

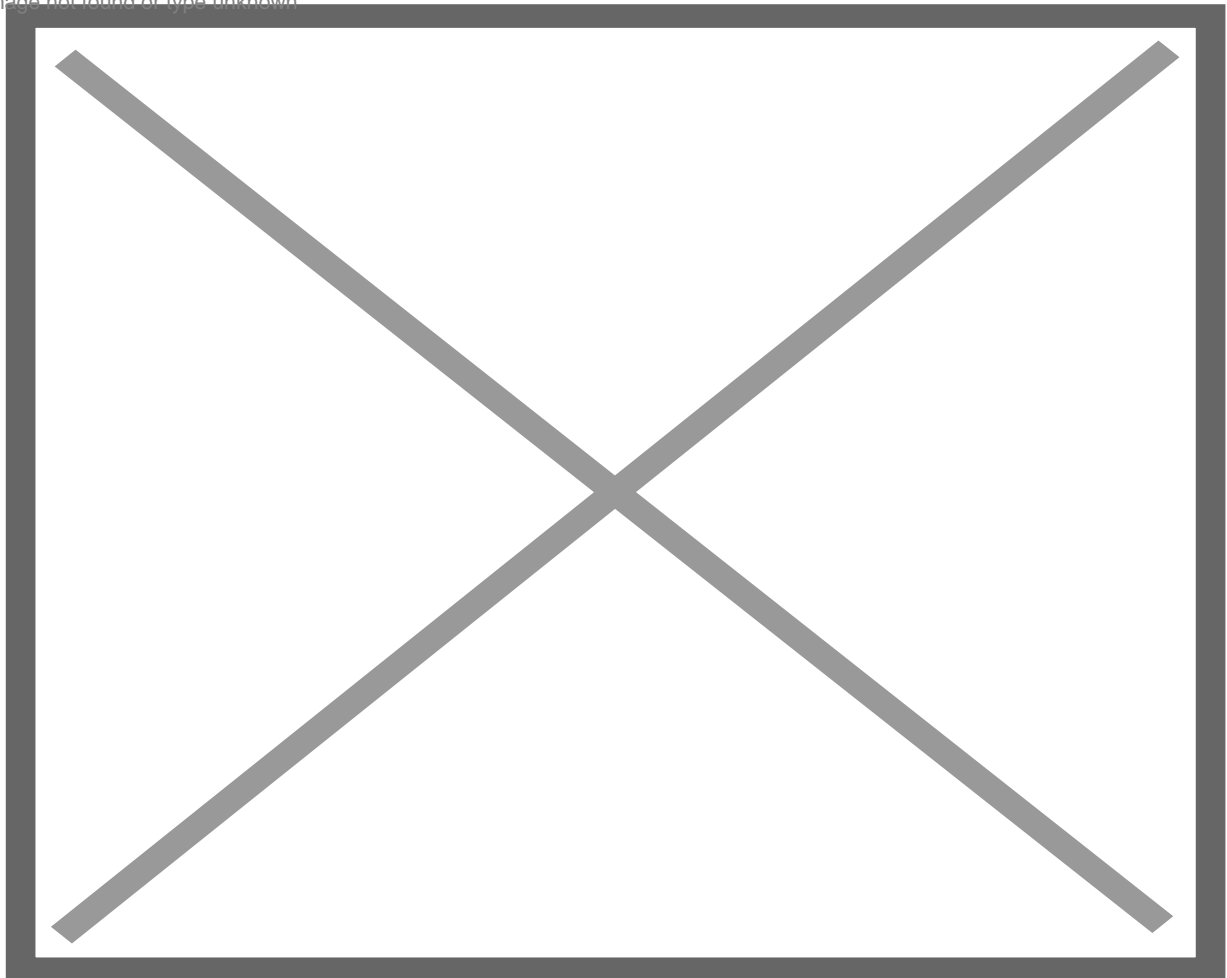
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World Health Kitchen Announces Fourth-Round Recipients of Grants Disbursed Through Its Food Producer Program

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World Central Kitchen (WCK) has announced the recipients of its fourth round of grants in the U.S. Virgin Islands, disbursed through its Food Producer Network (FPN).

The program builds resilient local food systems and strengthens food security through direct financial support to smallholder farmers and fishers, as well as small food-related businesses and nonprofit organizations, according to a release WCK issued Wednesday. The program seeks to revitalize its beneficiaries' operations and re-grow their capacity to produce, distribute, and sell food at the local level to reduce reliance on food imports.

Joining FPN in St. Thomas are: Healthy Harvest Farm, Joshua Quetel, My Brother's Workshop, and Sugar Brown Farms. The new FPN program participants in St. Croix are Maldonado's Fishing, NJ's Fishing, Rico's Fish Market, Rodgers' Farm, and Virgin Islands Farmers Alliance. Also located in St. Croix and receiving its second WCK grant is Sejah Farm.

Operated by Yvette and Dale Brown, Sejah Farm is a multi-faceted farm operation that raises goats and sheep, poultry and eggs, and grows vegetables for local and off-island demands. Sejah Farm used its first WCK grant to acquire a dual-system cold storage unit, with both a walk-in cooler and freezer, as well as a diesel generator to operate the unit in times of emergency. Yvette and Dale will use their second grant to create a learning center where local producers will be empowered with the knowledge and skills to grow their business and advance food and nutrition security across the Virgin Islands, according to the release.

The funds will be used by program participants to finance capital improvements like building chicken coops, upgrading food packing facilities, and installing irrigation systems. Funds will also be used to purchase ice machines, motors for fishing boats, lobster traps, and other fishing equipment. WCK also offers technical capacity building workshops to raise participant production capabilities and enhance commercial operations to increase sales and access to markets. Additionally, WCK assists beneficiaries through its volunteer network, composed of local community members and visitors who provide community service to help participants meet their goals.

“Through this Network, we have supported 29 small businesses and organizations in the Virgin Islands. Nearly four years after launching FPN, we have concrete data showing that members of the Network can double production and sales within a year of joining the program. They are connecting with food producers from across the Virgin Islands as well as throughout the Caribbean, and are stronger today as a network than they were before individually,” said Mikol Hoffman, director of the Food Producer Network.

FPN was established in Puerto Rico in 2018 in response to the devastating hurricane season the year prior. Since then, \$4.1 million in grants have been disbursed to food producers affected by natural disasters in the Caribbean and Central America, the release further stated. The program expanded to the Virgin Islands in 2020 where it has invested nearly half a million dollars in food-related businesses.

For more information, visit wck.org/fpn and follow FPN on social media facebook.com/wckfpn. For a calendar of upcoming webinars, please visit wck.org/fpn-events.