



## News Release

For Immediate Distribution

### **Vital Public Input Sought by Agricultural Plan Task Force** *Community Survey on Food Security Launched*

**May 25, 2021, US Virgin Islands** – In order to improve food security in the territory, the recently formed Agricultural Plan Task Force is asking for community input via a survey on local food sources/agriculture to better understand community needs and perceptions. This input will be crucial in formulating a territory-wide Agricultural Plan, as called for in Act 8404, signed into law in December 2020. The public can access the Community Engagement Survey at <https://bit.ly/VIAgComSurvey> until Monday, June 14, 2021. The survey seeks to uncover such information as importance placed on locally sourced food and why; perceived quality, quantity and variety of locally produced food; role of community/backyard farming; environmental impacts; etc.

Headed by Dr. David Hall, President of the University of the Virgin Islands and Positive T. A. Nelson, Commissioner of Agriculture, the Agricultural Plan Task Force will formulate a comprehensive plan to increase agricultural sustainability and productivity including necessary resources, support and budget recommendations. Other members of the Task Force include Diana E. Collingwood, Assistant Commissioner Department of Agriculture; Hannah V. Cary, Deputy Commissioner Department of Agriculture; Dr. Kendra Harris, Dean of the School of Business University of the Virgin Islands; Dr. Usman Adamu, Dean of the School of Agriculture University of the Virgin Islands; and Harith Wickrema, President of Island Green Living Association, an environmental non-profit on St. John.

In addition to the survey, the Agricultural Plan Task Force has held island-specific Food Security Town Halls on St. Croix and St. John to gather input from farmers and stakeholders, with the final one scheduled for June 3 on St. Thomas. Interested parties can register to attend in person at 340-693-1003 or join via Zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/3850929463>. The Task Force has also initiated a survey of territory farmers.

- more -

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Increasing locally sourced food yield and quality will improve food security and independence. Ninety-seven percent of the USVI food supply is imported according to the UN Food and Agricultural Organization. Importation of food not only leaves the territory susceptible to shortages, but it impacts freshness and nutritional value and brings additional transportation costs. Environmental issues are also key, such as the increased pollution and packaging waste.

The community is welcome to reach out to the Agricultural Plan Task Force with comments or questions at 340-774-5182 or [agplan@doa.vi.gov](mailto:agplan@doa.vi.gov).

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