

The Virgin Islands Consortium

2018 Agricultural Fair Cancelled, Dept. Of Agriculture Confirms

Business / **Published On November 15, 2017 12:07 PM /**

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ST. CROIX -- Department of Agriculture (D.O.A.) Commissioner Carlos Robles has confirmed that due to the damage wrought to the Agriculture Fair grounds in Estate Lower Love, the 2018 Agriculture Fair will not take place. The confirmation, expected by many, represents a blow to the St. Croix economy and D.O.A., which relied on the fair as a reliable source of annual income.

But aside from the damage and the safety concerns at the fair grounds, St. Croix's agriculture industry, already at its lowest point according to Dale Browne, co-founder of Sejah Farms, would not be able to grow enough produce in time for the February event, as local farms saw almost complete devastation following Hurricane Maria.

Mr. Browne, whom The Consortium spoke with last week for an upcoming story on the territory's agriculture industry, said his farm, which he and his wife, Yvette Browne founded over 20 years ago, saw catastrophic damage and will need to be rebuilt from the ground up. The farm's trailers were damaged; livestock sheds were destroyed; an annual food-tasting event dubbed "[Bush Cook, Chef Cook](#)" and three other events put on by Sejah farms, were cancelled. The farm also lost livestock, including five sheep, and had to rehabilitated others that were traumatized by the storms.

"Upon all of that, you have the Dept. of Agriculture which is totally decimated; they can't do anything for anybody. They can't send anyone out to do anything for anybody because of the rain and because of the destruction that they had there," Mr. Browne said. He said farmers across the board were severely affected by the storms, "and for those who may be able to produce but depend on the department to do land preparation, that can't be done because they're trying to take care of what's necessary in order to get back operational. That is not going to happen probably until the end of the year," Mr. Browne said.

Feature Image: Agricultura Fair grounds after Hurricane Maria. ([Irene Ali Photography](#))