

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sen. Novelle Francis Eager To Support Agriculture Industry, Sponsors First Bill

Business / **Published On January 16, 2015 10:17 AM /**

Cynthia Graham **January 16, 2015**



Three days after being sworn in as a member of the 31st Legislature, freshman St. Croix Sen. Novelle Francis, Jr. on Wednesday made known his "intentions to work with the Mapp-Potter administration to develop the territory's agriculture industry," according to a statement released from the senator's office.

Francis, who is the vice-chair of the Committee on Economic Development, Agriculture and Planning, has submitted a bill request to create legislation for the formation of an entity to market local agricultural products, as well as develop farmer co-ops that would provide support and resources for fishermen and farmers.

Francis believes it would serve the agriculture industry well to have more government-supported initiatives and resources.

"Our farmers and fishermen currently wear two hats--production and sales," Francis said. "The creation of an entity for the wholesale marketing of agricultural products, would not only allow our farmers and fishermen to focus their energies on production, but also allow greater access for consumers, thereby providing revenue opportunities for both the tradesmen and the government."

The senator applauded the Mapp administration for its interest in growing the farming industry, referencing [the governor's remarks](#) about his vision for agriculture in the territory.

"I was very encouraged today to hear of the administration's plans, as they are comparable with my proposed legislation to support the agricultural industry," Francis said.

The senator says he is in the process of arranging a meeting with newly appointed Agriculture Commissioner-designee Carlos Robles "to discuss their shared objectives."