

V.I. Local Food and Farm Council Adopts Resolution Regarding Composting of Green Debris

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April 30, 2026



The Island Green Living Association piloted a green waste composting program after the 2017 hurricanes.
(Source file photo by Amy H. Roberts)

On April 17 the Local Food and Farm Council (LFFC), co-chaired by Agriculture Commissioner Louis E. Petersen Jr. and UVI President Safiya George, passed an urgent resolution.

Proposed by a local farmer, Royce Creque, and home gardener Harith Wickrema, and seconded by farmer Dr. Nate Olive, the motion was adopted unanimously:

We, the members of LFFC, appeal to the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority (VIWMA) [and our senators](#) to change course and support a sustainable waste management policy whereby the USVI prioritizes the chipping, shredding and composting our green and

brown debris in order to support agriculture and our farming community as opposed to burning this rich resource.

One of the biggest challenges for farmers is the poor soil quality of our land in the territory. Vegetative debris is an invaluable resource which can be turned into much needed compost and mulch. We consider this material as “black gold” as it adds essential nutrients back into our soil. In addition to serving as an agricultural product and soil amendment for farmers and gardeners, it can also be used for landscaping and erosion control as well as an export product similar to Puerto Rico’s compost.

We urge our policy makers not to rob our farmers of this precious natural resource.

Ninety-seven percent (97%) of our food supply is currently imported, a fact that led to the passage of Act 8404, mandating the creation of a Territorial Agricultural Plan in 2021 to support food security and food sovereignty. In order to ensure the success of this Plan, which the LFFC was established to manage, a primary need is the improvement of our soil quality.

Dr. Nate Olive, president of V.I. Farmers Alliance, shared his firsthand feedback from farmers who are asking for clean mulch and compost to increase yield. The way to reduce green waste from entering our overburdened landfills is to start chipping, mulching and composting tomorrow and not wait for a lengthy legal process that air curtain incineration will face.

Please help support food security, the livelihood of our farmers, and the health and welfare of our community by chipping, mulching and composting our vegetative debris.

The LFFC is charged with guiding the implementation of the Territorial Agricultural Plan and its eight mandates, which were approved and endorsed by the governor and ratified by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands.

The Local Food and Farm Council is made up of 17 members, including Co-Chairs Petersen and George; Dr. Usman Adamu, dean and director of the School of Agriculture, UVI; Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington, commissioner, Education Department; Jean-Pierre L. Oriol, commissioner, DPNR; Wayne L. Biggs Jr., CEO, USVI Economic Development Authority; Honorary Farm Members Abeba Sellassie, Ityopia Rootz Farm; Dr. Nate Olive, Ridge to Reef Farm; Edmon Titre, New Breed Farm; Royce Creque, Greenridge Guavaberry Farm; Honorary Fisher Members Winston Ledee and Mavel Maldonado; VIDE Designees Dr. Renee Charleswell, deputy commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction, VIDE; Harith Wickrema, president, Island Green Living; and Cydney Meadows, territorial director of Sustainability and Agricultural Education, Division of Curriculum and Instruction, VIDE; and DPNR Designees Dr. Nicole Angeli, director of Fish and Wildlife, DPNR, and Dr. Sennai Habtes, bureau chief, Fisheries, DPNR.

For more information or to share feedback, please contact 340-693-1003 or vilocalfoodandfarmcouncil@doa.vi.gov. Visit www.vilocalfoodandfarmcouncil.org.

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