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## Local Food and Farm Council Announces October Town Halls on USVI Agricultural Plan

**Farmers, fishers, and residents are invited to sessions on St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John to review progress on food security, sustainability, and local production, with leaders stressing community voices in shaping the territory's future.**

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Farmers, fishers, and community members across the territory are invited to take part in upcoming town halls this October, where the Local Food and Farm Council (LFFC) will provide updates on progress made under the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan.

The series, titled “USVI Agricultural Plan in Action: Together for Our Islands. Our Food. Our Future”, will focus on achievements over the past year, key milestones, and next steps. Attendees

will also have the opportunity to participate in open dialogue about agricultural and fisheries priorities, with an emphasis on sustainability, support, and community engagement.

The council will host sessions on October 6 in St. Thomas, October 8 in St. Croix, and October 27 in St. John, all scheduled from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. AST, with preregistration beginning at 5:30 p.m. Each town hall will be held in a hybrid format, with both in-person and virtual attendance options.

The Agricultural Plan, endorsed by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and ratified by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands, is guided by the LFFC through its eight mandates. Progress is considered critical in advancing food security across the territory, where the UN Food and Agricultural Organization estimates that 97 percent of the food supply is imported.

“A resilient and equitable food system isn't built overnight,” said LFFC Co-Chair Dr. Safiya George, President of the University of the Virgin Islands. “It demands sustained collaboration, transparent governance, and a shared commitment to putting community needs first.”

Her fellow Co-Chair, Agriculture Commissioner Dr. Louis E. Petersen Jr., emphasized the importance of inclusion. “Our work is driven by the belief that those who grow, harvest, and supply our food must have a seat at the table, not just as participants, but as decision-makers shaping the future of farming, fishing and food production in the Virgin Islands,” he said. “We invite the community to attend and lend their voices.”

Officials stressed that strengthening local production benefits the economy by supporting farmers, fishers, and small businesses while also ensuring fresher, more nutritious food at lower costs for consumers. The shift also helps protect the territory from supply-chain disruptions and reduces waste and pollution associated with heavy reliance on imports.

#### Event Details

- St. Thomas — Monday, October 6, University of the Virgin Islands, Orville E. Kean Campus, Laverne E. Ragster Administration & Conference Center, First Floor Conference Room.
- St. Croix — Wednesday, October 8, University of the Virgin Islands, Albert A. Sheen Campus, The Great Hall.
- St. John — Friday, October 27, Legislature of the Virgin Islands, St. John Annex Conference Room.
- Time: 6:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. AST (in-person preregistration at 5:30 p.m.).
- Virtual Access: [bit.ly/AGPLANACTION](https://zoom.us/j/3850929463?omn=91024063804) or via Zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/3850929463?omn=91024063804>, Meeting ID: 385 092 9463.
- RSVP for in-person attendance: [vilocalfoodandfarmcouncil@doa.vi.gov](mailto:vilocalfoodandfarmcouncil@doa.vi.gov).

The Local Food and Farm Council is composed of 17 members, including Co-Chairs Dr. Louis E. Petersen Jr. and Dr. Safiya George; Dr. Usman Adamu, Dean and Director of UVI's School of Agriculture; Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Commissioner of the Department of Education; Jean-Pierre L. Oriol, Commissioner of DPNR; Wayne L. Biggs Jr., CEO of the USVI Economic Development Authority; along with honorary farm members Abeba Sellassie of Ityopia Rootz Farm, Dr. Nate Olive of Ridge to Reef Farm, Edmon Titre of New Breed Farm, and Royce Creque of Greenridge Guavaberry Farm.

Honorary fisher members include Winston Ledee and Mavel Maldonado. Additional members are VIDE designees Dr. Renee Charleswell, Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction; Harith Wickrema, President of Island Green Living; and Cydney Meadows, Territorial Director of Sustainability and Agricultural Education. DPNR designees include Dr. Nicole Angeli, Director of Fish & Wildlife, and Dr. Sennai Habtes, Bureau Chief of Fisheries.

For more information or to share feedback, residents can call 340-693-1003 or email [vilocalfoodandfarmcouncil@doa.vi.gov](mailto:vilocalfoodandfarmcouncil@doa.vi.gov). Details are also available at [www.vilocalfoodandfarmcouncil.org](http://www.vilocalfoodandfarmcouncil.org).

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