

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. Of Agriculture Deputy Commissioner Named; Satellite Farm Program At St. Croix Schools Announced

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Ernice Gilbert **March 20, 2019**



During a Department of Agriculture press conference held on Tuesday, the department's commissioner nominee, Positive Nelson, announced Khadija Blyden as D.O.A.'s deputy commissioner, who Mr. Nelson said will help him manage and run the department. The former lawmaker sought to relay a new day of unity at D.O.A., stating, "when we speak, we speak as one Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture. This thing about St. Thomas and St. Croix can't exist, even though physically we do. But as far as operations, we are one department and we will try to be efficient all around."

Ms. Blyden, whose most recent employment was executive assistant to the chief executive at Viya during Alvaro Pillar's tenure, said she would strive to have the department's employees work more efficiently.

"I came from a strong executive administrative background, therefore providing me with the ingenuity to help collectively strengthen the teams to help you work more efficiently, more lightly, so that we can better and effectively serve our farming community, our schools, and our community at large." Ms. Blyden said.

Also announced during Tuesday's press conference was Roberto James as the department's school and satellite farm coordinator. In his role, Mr. Roberto will help create the school and satellite farm program in public schools on St. Croix, which both Mr. Nelson and Mr. Roberto said should serve to help build interest in farming in young Virgin Islanders. If the program is successful on St. Croix, it will be replicated in St. Thomas, the men said.

"Our children need to realize that there are opportunities in agriculture, agri-science to be [specific], with over 400 different careers, and here is one field that we can use to introduce them to agriculture," Mr. Roberto said, referring to the pilot school and satellite farm program on St. Croix.

Aside from the program announced Tuesday, Mr. Nelson also said he intends to host a summer program on St. Croix this summer. "There's no way we can expect interest of the young people into farming if we don't expose them and get them close to farming," he said.

Feature Image: Khadija Blyden, (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)