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Fish Farming Program to Launch in USVI; St. Croix Site Identified for Initial Phase

Fish to be raised in inland nurseries before being transferred to offshore cages; plans for territory-wide expansion underway

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. met with representatives from Caribbean Sustainable Aquaculture (CSA) last week to discuss the introduction of fish farming to the Virgin Islands. The initiative aims to enhance food security, promote sustainable agriculture, and stimulate the local economy through innovative aquaculture practices, according to Government House.

The administration said that during the meeting, Governor Bryan emphasized the importance of the project in addressing the territory's reliance on imported food. "Today marks a significant step forward in our efforts to make the Virgin Islands more self-sufficient and resilient," he said. "The introduction of fish farming will not only help us reduce our dependence on imported food but

will also create new opportunities for local farmers and entrepreneurs."

The fish farming system proposed by CSA includes raising fish in inland nurseries before transferring them to submerged cages at depths of 150-200 feet in offshore waters. These cages will be monitored and managed by surface vessels to ensure optimal growth conditions. The Virgin Islands stands to benefit from CSA's expertise in sustainable development, as the organization brings its experience from operations in Curaçao, Norway, and Morocco, according to Gov't House.

Dennis Brow, a spokesperson for CSA, expressed enthusiasm about the partnership. "We are thrilled to partner with the Virgin Islands on this initiative. Aquaponics represents the future of farming, especially in island communities where space and resources are limited. By working together, we can create a model for sustainable agriculture that benefits both the environment and the people."

According to Gov't House, the initiative aligns with the broader goals of the Virgin Islands, which include promoting environmental sustainability, enhancing food sovereignty, and fostering economic growth.

Initial site assessments for the project have begun on St. Croix, and CSA officials are engaging with local fishermen and identifying offshore locations. The plan includes expanding the program territory-wide in the coming years.

As part of the rollout, CSA will work with local schools and community groups to provide education on sustainable farming practices, aiming to inspire the next generation of Virgin Islanders to engage in the agricultural sector.

Both Governor Bryan and CSA representatives committed to ensuring that the initiative benefits all residents of the Virgin Islands. Further updates, including details on how local farmers and entrepreneurs can participate, are expected in the coming months.