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USVI Agriculture Plan Seeks to Boost Local Product Output From 3 Percent to 35 Percent by 2040

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Agriculture land planted with Papaya trees. By. GETTY IMAGES

Boosting local agriculture products from 3 percent to 35 percent is one of the goals for the agriculture sector as part of Vision 2040 – a developmental approach that is aimed at addressing the services, technology, energy, agriculture, and manufacturing sectors in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

This was one of the many outcomes anticipated under the Vision 2040 Agriculture Plan component which was unveiled on Monday during a virtual and in-person ceremony, where members of the public had the opportunity to question aspects of the plan after it was unveiled by the Agricultural Plan Task Force.

“The goal is to boost agriculture products by 2 per year...increase the acreage in production by 10 percent each year and increase the number of license farmers by 5 percent each year,” said co-chair of the Task Force Dr. David Hall, University of the Virgin Islands president.

The plan, which took nine months to develop also anticipates an outcome of having more individuals engaged in home gardening and community growth by 10 percent per year, while at the same time reducing the number of agricultural inputs by 2 percent each year. Agricultural inputs are defined as products permitted for use in organic farming, and include feedstuffs, fertilizers and permitted plant protection products as well as cleaning agents and additives used in food production.

As required by Act 8404, the Agricultural Plan should contain policy and funding recommendations to support and expand the local food system, increase locally grown food production, and provide an avenue of food security in the territory.

“This agricultural plan will be a living working document that could be amended as necessary, and I am certain that as the years and times go by, we will do what is necessary,” said Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory when delivering remarks virtually during the unveiling. “...The outcome will be to increase food security for the people of the Virgin Islands.”

In response to a question in which Mr. Hall was asked about the likelihood of the plan getting fully funded or adopted if there is a change in administration, he made it clear that that will be a question to be answered by the Legislature. “I can only speak from the standpoint of the task force,” he said. “We feel our job is to put forth a strong plan and then advocate for its adoption and we have been doing that.”

A news release from the task force informing and inviting the public to the unveiling said that one of the most critical issues facing the territory is ensuring a sustainable food supply.

The U.S. Virgin Islands Vision 2040, unveiled by Governor Albert Bryan and Economic Development Authority CEO Wayne Biggs [in October 2020](#), seeks to facilitate economic growth, job creation, and wealth generation. The entire plan is scheduled to be published on the Department of Agriculture's website on May 10th.

Besides Dr. Hall, the other members of the Agricultural Plan Task Force include Commissioner of Agriculture, Positive T.A. Nelson who also co-chairs the grouping; Diana E. Collingwood, Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture; Hannah V. Carty, former Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture; Dr. Kendra Harris, Dean of the School of Business, University of the Virgin Islands; Dr. Usman Adamu, Dean of the School of Agriculture, University of the Virgin Islands; Harith Wickrema, President of nonprofit Island Green Living Association; Dale Browne of Sejah Farms; Royce Creque of Greenridge Guavaberry Farms; and Nate Olive, Director, Ridge to Reef Farms.