investment alone, however, is not enough. Producers also need business assistance and sustainable production support; students need agricultural education and career pathways; policymakers need reliable data; and implementation partners need effective coordination. The Agricultural Plan connects these needs through its mandates.

II. PROGRESS UNDER THE AGRICULTURAL PLAN

A. Mandate Nos. 1 and 5 — Policy Review, Coordination, and Oversight

Act No. 8716 charged the Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council with coordinating implementation among government agencies, UVI, farmers, fishers, educators, nonprofits, and private-sector partners. During the past year, the Council convened meetings, coordinated with partners, engaged stakeholders, developed policy recommendations, and reported to the Legislature. This work advances Mandates Nos. 1 and 5 and supports implementation across the remaining mandates.

B. Mandate No. 2 — Strengthening Agricultural Businesses

Mandate No. 2 has advanced through business counseling, grant readiness and leadership development, direct producer investment, and increased attention to organic agriculture. Together, these initiatives help agricultural enterprises strengthen operations, pursue funding, and address production constraints.

Agriculture Business Center

During the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2026, the Agriculture Business Center served 28 new clients, provided 251 individual counseling sessions, and conducted 29 training events reaching 376 participants. It also helped clients secure \$177,000 in capital infusions and obtained \$100,000 in grants to expand programming. Despite these results, the Center did not receive its Fiscal Year 2026 implementation funding, its operating funds are exhausted, and two positions and Territory-wide services are at risk.

Territorial Agricultural Plan (TAP) Grant Academy and Fellowship

From January through March 2026, the UVI Office of Sponsored Programs and the Council offered the three-part Territorial Agricultural Plan Grant Academy. The series introduced farmers, fishers, agricultural businesses, and community organizations to funding opportunities, proposal writing, and available grant and loan resources.

The Academy recorded 117 workshop registrations: 26 in January, 45 in February, and 46 in March. Participants gained practical information and skills for identifying opportunities and preparing competitive proposals and budgets.

Two inaugural TAP Fellows helped lead the Academy while developing their agricultural leadership skills. Together, the Academy and Fellowship expanded access to grant education and established a foundation for more grant-ready producers and organizations.

Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund

To date, the Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund has completed one funding cycle. The program received 106 applications and made 12 awards totaling \$500,567. Follow-up reporting in 2025 found that 80 percent of awardees increased production capacity.

The investments supported equipment, irrigation, farm infrastructure, solar power, processing, cold storage, pollinator protection, and other improvements. The volume of applications, compared with the number of awards available, demonstrates continued demand for direct agricultural investment.

Organic Agriculture

Organic and sustainable production is increasingly important given the Territory's limited land, water constraints, climate conditions, and dependence on imported inputs. Soil health, water stewardship, integrated pest management, composting, and resilient production practices can strengthen local agriculture.

The Agriculture Business Center connected sustainable production with business planning through its participation in Learning Under the Mahogany at Wadeh's Organic Farm on St. Thomas.

The Council also established an Organic Agriculture Subcommittee. Its next phase will focus on producer education, technical assistance, demonstrations, transition and certification guidance, soil-building practices, and outreach.

C. Mandate No. 3 — Local Food and Farm Coordinator

Coordination remains one of the most significant implementation gaps. The Agricultural Plan involves multiple agencies, programs, funding streams, subcommittees, and reporting responsibilities, but no dedicated individual coordinates this work daily.

The administrative framework for the Local Food and Farm Coordinator has been developed, and a qualified candidate identified. The Council seeks to transfer the position and its appropriation from VIDA to UVI through an amendment to Act No. 8700, Section 5.

The Coordinator would manage day-to-day implementation, facilitate communication, track responsibilities and deliverables, support stakeholder engagement, and prepare updates for the Council and Legislature. This position would provide the continuity and accountability needed between Council meetings.

D. Mandate No. 4 — Local Food and Farm Fund and Supporting Nonprofit

The Council established a supporting 501(c)(3) nonprofit to advance development of the Local Food and Farm Fund. It provides a vehicle to pursue grants, philanthropy, sponsorships, and partnerships that may not be available through ordinary government appropriations.

The nonprofit does not replace the Council, alter UVI's or VIDA's responsibilities, or substitute private fundraising for legislative support. It remains under Council governance and subject to applicable legal, financial, audit, and reporting requirements.

The Council asks the Committee to acknowledge that this structure is consistent with Mandate No. 4, allowing the Council to pursue additional resources for implementation.

E. Mandate No. 6 — Virgin Islands Local Food Symbol

The Virgin Islands Local Food Symbol remains in development. Once established, the symbol will help consumers identify locally grown and produced goods, strengthen the visibility of farmers, fishers, and food producers, and encourage greater demand for local products. Development will require stakeholder input on standards, branding, marketing, and public education.

F. Mandate No. 7 — Preparing the Next Generation

The Department of Education has continued developing a Territory-wide agricultural education and workforce pathway. It created more than 1,000 pages of locally grounded curriculum and Virgin Islands Standards of Achievement for pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The curriculum received unanimous Career and Technical Education Board approval, support from the Virgin Islands Board of Education and the Council, and was shared through town halls on St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John.

FFA expanded from no active chapters to three and from 25 to 150 participating students, restoring the Territory's recognition by the National FFA Organization. Ten students are preparing for the 2026–2027 National FFA Convention, and more than 10,000 seed packs and grow kits have been distributed.

Six industry-size greenhouses are planned, irrigation systems are being installed, and additional agricultural facilities are advancing. Along with curriculum implementation, teacher training, animal-

husbandry programs, school gardens, and experiential learning, these investments will help develop the Territory's future agricultural workforce.

G. Mandate No. 8 — Strengthening Data and Accountability

During Fiscal Year 2025–2026, the Eastern Caribbean Center conducted field and telephone surveys, trained interviewers, managed quality assurance, and continued developing a Territory-wide agricultural data system.

Its surveys recorded 244 home and community garden responses and interviews with 339 farmers, 51 fishers, and eight respondents engaged in both. Continued data collection will help the Council and Legislature measure production, food security, business sustainability, geographic reach, and program outcomes.

H. Additional Recommendation No. 5 — Grant-Writing Capacity

Grant-writing capacity remains an implementation gap. The Council seeks one dedicated Grant Writer to work with the Coordinator, the supporting nonprofit, VIDA, UVI, and other partners to identify opportunities, develop competitive applications, and secure resources for coordinated Agricultural Plan projects.

The nonprofit would approve, administer, account for, and report on the funds it receives, while the Grant Writer and Coordinator would develop project concepts, assemble supporting data and budgets, and coordinate partner commitments.

This role would not duplicate the TAP Grant Academy. The Academy prepares producers and organizations to pursue funding for their own operations; the Grant Writer and Coordinator would focus on projects benefiting the broader agricultural community.

III. FISCAL YEAR 2027 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following budget table summarizes the Council's Fiscal Year 2027 recommendations. These investments sustain programs producing measurable results and address critical implementation gaps.

The Council is maintaining the same overall request as the prior fiscal year, reorganized by implementing entity to clarify responsibility, reflect the proposed transfer of the Coordinator to UVI, and identify critical VIDA positions.

Requested Legislative Actions

The Council respectfully requests that the Legislature:

1. Appropriate \$2,983,000 for the Fiscal Year 2027 priorities summarized on the following page.
2. Amend Act No. 8700, Section 5, to transfer the Local Food and Farm Coordinator position and its supporting appropriation from VIDA to UVI.
3. Fund the identified critical positions, including one dedicated Grant Writer.

4. Acknowledge the Council's supporting 501(c)(3) nonprofit as a vehicle for fundraising, grant administration, and implementation of Mandate No. 4, subject to applicable legal, financial, audit, and reporting requirements.
5. Authorize reasonable reallocation of previously appropriated UVI Agricultural Plan funds among Council-related activities, subject to appropriate oversight and reporting.

SUMMARY OF REQUESTED FY2027 APPROPRIATIONS

Implementing Entity	Priority Area	Relevant Mandate	Requested Amount
University of the Virgin Islands	Agriculture Business Center	Mandate No. 2	\$250,000
	Organic Agriculture	Mandate No. 2	\$150,000
	Council Operations and Administrative Support	Mandate No. 5	\$300,000
	Eastern Caribbean Center	Mandate No. 8	\$150,000
	Territorial Agricultural Plan Grant Academy and Fellowship	Mandate No. 2	\$250,000
	Local Food and Farm Coordinator	Mandate No. 3	\$86,715
UVI Subtotal			\$1,186,715
Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture	Civil Engineer	Additional Recommendation No. 3	Included
	Plant Pathologist	Additional Recommendation No. 3	Included
	Grant Writer	Additional Recommendation No. 5	Included
VIDA Subtotal			\$296,285
Virgin Islands Department of Education	Sustainability and Agricultural Education	Mandate No. 7	\$500,000
VIDE Subtotal			\$500,000
Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority	PPPIF Grant Program	Mandate No. 2	\$1,000,000
VIDEDA Subtotal			\$1,000,000
GRAND TOTAL REQUEST FOR FY2027			\$2,983,000

The Coordinator is shown as a separate UVI line item, with \$86,715 deducted from VIDA's critical staffing allocation. The Civil Engineer, Plant Pathologist, and Grant Writer remain within the combined VIDA allocation. These adjustments do not increase the overall request.

IV. CLOSING REMARKS

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, the results presented today demonstrate that the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan can produce meaningful outcomes. The question now is how much more the Territory can accomplish with sustained investment, adequate staffing, and consistent implementation.

The Council respectfully asks the Legislature to build upon the progress already made and support its Fiscal Year 2027 recommendations as an investment in a more productive, resilient, and food-secure Virgin Islands.

On behalf of Co-Chairs Dr. Safiya George and Dr. Louis Petersen, the members of the Council, and our implementation partners, thank you for your consideration. We stand ready to answer any questions.

APPENDICES

Title	Description
Appendix A — Act No. 8716	Establishes the Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council and sets forth its statutory mandates, responsibilities, membership, and role in coordinating implementation of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan.
Appendix B — Agricultural Plan Implementation Progress Report	Summarizes implementation status, accomplishments, current needs, and FY2027 priorities across the mandates of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan.
Appendix C — Agriculture Business Center Performance Report	Reports Fiscal Year 2026 third-quarter counseling, training, outreach, grant assistance, access-to-capital activities, and client outcomes.
Appendix D — TAP Grant Academy and Fellowship Update	Summarizes the Territorial Agricultural Plan Grant Academy, fellowship development, program accomplishments, administrative improvements, and future priorities.
Appendix E — Sustainability and Agriculture Education Report	Describes curriculum development, approvals, educator support, student organizations, agricultural infrastructure, community engagement, and workforce-development activities.
Appendix F — Agricultural Data Collection and Analysis Report	Summarizes the Eastern Caribbean Center’s agricultural surveys, data-collection methods, preliminary findings, and reporting activities.
Appendix G — PPPIF Investment Update	Highlights the Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund’s applications, awards, producer investments, reported outcomes, and impact on agricultural capacity.

ACT NO. 87 16

BILL NO. 35-0049

THIRTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Regular Session

2023

An Act amending title 7, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code by adding subchapter VIII, establishing a Local Food and Farm Council in accordance with mandate five of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan

---0---

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. Title 7, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code is amended by adding a new subchapter VIII that reads as follows:

"Subchapter VIII. Virgin Islands Agriculture Plan Act

§ 29a. Local Food and Farm Council

(a) A Local Food and Farm Council is established within the University of the Virgin Islands for budgetary purposes only. The Local Food and Farm Council is composed of 11 members, with each nongovernmental member serving a three-year term. A member may serve until the member's successor is appointed and qualified. The Governor may remove any member.

(b) The Local Food and Farm Council is composed of:

- (1) The Commissioner of the V.I. Department of Agriculture, or designee.
- (2) The President of the University of the Virgin Islands, or designee;
- (3) The Dean of the University of the Virgin Islands School of Agriculture, or designee;
- (4) The Executive Director of the V.I. Economic Development Authority, or designee;

(5) The Commissioner of the V.I. Department of Education, or designee;

(6) The Commissioner of the V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources, or designee;

(7) Five community members appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Legislature, including three licensed Virgin Islands farmers of livestock or crops—one from St. Croix, one from St. Thomas and one from St. John, and two food industry representatives—one from each district, being either a licensed wholesaler, grocer or restauranter.

(8) Each member of the Council shall receive \$100 for each day or part thereof spent in the attendance of official meetings, plus actual travel expenses when the member must travel from the island of his residence to attend an official meeting.

(c) The Local Food and Farm Council, among other responsibilities prescribed in the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan, shall:

(1) Make necessary amendments to the Virgin Islands Agriculture Plan;

(2) Make recommendations for changes to existing law or policy and respond to any requests by the Legislature for policy or funding recommendations as legislated;

(3) Advise the Local Food and Farm Coordinator;

(4) Collect and evaluate the production and marketing data of critical local food systems;

(5) Participate in grant decision-making processes, in an advisory capacity;

(6) Collaborate with local and federal governmental agencies, non-profit organizations and business to research, explore, and enhance food security opportunities available to the Virgin Islands;

(7) Conduct community outreach and engagement surveys, townhalls and other meetings;

(8) Promulgate guidelines for the use of the Local Farmers Food Fund;

(9) Promulgate regulations in furtherance of the implementation and development of the Agricultural Plan;

(10) Regularly monitor the Agricultural Plan, conduct an annual assessment of its effectiveness, and deliver a report to the Legislature and the Governor; and

(11) Perform any other tasks assigned by the Governor or prescribed by law to carry out its objectives of sustaining and supporting the growth of agricultural productivity over time.”

Thus passed by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands on April 14, 2023.

Witness our Hands and Seal of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands this 18th Day of April, A.D., 2023.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Novelle E. Francis, Jr.".

Novelle E. Francis, Jr.
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Carla J. Joseph".

Carla J. Joseph
Secretary

Bill No. 35-0049 is hereby approved.

Witness my hand and the Seal of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands at Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, This 25th day of April 2023 A.D.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Albert Bryan Jr.".

Albert Bryan Jr.
Governor





Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan

Agricultural Plan Implementation & Progress Summary Status Update as of July 2026

Strategic Implementation Initiative	Agricultural Plan Mandate(s)	Lead Agency	Current Status	Major Accomplishments	Current Needs / FY2027 Priorities
Comprehensive Regulatory Framework	Mandate 1 COMPREHENSIVE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK	Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council	Implementation Ongoing	The Council has continued to monitor statutory and regulatory issues affecting the agricultural sector as they arise. When appropriate, the Council has publicly communicated its positions and recommendations through official correspondence, resolutions, and press releases to support implementation of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan.	Continue reviewing regulatory issues affecting the agricultural sector, providing recommendations to policymakers and stakeholders, and advocating for modernization of the Territory's agricultural regulatory framework consistent with the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan.
Agriculture Business Center (AgBC)	Mandate 2 BUSINESS MODEL #1	University of the Virgin Islands	Operational	Fully operational on St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John providing business counseling, technical assistance, grant support, training, and outreach services to farmers and fishers.	FY2026 implementation funding was not received and AgBC operating funds have been exhausted. Temporary reallocation authority is requested to prevent the layoff of two AgBC staff and maintain uninterrupted services while the FY2027 budget request is under consideration.
Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) - TAP Fellowship Program	Mandate 2 BUSINESS MODEL #2	University of the Virgin Islands – Office of Sponsored Programs	Active Implementation	Two successful fellows were selected for the inaugural fellowship, and led the TAP Academy	Continue fellowship programming and leadership development.

Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) - TAP Academy	Mandate 2 BUSINESS MODEL #2	University of the Virgin Islands – Office of Sponsored Programs	Operational	Offered three grant-readiness training, technical assistance, workshops, and capacity-building activities continue in support of the Agricultural Plan.	Continue annual funding for TAP Academy programming and grant education.
Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund (PPPIF)	Mandate 2 BUSINESS MODEL #3	Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority (USVI EDA)	Awaiting Next Funding Cycle	Successfully established and administered the Territory's first competitive agricultural grant program, including development of the application process, evaluation criteria, conflict-of-interest safeguards, and grant award procedures. The program expanded access to direct financial assistance for Virgin Islands farmers, fishers, and agricultural enterprises.	Secure continued annual appropriations to support future PPPIF funding cycles, expand the number and value of available awards, and strengthen financial assistance for farmers, fishers, and other agricultural producers throughout the Territory.
Organic Agriculture Initiative	Mandate 2 BUSINESS MODEL	University of the Virgin Islands	Ready for Implementation	To expand organic agriculture through producer outreach, technical assistance, demonstrations, education, and support of the Organic Agriculture Subcommittee.	Fund for education, producer assistance, and Territory-wide organic agriculture programming.
Local Food & Farm Coordinator	Mandate 3 COORDINATOR FOR LOCAL FOOD FARM PROGRAM	Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council / UVI	Ready for Implementation	Administrative framework completed and qualified candidate identified; proposed transfer to UVI will centralize implementation oversight.	Approve transfer with associated funding and operationalize the position.
Local Food & Farm Fund 501(c)(3)	Mandate 4 LOCAL FOOD FARM FUND	Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council	Nonprofit Organization Established; Fund Development and Implementation Underway	The Council completed the organizational steps to establish the supporting nonprofit organization for the Local Food & Farm Fund. Governance remains under Council direction, consistent with Mandate No. 4. The nonprofit expands opportunities for strategic partnerships, philanthropic support, corporate sponsorships, and additional funding opportunities.	Continue operationalizing the Local Food & Farm Fund, strengthen governance and partnerships, and expand funding opportunities to support implementation of the Agricultural Plan.

Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council (Advisory Committee)	Mandate 5 ADVISORY COMMITTEE	Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council	Ongoing Council Coordination and Advisory	The Council continued to fulfill its statutory responsibilities by convening regular meetings, coordinating implementation of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan, establishing and supporting subcommittees, facilitating collaboration among government agencies and strategic partners, reviewing agricultural initiatives, developing legislative recommendations, and providing oversight of implementation activities. The Council also strengthened stakeholder engagement through public meetings, legislative testimony, official correspondence, and outreach efforts supporting agriculture throughout the Territory.	Continue coordinating implementation of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan, strengthening partnerships among government agencies and stakeholders, expanding public engagement, supporting Council subcommittee activities, and providing policy recommendations that advance agriculture, food security, and economic development throughout the Virgin Islands.
Virgin Islands Local Food Symbol	Mandate 6 LOCAL FOOD SYMBOL	Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council	Planning	The Council has identified development of a Virgin Islands Local Food Symbol as a strategic initiative to promote locally grown and produced agricultural products, strengthen consumer awareness, and increase recognition of Virgin Islands farmers, fishers, and food producers. The initiative remains incorporated into the Council's long-term implementation strategy for the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan.	Advance the development and implementation of the Virgin Islands Local Food Symbol through community collaboration, branding, marketing, and public education initiatives that encourage consumer recognition and increased demand for locally produced agricultural products.
Sustainability Agricultural Education (SAE)	Mandate 7 EDUCATION AND TRAINING	Virgin Islands Department of Education	Operational	Agricultural curriculum formally approved; educator training expanded; student agricultural programs strengthened; planning underway for a school greenhouse to provide hands-on learning.	Continue investment in curriculum implementation, greenhouse construction, educator support, equipment, and workforce development.

Eastern Caribbean Center (ECC)	Mandate 8 DATA, BENCHMARK, AND ANALYSIS	University of the Virgin Islands – Eastern Caribbean Center	Operational	Agricultural surveys, fisheries data collection, benchmarking, and economic analysis continue to support evidence-based planning.	Continue expanding reporting, benchmarking, and performance measurement.
Grant Writer	Additional Recommendations 5 ENHANCE GRANT WRITING AT VIDA	Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council / VI Department of Agriculture	Ready for Implementation	Position designed to strengthen grant development and diversify external funding supporting Agricultural Plan implementation.	Provide annual funding to establish the position.

Legislative Support & Consideration to Sustain Agricultural Plan Implementation

- Provide FY2027 funding for the Local Food and Farm Coordinator and Grant Writer positions to strengthen implementation capacity.
- Authorize the University of the Virgin Islands to reallocate previously appropriated Agricultural Plan implementation funds among Council-related activities, as operationally necessary, to sustain critical services such as the Agriculture Business Center while maintaining legislative oversight.
- Approve the transfer of the Local Food and Farm Coordinator position, together with its supporting appropriation, from the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture to the University of the Virgin Islands by amending Act No. 8700, Section 5.
- Continue annual appropriations supporting key Agricultural Plan initiatives, including the Agriculture Business Center, PPPIF, Organic Agriculture, Sustainability and Agricultural Education, TAP Academy, Eastern Caribbean Center, and other strategic implementation investments.
- Continue support for Mandate No. 4 through the Local Food and Farm Fund under Council governance.



VI Agriculture Business Center Quarterly Report

Agriculture Business Center

FY 2026 Third Quarter Summary Report

Reporting Period: April 1, 2026–June 30, 2026

Executive Overview

During the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2026, the VI Agriculture Business Center continued to expand business development support for farmers, fishers, and agribusiness owners throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Center provided individualized counseling, training, outreach, grant application assistance, and access-to-capital support focused on strengthening agricultural businesses and improving long-term sustainability.

Major accomplishments included launching a new funding opportunity for farmers and fishers, participating in territory-wide outreach events, supporting farmers with national grant applications, and securing two grants totaling \$100,000.

Key Activities and Accomplishments

On May 13, 2026, Director Shanta “Shay” Roberts presented at **“Learning Under the Mahogany: Sustainable and Organic Practices in Action,”** hosted by the National Center for Appropriate Technology under the Florida Organic Growers Southeast Transition to Organic Partnership Program.

The hands-on workshop and farm walk were held at Wadeh’s Organic Farm in St. Thomas. Director Roberts presented farm business strategies, emphasizing business planning, financial management, recordkeeping, and informed decision-making for sustainable agricultural enterprises.

On May 6, 2026, the Agriculture Business Center collaborated with the RTPark Community Investment Fund to launch the new **Farmers and Fishers Program**. The webinar, **“Helping Farmers & Fishers Thrive: Community Impact Fund,”** covered program eligibility, funding benefits, application requirements, and strategies for preparing a strong application. Eligible applicants could request between \$500 and \$10,000 to support agricultural or fishing business growth.



VI Agriculture Business Center Quarterly Report

The Center also hosted informational tables at the **Government Contracting and Matchmaker Summit Series** on May 5 in St. Croix and May 6 in St. Thomas. Advisors engaged attendees and promoted available counseling, training, funding assistance, and business development resources for farmers and agribusinesses.

On May 27, Agriculture Business Center Advisor Dara Cooper hosted an introductory webinar featuring Dr. Renu Singh, Project Director of the Agribusiness Digital Commerce Program, and her marketing team. The session introduced an upcoming webinar series designed to help farmers and agribusiness owners improve branding, digital marketing, online sales, social media, and customer engagement.

In June, Agriculture Business Center advisors assisted several farmers across the territory with applications for the **National Viability Farm Grant** administered by the Rural Advancement Foundation International. The program offered up to \$10,000 to support working farms. Advisors assisted clients with project narratives, budgets, eligible expenses, business impacts, and market expansion strategies.

Grant Awards

The Agriculture Business Center secured two grants valued at \$50,000 each, for a combined total of \$100,000.

The first award was through the **Native, Medicinal and Fruit Tree Planting, Protection, Maintenance, Education, and Removal Grant Program**. The program is administered by the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands in collaboration with the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture and funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service.

The project will support tree planting, stewardship, education, maintenance, and business development opportunities connected to agroforestry and sustainable agriculture.

The second award was received through the **Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network–South**. This USDA-funded initiative seeks to expand the capacity of organizations serving farmers, ranchers, farm workers, and other agriculture-related workers experiencing stress.

The grant will support outreach, partnerships, education, business resilience, farmer well-being, financial stability, and improved access to support services.



VI Agriculture Business Center Quarterly Report

Training and Client Impact

During the quarter, the Agriculture Business Center hosted and supported webinars and training activities in business planning, marketing, digital commerce, financial management, and access to capital.

Highlighted sessions included:

- **Helping Farmers & Fishers Thrive: Community Impact Fund** — May 6, 2026
- **Canva Workshop, Sessions 1 and 2** — May 20, 2026
- **Agribusiness Digital Commerce Introduction Webinar** — May 27, 2026

The Center's third-quarter performance included:

- **28 new clients**
- **251 one-on-one counseling sessions**
- **29 training events**
- **376 training participants**
- **Three client capital infusions**
- **\$177,000 in capital secured**

These outcomes reflect stronger business planning, improved financial management, expanded access to funding, and increased readiness for business growth among the territory's agricultural producers.

Post-Quarter Highlights

In July 2026, the Agriculture Business Center partnered with Dr. Renu Singh and her marketing team to develop and deliver a four-part agricultural marketing webinar series focused on branding, digital presence, content creation, and online marketing.

Director Roberts also delivered a presentation titled **"Agriculture Business Center Support Programs for Farmers"** at the 58th Caribbean Crops Society and first USVI Agriculture Conference, held July 12–17, 2026, at the University of the Virgin Islands.



VI Agriculture Business Center Quarterly Report

Conclusion

The third quarter demonstrated the Agriculture Business Center's continued commitment to supporting a stronger and more resilient agricultural sector. Through counseling, training, outreach, grant assistance, access to capital, and strategic partnerships, the Center helped farmers, fishers, and agribusiness owners strengthen operations, pursue funding, and prepare for sustainable growth across the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Prepared by:

Shay Roberts

Director

Virgin Islands Agriculture Business Center

Date: July 20, 2026



VI Agriculture Business Center Quarterly Report



TERRITORIAL AGRICULTURAL PLAN

Grant Academy & Fellowship Report

Fiscal Year 2026 Program Update

117

Workshop registrations

2

Inaugural TAP Fellows

4

Funding proposals supported

Prepared for

Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council

July 2026

Executive Summary

The Territorial Agricultural Plan (TAP) Grant Academy and Fellowship expanded access to grant education, strengthened agricultural leadership, supported youth and workforce development, and contributed to the preparation of external funding proposals for the U.S. Virgin Islands. The University of the Virgin Islands Office of Sponsored Programs delivered the Academy in partnership with the Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council from January through March 2026, with collaborative support from the inaugural TAP Fellows.

The three-part Academy recorded 117 workshop registrations and introduced farmers, fishers, agricultural businesses, and community organizations to funding opportunities, proposal development, budgeting, and grant and loan resources. Fellows extended the program’s reach through education, community engagement, curriculum development, career presentations, and proposal support.

Program at a Glance

Program Element	FY2026 Result
Grant Academy	Three sessions delivered from January through March 2026.
Participation	117 registrations: 26 in January, 45 in February, and 46 in March.
Fellowship	Two inaugural Fellows supported program delivery and leadership development.
Youth and workforce outreach	Career presentations, experiential learning, Envirothon curriculum and competition support, and community engagement.
Grant development	Four proposals or applications supported, including one reported award and one SAI approval.

1. TAP Grant Writing Academy

The Academy introduced participants to grant opportunities, effective proposal development, and grants, loans, and other resources available to support agricultural initiatives. Participants received practical guidance on identifying opportunities, shaping project concepts, preparing competitive narratives and budgets, and locating resources relevant to their operations.

The Fellows contributed to collaborative planning and delivery of the Academy while developing their own leadership, outreach, and grant-development experience. Future evaluation should track applications submitted, funding secured, and changes in participants’ grant readiness.

2. Fellowship Activities and Community Engagement

The Fellows reported activities that advanced agricultural education, youth engagement, workforce development, conservation, and community awareness. These activities included:

- Support for the USVI Youth ReGeneration Corps Program and a Family Finance Leadership event.
- A presentation and engagement with the UVI School of Agriculture’s Careers in Agriculture class.
- Participation in the three-day EnVizion Cannabis 2026 Educational Conference, including a Careers in the Cannabis Industry presentation for UVI students attending on scholarship.
- Career presentations for tenth-grade students participating in the Science Teachers Foundation summer camp, emphasizing transferable skills and career pathways.
- Curriculum development for the USVI Envirothon and support for the inaugural USVI Envirothon Competition in May 2026.
- Representation at Agrifest 2025 to explain the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan and the role of the TAP Fellows.

3. Grant and Proposal Development

The Fellows also participated in developing and submitting funding proposals designed to strengthen agricultural infrastructure, workforce development, conservation, controlled-environment agriculture, and research capacity.

Proposal / Initiative	Purpose	Reported Status
USVI—Facility and Driveway Access Upgrades	Facility and driveway improvements supporting workforce development and entrepreneurial growth among rural farmers and small businesses.	Submitted; SAI approved
Farm Force: Conservation Career Workforce Development	Two annual conservation boot camps—one in Vermont and one in the Virgin Islands—from 2026 through 2029.	Canaday Foundation award reported
Growing Agriculture Innovators	Hands-on controlled-environment agriculture to strengthen recruitment and innovation in the U.S. Virgin Islands.	RIIA grant submitted
Geological Agriculture’s Impact on Medicinal Plant Efficacy	Research on geological agriculture and medicinal plant efficacy.	USDA AFRI proposal submitted

4. Reported Outcomes

- Expanded access to grant education for agricultural producers, businesses, and community organizations.
- Strengthened leadership and grant-development experience among the inaugural TAP Fellows.
- Broadened youth and student awareness of agricultural, conservation, cannabis, and related career pathways.
- Supported curriculum development and experiential environmental education through the USVI Envirothon.
- Contributed to external funding proposals and a reported multi-year conservation workforce-development award.
- Increased public awareness of the Agricultural Plan and the TAP Fellowship through community outreach.

5. Recommended Future Reporting

To demonstrate longer-term impact, future TAP reporting should track:

- Academy attendance by island and participant type;
- Applications submitted and funding secured by Academy participants;
- Fellow-led activities, audiences reached, partnerships formed, and deliverables completed;
- Status and value of proposals supported through the Fellowship;
- Youth and workforce-development participation and follow-up outcomes; and
- How TAP-supported activities advance specific mandates of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan.

Conclusion

The TAP Grant Academy and Fellowship established a foundation for stronger grant readiness, agricultural leadership, youth engagement, and external resource development. Continued support, consistent outcome tracking, and alignment with the Agricultural Plan will allow the program to build on its inaugural-year accomplishments and demonstrate measurable value to the Territory's agricultural community.



Virgin Islands Department of Education

Sustainability and Agriculture Education (SAE) CURRICULUM — Updates & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

LEGISLATIVE & POLICY SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

- Act 8404, Mandate #7 — VIDE tasked to create comprehensive agricultural education system
- Act 8700 funding secured for:
 - Developing Sunshine Curriculum and VISAE
 - Sending students to National FFA Convention 2026/2027 Prepared
 - Supplying schools with animal husbandry, growing materials, and garden infrastructure

OFFICIAL APPROVALS & PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

The VISA SAE Sunshine Curriculum has been formally presented and received support from key governing bodies across the Virgin Islands:

Body	Outcome
CTE Board	Unanimously approved the curriculum
VI Board of Education	Formal support received
Local Food and Farm Council	Support received — presented across all three islands
3 Island Town Halls	Presented to the public on St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John
Ag Fair	Presented to the public — thousands in attendance

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

- Created the Sunshine Curriculum (VISA SAE) — 1,000+ pages of Ag in the Classroom content
- Developed Virgin Islands Standards of Achievement for Sustainability and Agricultural Education (VISA SAE) — Pre-K through 12th grade
- Built Crosswalk aligning VISA SAE to national ANRF frameworks for grant reporting and alignment
- Created SAE Calendar — international and Virgin Islands events (Moringa Day, Sweet Potato Day, Ag Fair)
- Developed SAE SOPs — step-by-step guidance for adverse growing conditions (power outages, water supply breaks)
- Created Ag Business & Careers Manual — career exploration, job applications, resume building, land access, organic certifications, value-added product labeling and distribution for 10 grades through Farmer Education with the Ag Business Center and Director Shay Roberts and Team
- Built Practical Practicum Practice — Flora and Fauna Playlists with QR codes, scientific names, common names, and local uses
- Designed STEAM-based integrated lessons aligned to VISA ELA, VISA MATH, and NGSS standards and developed curriculum that ALL teachers can use
- Created intervention-ready lessons with built-in scaffolds for struggling students with VISTAS and Director Semper
- All content based on Zone 13 and the Virgin Islands

SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION

- Serving public and private schools across St Thomas, St John, and St Croix

INFRASTRUCTURE & TECHNOLOGY

- Freight farm coming online this year — first in the territory. Fully self-contained, climate-controlled classroom on wheels producing equivalent of 2.5 acres

- Wifi-enabled irrigation systems being installed — students monitor soil, water, and crop health from phones and computers
- 6 Industry-size greenhouses on the line this year — commercial-scale production
- RFPs for poultry coops developed and submitted to procurement
- Greenhouse buildouts at partner schools underway

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

- FFA: Rebuilt from zero to three chapters — 150 students — 500% growth
- Full recognition from National FFA regained
- \$5,000 grant secured from National FFA for service and National Convention
- 10 students heading to National FFA Convention 2026-2027
- Introduced principals to National FFA leaders and invited them to National FFA Convention 2026-2027
- 4-H — Pre-K through 4th grade engagement
- MANNRS — High school and college networking
- Educator and Partner Connections through the Seeds of Security (SOS) Council — community network of experts, educators, and advocates

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & ANIMAL HUSBANDRY IN PREPARATION FOR SY 26/27

- Raising chickens and ducks — Easter Egger chickens and ducks for student animal husbandry programs
- St. Croix Hair Sheep — students learning about climatized animals through Farm Education For All and what types of feed we can grow, manufacture, and sell in the USVI
- Animal feed pellet making — hands-on exhibits at Ag Fair
- Students engaged in feeding, raising, and learning full production cycles — from chick to egg to table

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & EVENTS

- Igniting STEAM — professional development for educators
- Week of the Young Child — community engagement
- Ag Fair — student exhibits, community art, pellet making demonstrations, curriculum presentations to the public

- 3 Island Town Halls — presenting to the public across St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John
- Local Food and Farm Council Town Halls — presented the curriculum across all three islands
- VI Youth Fun Quest — STEAM-based youth engagement
- Girls in STEAM — inspiring young women in agriculture and sustainability

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Over ten thousand seed packs and grow kits distributed to students, families, farmers, and community members
- SAE educational games — all subject areas
- Grafting certificates provided
- Grow bags distributed to empower students and families
- Value-added product education — moringa, breadfruit, soursop products
- Ag Fair student exhibits — pineapple mural, community art connecting agriculture to hospitality industry
- Public presentations at Ag Fair and 3 island town halls

PARTNERS WHO ADDED TO THE ORGANIZING OF THE CURRICULUM

- Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture (VIDA)
- UVI Cooperative Extension
- Eco-Schools
- Planet Green Force
- Seeds of Security (SOS) Council
- VI Cultural Education
- Vistas VI State Assessment Team
- Local Food and Farm Council
- VIWMA
- Women in Agriculture
- School Food Authority
- Farm Education For All
- Ag Business Center (Director Shay Roberts)
- National FFA
- VI Board of Education

- CTE Board

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- \$5,000 FFA Grant — for service grant
- Incoming National Convention attendance grant
- Granted \$5000 in EDC funds from Greenleaf in conjunction with Matthew King, VIDE's Partnership Director
- Full recognition from National FFA — good standing letter received

QUICK SUMMARY — KEY STATS

Metric	Number
Curriculum pages	1,000+ pages of lesson plans, VI standards of Achievement for Sustainability and Agricultural Education standards, Hydroponics Lesson plans, SOP for Inclement Weather and Trouble Shooting, SAE Calendar, and Practicum of Flora and Fauna of the USVI (plants and animals)
Students serviced	100% of students through science, English and math integration, events, and seed distribution services.
FFA chapters	0 to 3
FFA students	25 to 150
FFA growth	500%
FFA grant	\$5,000
Seed packs distributed	Over 10.000 seed packs and grow kits distributed.
Infrastructure projects	Industrial Greenhouse installations, freight farm connected to the newly installed power grid, Wi-Fi connected irrigation monitoring systems, poultry coops
Animal programs	Chickens, ducks, highlighting with Culture Education and Farm Education for All: St. Croix Hair Sheep

Community events	Ag Fair, Town Halls (3 islands), STEAM events, Week of the Young Child
Board approvals	CTE Board, VI Board of Education, Local Food and Farm Council

EASTERN CARIBBEAN CENTER QUARTERLY REPORT FOR JULY 2026

In partnership with the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture and Local Food and Farm Council, the ECC develops and implements a systematic evaluation framework to ensure consistent, high-quality data collection. During non-census years, the survey uses purposeful sampling to gather information from active producers and maintain continuity with previous cycles. While this method does not capture every agricultural operation, it offers a practical and cost-effective way to track trends, identify emerging issues, and evaluate changes in production, marketing, and agricultural practices each year.

During FY 2025–2026, ECC continued to advance **Mandate No. 8 of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan** through the design and implementation of territory-wide agricultural data collection activities. Major accomplishments included:

- Successfully conducted telephone and field data collection to support implementation of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan.
- Coordinated agricultural data collection activities during the **St. Croix Agricultural Fair** and **St. Thomas Afternoon on the Green**, expanding outreach to farmers, vendors, and the public.
- Managed project planning, survey operations, interviewer training, quality assurance, data management, and preliminary analyses.
- Partnered with the Cooperative Extension Service to strengthen stakeholder engagement and improve survey coverage across the Territory.
- Continued developing a comprehensive agricultural data system to support evidence-based planning, policy development, and future evaluation of Agricultural Plan implementation.

The FY 2026 budget request for ECC remains **\$150,000**, consistent with the Council's previous budget request, and will support continued data collection, analysis, reporting, and monitoring activities necessary to measure progress toward the goals of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan. As reflected in the Council's FY 2026 budget request, the Eastern Caribbean Center's requested appropriation is **\$150,000** under the University of the Virgin Islands to support **Mandate No. 8** of the Agricultural Plan.

1. Introduction

1.1.Charge to the Eastern Caribbean

For the third consecutive year, the Eastern Caribbean Center (ECC) at the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) is responsible for conducting the annual agricultural survey across the U.S. Virgin Islands. This survey is a key tool for monitoring agricultural activity, assessing business trends, and measuring progress toward the goals in the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan. Given

the impact of economic conditions, weather events, and evolving production practices on local agriculture, collecting reliable annual data is essential to identify both progress and ongoing challenges.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Methods of Data Collection

The Eastern Caribbean Center (ECC) at the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) was responsible for collecting data from home gardeners, community farmers, commercial farmers, and fishers throughout the St. Croix and St. Thomas-St. John districts. The primary objective was to obtain reliable, consistent information that could be used to monitor agricultural activity and evaluate progress toward the goals of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan. Collecting data from these diverse groups required methods that balanced scientific rigor with the practical realities of conducting field research across multiple islands and production systems.

The survey instruments were developed collaboratively by subject matter experts representing the University's Cooperative Extension Service, the Eastern Caribbean Center, and the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources. The development team included the Associate Director of Cooperative Extension Services at the Albert A. Sheen Campus, the Acting Assistant Director of Cooperative Extension Services at the Orville E. Kean Campus, the Bureau Chief of Fisheries, and the ECC Statistician. Drawing on their collective expertise in agriculture, fisheries, extension education, and survey methodology, the team identified the information needed to address the study's objectives and to ensure continuity with data collected in previous years. The collaborative design process also helped ensure that the questionnaires reflected current agricultural conditions while maintaining consistency with earlier survey cycles, allowing meaningful comparisons over time.

2.1a Home Gardening and Community Survey

Data for the Home and Community Garden Survey were collected using a probability sampling approach during two of the Territory's largest public events that attract residents with an interest in agriculture and local food production. Surveys were administered on February 15, 2026, at the Agriculture and Food Fair on St. Croix and on March 15, 2026, during Afternoon on the Green on St. Thomas.

A cluster sampling design was used to efficiently reach home gardeners attending these events. This approach offered an effective balance between representativeness and logistical feasibility by concentrating data collection where large numbers of potential respondents were already gathered. While sampling at public events may not capture every type of home gardener, particularly those who do not attend community activities, these events attract a broad cross-section of individuals actively involved in gardening across the Territory. As a result, the approach provides a practical and cost-effective means of collecting high-quality data while

producing findings that are informative for understanding home gardening practices in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The use of the same events and comparable sampling procedures across survey years also strengthens the study's ability to monitor changes in gardening practices, production, and household food use over time. Maintaining methodological consistency enhances the comparability of annual findings and supports the development of a reliable longitudinal dataset for agricultural planning and policy evaluation.

Table 2.1a. Farmer Type by Year

Response	USVI	2024	2025	Percent Change
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	
Home Gardener	63.5	57.2	70.1	22.6
Community Farmer	1.6	2.3	0.8	-65.2
Licensed Farmer	3.2	2.7	3.7	37.0
I do not farm/garden/ harvest	31.3	37.0	25.4	-31.4
Other	0.2	0.8	0.0	-100.0
Total Responses	501	257	244	

Note: Positive numbers in the percent change column represent an increase.

Percent Change is calculated by this formula $(\text{year}_2 - \text{year}_1) / \text{year}_1$

Overall, the results indicate that the 2025 survey achieved stronger representation of individuals actively engaged in agriculture than the 2024 survey. The proportion of home gardeners increased by 22.6%, rising from 57.2% to 70.1%, indicating that home gardeners became an even larger share of the survey population. In contrast, the proportion of respondents who did not farm or garden decreased by 31.4%, falling from 37.0% to 25.4%, suggesting that the survey was more effective in reaching its target population. Licensed farmers increased by 37.0%, from 2.7% to 3.7%, although they continued to represent a relatively small proportion of respondents. Conversely, community farmers declined by 65.2%, from 2.3% to 0.8%, indicating considerably lower representation in 2025. While these percentage changes should be interpreted cautiously because of the small number of respondents in some categories, the overall pattern demonstrates that the 2025 survey provided stronger coverage of active agricultural producers, particularly home gardeners, thereby improving the survey's ability to assess gardening and farming activities across the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Table 2.1 **Representativeness of the Sample**

Demographics	Census 2020 (Ages 20-74)	Respondents to Survey (in percent)	Difference
Sex			
Male	48.3	42.4	-5.9
Female	51.7	56.3	4.6
Age			
24 years and under	6.9	11.5	4.6
25 to 34 years	15.3	6.6	-8.7
35-44 years	16.9	11.5	-5.4
45 to 54 years	20.4	24.2	3.8
55-64 years	22.4	25.8	3.4
65 years and over	18.2	20.5	2.3
Ethnicity			
Black/ African American	71.4	92.2	20.8
White	13.3	4.5	-8.8
French Caribbean		0.0	-
Asian	1.0	0.4	-0.6
American/Alaska Native		0.0	-
Other	6.3	2.9	-3.4

The comparison between the survey sample and the 2020 Census population indicates that the sample was generally representative of the target population, although several demographic differences were evident. Women accounted for 56.3% of survey respondents compared with 51.7% of the census population, while men represented 42.4% of the sample versus 48.3% of the population. Older adults were also more heavily represented, with individuals aged 55 to 64 years comprising 25.8% of the sample compared with 22.4% of the census population. In contrast, adults aged 25 to 44 years were underrepresented, whereas respondents aged 24 years and younger made up 11.5% of the sample compared with 6.9% of the population. The largest difference was observed in ethnicity. Black or African American respondents comprised 92.2% of the survey sample, substantially higher than their 71.4% representation in the census, while White respondents accounted for only 4.5% of the sample compared with 13.3% of the population. These patterns suggest that the survey was particularly successful in reaching the demographic groups most actively engaged in home gardening within the study area. Although these demographic differences should be considered when interpreting subgroup analyses and generalizing the findings to the broader population, the sample provides a robust basis for examining home gardening practices and their associated outcomes among the primary population of interest.

Fig 2a. Percent of Field Crops Consumed Locally

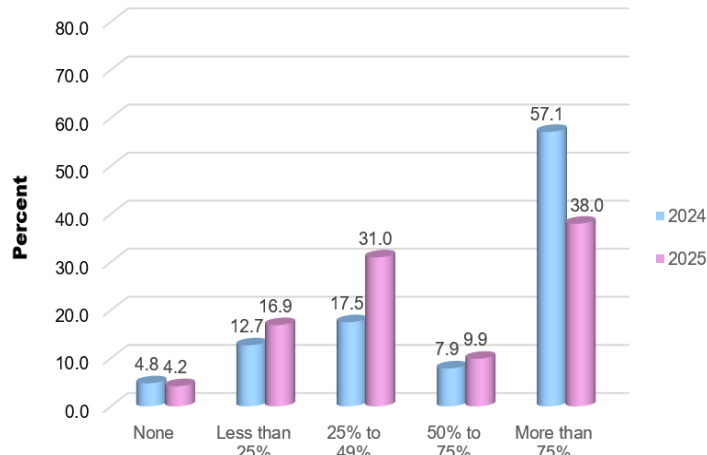


Fig 2b. Percent of Vegetables Consumed Locally

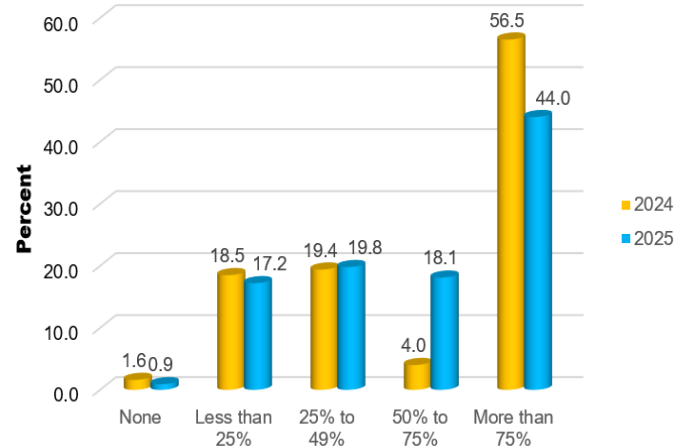


Fig 2c. Percent of Fruits Consumed Locally

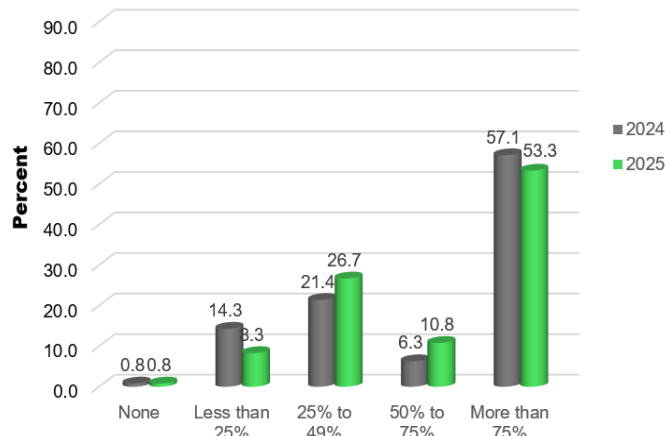
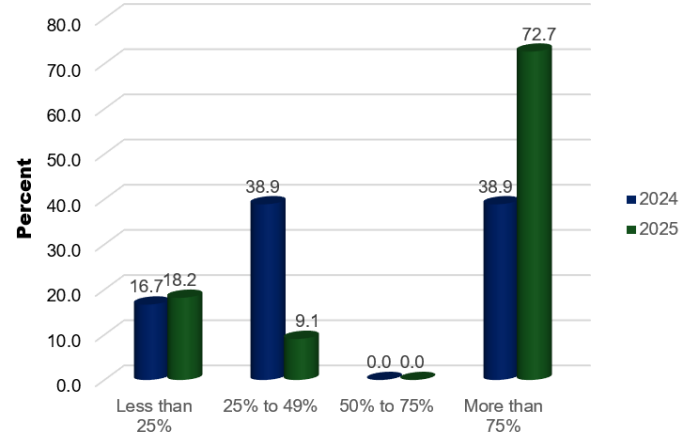


Fig 2d. Percent of Livestock/Eggs Consumed Locally



Overall, the findings indicate that home gardeners continued to consume most of their produce within their own households, highlighting the important role of home gardening in supporting household food security and self-sufficiency. Across all commodity groups, more than half of respondents reported consuming at least half of their harvest locally, with the highest levels observed for fruits and livestock products. While the proportion of respondents consuming more than 75% of their field crops and vegetables locally declined slightly between 2024 and 2025, these decreases were accompanied by increases in the moderate consumption categories,

suggesting a shift in consumption patterns rather than a reduction in the use of home-grown food. In contrast, local consumption of livestock products increased substantially, indicating greater reliance on home-produced eggs and meat. Collectively, these results demonstrate that home gardens remain a significant source of food for participating in households and continue to contribute to dietary needs, food resilience, and reduced dependence on externally purchased food.

2.2 Farmers and Fishermen Survey

The standard method in the conduct of a probability or representative sample among households was considered to be beyond the resources available to the survey planners. Given the relatively small number of bona fide farmers and fishermen throughout the Territory, it was methodologically appropriate to select a probability sample size that was smaller than these population. The study design utilized computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) procedure. The ECC CATI leverages an established centralized telephone facility at UVI to facilitate immediate data capture within the interviewing process. All data collected through CATI can be immediately reviewed and securely transferred to protect participant information and confidentiality.

The Eastern Caribbean Center (ECC) conducted telephone interviews among 339 commercial farmers, and 51 commercial fishermen and 8 participants that are both commercial fishermen and farmers in the US Virgin Islands who fit the following criteria: licensed farmer or fishermen in the year of 2024-2025, currently growing crops, fruits or vegetables, raising livestock/poultry or fishing. The interviewing process started May 8 and concluded May 28, 2026

Administrative Data Availability from Department of Agriculture

The preparation of this progress report was delayed because the administrative data required by the Department of Agriculture was delayed. These records are essential to the analysis, as they provide the information needed to assess program implementation, validate survey findings, and measure progress against established objectives.

At the time this report was prepared, the Department was still entering and organizing the requested administrative records. Because this compilation was ongoing, the available information was insufficient to support a comprehensive analysis. Rather than relying on incomplete records that could lead to inaccurate or misleading findings, the report is limited to data that could be verified during the reporting period.

The Department has indicated that data entry is expected to be completed within the coming weeks. Once the full administrative dataset becomes available, it will be incorporated into the analysis to provide a more complete assessment of program activities and outcomes. Any resulting updates or revisions will be reflected in the subsequent reporting cycle.

Every farm has a moment.

A moment where the future depends on one investment.

One season. One piece of equipment. One opportunity.

When farmers succeed, our islands become stronger.

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS LOCAL FOOD AND FARM COUNCIL



Growing Impact

Investing in Farmers. Strengthening Communities.

Five farmers. One shared future.

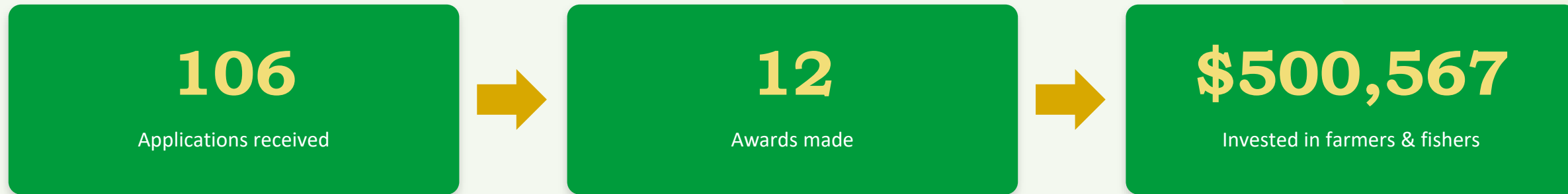




THE FUND

One fund. A territory of opportunity.

The Public–Private Partnership Investment Fund — created through the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan and funded by Act No. 8700.



REPORTED 2025 follow-up visits found 80% of awardees increased production capacity.

So — what happens when we invest in Virgin Islands farmers?

Meet five of the twelve.

Farming since 2020



ADD FARMER PHOTO

Eric Ahrens

Mycelium Man · St. Croix

Fresh gourmet mushrooms + organic compost

MEET THE FARMER 1 OF 5

Give the islands a fresh, local, high-protein food — and turn waste into compost for other farmers.

1

THE CHALLENGE

Equipment bottleneck — production capped at 30–40 lbs a week.

2

PPPIF INVESTED

\$25,000 · Tier 1



Processing · cold storage · second grow room · solar power

3

WHAT CHANGED

PROJECTED OUTCOMES



4× targeted weekly production capacity



Goal of 150 lbs/week · \$0 power via solar



WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Local protein production — more homegrown protein for island tables.



PANEL PROMPT *What changed first once the new equipment arrived?*

Farming since 2015



ADD FARMER PHOTO

Leonardo Perez

Bordeaux Botanica · St. John

Microgreens, rare fruit, spices, nuts, honey

MEET THE FARMER 2 OF 5

Build a regenerative food forest that teaches the community climate-smart farming.

1

THE CHALLENGE

Water — steep land, heavy runoff and drought vulnerability.

2

PPPIF INVESTED



Mini excavator · Keyline water earthworks · soil & planting

\$42,500 · Tier 1

3

WHAT CHANGED

PROJECTED OUTCOMES



20–30% projected productivity gain



0.5-acre food forest · less hauled-in water



WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Climate resilience — farms that endure drought and storms.



PANEL PROMPT *How does managing water change what you can grow?*

30+ years farming



ADD FARMER PHOTO

Derick Hodge

Staff of Life · St. Thomas

Orchard fruit & vegetables

MEET THE FARMER 3 OF 5

Grow healthy food sustainably and open the farm to the community.

1

THE CHALLENGE

Labor — land prep, trenching and drainage all done by hand.

2

PPPIF INVESTED



Mini excavator · attachments · training · soil work

\$50,000 · Tier 2

3

WHAT CHANGED

PROJECTED OUTCOMES

- ↑ 75% projected increase in output
- ↑ 70% less manual labor · room for agritourism



WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Healthy soils — land that stays productive for decades.



PANEL PROMPT *What can you do now that you couldn't do by hand?*

25 years · 2nd generation



ADD FARMER PHOTO

Roniel Allembert

VI Honey Man · St. Croix

Honey, plantains, cucumbers, tomatoes · 350 hives

MEET THE FARMER 4 OF 5

Protect the territory's pollinators and grow more local food.

1

THE CHALLENGE

Termites — destroying wooden hives (180 lost) · no tractor.

2

PPPIF INVESTED



200 termite-proof hives · tractor · computers

\$54,616 · Tier 2

3

WHAT CHANGED

PROJECTED OUTCOMES

- ↑ 200 termite-proof hives (~30-yr life)
- ↑ 2 acres cleared · 350 colonies protected



WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Pollination — healthy bees pollinate farms across the island.



PANEL PROMPT *What do healthy hives mean for other farmers?*

Farming since 2015



ADD FARMER PHOTO

Trevor Warner

Pleasant Valley Farm · St. Croix

Bananas, plantains, pineapple, fruit, veg & honey

MEET THE FARMER 5 OF 5

Make locally grown, chemical-free food the community's first choice.

1

THE CHALLENGE

Wildlife & water — crop loss to deer, irrigation gaps, no tractor.

2

PPPIF INVESTED

\$57,000 · Tier 2



Tractor + implements · irrigation · plastic hives · fencing

3

WHAT CHANGED

REPORTED OUTCOMES

- ✓ Tractor, irrigation & fencing installed
- ✓ Vegetable & honey production up · hired two workers

Reported in 2025 legislative testimony



WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Food production — more local food and more local jobs.



PANEL PROMPT You've grown output and hired staff — what's the next investment?



Looking Back. Looking Ahead.

A conversation with five Virgin Islands farmers.

1

What changed first after the investment?

2

What surprised you?

3

What would you do differently?

4

What advice would you give another farmer?

5

What should policymakers know?

6

If another investment came tomorrow, what would you prioritize?



Every investment tells a story.

One farmer. One family. One business. One community.

Together, a stronger Virgin Islands food system.

\$500,567

Invested

12

Awardees

106

Applications

3

Islands

1

Shared Future

Invest in a farmer. Strengthen the Virgin Islands.