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Agrifest 2020, Titled 'Agriculture: Trendy in 2020', Set for Feb. 15-17

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A young woman serving food poses for a pic during the Agricultural Food Fair in 2016
By. ERNICE GILBERT/VI CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — The biggest agricultural affair in the Caribbean takes place on St. Croix between Feb. 15-17, the Agricultural Food Fair Board of the Virgin Islands has announced.

This year's affair, titled "Agriculture: Trendy in 2020" takes place at the Rudolph Shulterbrandt Agricultural Complex, Estate Lower Love on St. Croix from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The entrance fee is \$6 for adults, \$4 for children, and \$5 for senior citizens. The opening ceremony is scheduled for 10 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 15.

Positive Nelson, current Dept. of Agriculture commissioner and former senator, spoke of new and exciting additions to the myriad of activities that take place during the fair, even as he said the 50th anniversary event will be something special. "We're going to plan grand for the 50th," he said.

Even so, those attending the fair this year will not be disappointed, Mr. Nelson said. He spoke of a farming competition between the public schools, along with a coal pot demonstration (a coal pot cookoff is scheduled for 2021) — events that are sure to grab the attention of onlookers — along with all the exciting activities and great food that people have come to expect.

Mr. Nelson said this year's theme speaks to the new trends in agriculture to include tower growing, aquaponics and the various new forms of technology being implemented in agriculture. "People having gardens in their homes, gardens in their kitchens, gardens and green spaces in office buildings — all of that is part of the new trend so we're happy to have a poster that captures that, which was drawn by artist Peter Gonzalez out of St. Thomas. He did a great job in capturing the concept," Mr. Nelson said.

Coney Island is returning, and there some construction ongoing on the site to repair damage done by Hurricane Maria in 2017, which Mr. Nelson said will facilitate even more activities. "We will be getting closer to what we were [before Hurricane Maria] and continue to build to have a better structure for not only the fair, but the Dept. of Agriculture," Mr. Nelson said.

Agrifest, however, needs little local promotion aside from the dates to entice people to show up. It has been one of the most popular events to attend on St. Croix for decades, and has a reputation for attracting tourists from around the Caribbean and elsewhere. Virgin Islands diaspora on the U.S. mainland usually set vacation time around the fair so they could be home, and over the years the event has grown even more popular.

Aside for the impacts of Hurricane Maria on St. Croix that [forced the 2018 event to be scaled back and to be held in May](#) —three months later than the usual February date — the fair's positive impact on St. Croix's economy continues to be an annual boost that is looked forward to by vendors participating in the annual affair, and other financial beneficiaries.

According to the board, Agrifest 2020 will feature Farmer of the Year award presentations and quadrille dancing by the Heritage Dancers. Other entertainment will include Soca Bingo with MC Bogle, The Music Commissioner, Big Band, Hypa Active Band, Hartatak Band International, Kurt Schindler, Reggae Artists Expo and Soca Artists Expo.

Family fun will involve interesting and attractive exhibits, demonstrations, entertainment, challenging competitions, games, prize-winning animals, a variety of delicious local food and beverages, along with fun fellowship of sharing with friends and relatives from neighboring islands.

In addition to participants from all three Virgin Islands, guests are expected to arrive from Guyana, St. Kitts, Nevis, St. Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, and Grenada.

The University of the Virgin Islands programs will participate under the UVI tent with educational displays of publications and services offered to the community.

The Agriculture and Food Fair is sponsored by the V.I. Department of Agriculture, the UVI Cooperative Extension Service, and the V.I. Department of Tourism.

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