

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Agriculture Displays Four Pieces Of Equipment Made Available Through Senate Drought Funding

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ST. CROIX -- The Department of Agriculture had on display today four pieces of equipment purchased through a \$500,000 Senate appropriation that was [approved](#) by Governor Kenneth Mapp last year during the drought season.

The new equipment include a fertilizer spreader, used to "broadcast" or spread fertilizer; and a grapulator, used to collect and place hay on a flatbed truck. D.O.A. Commissioner Carlos Robles said in the past the entire department would have to help in collecting hay, as well as prisoners made available through the Bureau of Corrections. The new machine eliminates that need and frees employees to perform other duties.

D.O.A. bought a hay baler as well, a piece of farm machinery used to compress a cut and raked crop (such as hay, cotton, straw, or silage) into compact bales that are easy to handle, transport, and store. And lastly, the department purchased a 2017 Mack water truck, the first of its kind in the territory, Mr. Robles said, that comes ready with all the "bells and whistles," including a global positioning system (GPS), carrying from 1,000 and up to 4,000 gallons of water.

The commissioner said the cost of the new machines combined is roughly \$200,000, all of which will be utilized in St. Croix specifically and not St. Thomas because of differences in terrain, he said.

As for the benefits, the commissioner sees many.

"It makes my office and my team more efficient. It gives us an opportunity to service more clients; it makes the work of my team a little bit easier because with some of the mechanization, it gives them a break," Mr. Robles said. "Prior to this, sometimes the entire St. Croix staff would have to be out there to assist and it reduces that stress, that labor on my team.

Mr. Robles said his employees gave him a list of their needs that would make work easier and more efficient for them, "and we responded by signing off, and they got the equipment," he concluded.