

# Testimony on Agriculture

Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture

*Submitted to: Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture*



*Positive T. A. Nelson*  
Commissioner of Agriculture

Government of the United States Virgin Islands  
**Department of Agriculture**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**INTRODUCTION** .....2

**DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES**.....2

**AGRICULTURE PLAN UPDATE** .....3

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ..... 3-4

**APPENDIX**.....

    A. Personnel.....7

    B. Vehicle Listing..... 8-9

    C. Status on Farmers’ Lease Agreements .....10

    D. Status Updates on Grants..... 11-16

    E. Status Updates on St. Croix and St. Thomas Abattoir.....17

    F. Path for Territorial Agriculture Plan..... 18-20

    G. List of Licensed Farmers ..... see attachment

    H. USVI Drought Impact ..... see attachment

Government of the United States Virgin Islands  
**Department of Agriculture**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Greetings Mr. Chairman Senator Javan E. James, committee members, other Senators of the 35th Legislature present, Control Staff, and People of the Virgin Islands.

The VIDA was called here to give an update on the overall status of this Department to include:

1. Vacancies
2. Inventory and condition
3. Status on renewal
4. Status on Grants
5. Status on St. Croix and St. Thomas Abattoir
6. List of Farmers
7. Path moving forward.

## **DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES**

VIDA continues to make headway in rebuilding food availability in the Territory. Farmers are more open to and are attending workshops to enhance technical and administrative skills and are becoming more familiar with the process to being grant worthy.

VIDA employees' morale has improved and an attitude towards excellence is being built via divisional training, professional development, and improved communication from management. We have purchased new equipment and tools to help employees improve efficiency while executing tasks. Most of VIDA's recovery projects are completed. We are awaiting the buildout of the St. John modular office, demolition of the St. Thomas abattoir, repair of Reservoir Road, Dorothea Office and Nursery fencing, and construction of the Administration Building on St. Croix, our largest and most costly Recovery project.

Government of the United States Virgin Islands

# Department of Agriculture

Progress made at VIDA is not without challenges. Heavy Equipment breakdowns, staff shortages, machinery failures, and aged infrastructure continue to plague us. The employee's resilience and innovation have persevered and remain intact.

## **AGRICULTURE PLAN**

The Territorial Agricultural Plan, Act 1804, endeavors to increase agricultural productivity locally to make food security and sovereignty a reality. VIDA's role is to oversee, support, and solidify the progression and implementation of the plan.

The path forward is to secure funding and support to continue building personnel capacity within VIDA to pursue mandates of the Territorial Plan which incorporates prior unfunded legislation.

Attached herein is a list of codified mandates in various sections of the code. Be reminded that this build-out will occur over time.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We thank you for this opportunity to present to this August body. The men and women of VIDA are committed to our roles in moving the V.I. towards Food Sovereignty.

We invite you to visit the 51st Annual Agriculture and Food Fair of the V. I. at the Rudolph Schulerbrandt Agricultural Complex which begins on February 18 – 20, 2023. The opening ceremony is at 10:00 am. Additionally, there are Farmer's markets each Saturday at the Ag Complex, Southgate corner, and the Sanderilla Thomas Bungalow. Bordeaux Farmer's market is every 2nd and 4th Sunday in Bordeaux and some Farmers are now virtual. You are encouraged to buy local, eat local, for healthy bodies and a healthy economy.

Government of the United States Virgin Islands  
**Department of Agriculture**

At this time, I would like to take a moment to express a sincere appreciation to all the hardworking men and women at VID. Thank you for your continued commitment, dedication, and contribution towards establishing food sustainability. As the theme of Agrifest 2023 suggest, Agriculture: Growing today for tomorrow... You, Me, All ah we.

As asked in your correspondence specifically. Enclosed are attachments to listing:

- A) Personnel (including vacancies)
- B) Inventory and condition of Heavy Equipment
- C) Status on the renewal for the leasing agreement for farmers
- D) Status on grants to the Department
- E) Abattoir: St. Croix and St. Thomas
- F) Agricultural Plan
- G) List of licensed farmers (separate attachment 288 farmers)
- H) USVI Drought Impact

## Department of Agriculture Personnel Listing

POS CONTROL #	First Name	Last Name	EMPLOYEE ID	SALARY	JOB TITLE	CLASS	TERR
183-000-001	POSITIVE	NELSON	701587	\$102,000	COMMISSIONER	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-002	DIANA	COLLINGWOOD	45748	\$95,000	ASST. COMMISSIONER	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-003	RIISE	RICHARDS	27535	\$85,000	DEPUTY COMMISSIONER	EXEMPT	STT
183-000-004	AARON	BRYAN	110209	\$68,000	DIR ADMIN & MGMT	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-006	BILLY	ABRAHAM	106403	\$61,350	DIR MARKETING SERV	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-009	ORLANDO	MELLENDEZ	90145	\$54,000	ASST DIR FOOD PRODUCTION	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-010	VICTOR	MURRAY	63028	\$70,650	DIR FOOD PRODUCTION	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-011	RAYMOND	THOMAS	81105	\$41,200	SUPV. AGRICUL. DEV.	EXEMPT	STJ
183-000-017	CURLEEN	ROGERS	111399	\$50,000	DIRECTOR ABATTOIR	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-019	SHENIQUA	KLYVERT	113408	\$43,000	PROC/QUAL CONT OFF	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-020	ARTEMAH	WOODS	83374	\$36,050	SANITATION MGR - STX	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-021	PATRICK	OLIVE	77616	\$36,050	SANITATION MGR - STT	EXEMPT	STT
183-000-022	BETHANY ANN	BRADFORD	59560	\$79,209	DIR VET SERVICES	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-028	AKIL	ANDREWS	71652	\$45,000	URBAN & COMM FOREST COORD	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-032	TAFARI	TZADDI	105299	\$50,000	ASSIST PROPERTY MNGR	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-036	ARIANNE	OLIVER	111042	\$45,000	NACD TECH ASSIST COORD STX	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-037	GRACIA	LETTSSOME	75415	\$40,000	NACD TECH ASSIST COORD STT	EXEMPT	STT
183-000-041	JAHMAL	FRANCIS	111493	\$41,080	STATE SURVEY COORDINATOR	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-042	LEANDRA	RICHARDS	77041	\$45,000	PROGRAM MANAGER	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-043	SHANTEL	DOUGLAS	106859	\$42,120	PROGRAM ASSISTANT	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-045	NAKEITHA	SMITH	121113	\$35,000	ADMIN SPECIALIST	EXEMPT	STT
183-000-046	JAMES	HENDERSON	65606	\$45,000	AGRI PROPERTY INSP	EXEMPT	STT
183-000-047	JAMAL	ROGERS	93884	\$45,000	AGRI PROPERTY INSP	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-048	CHIJIJOKE	FARRELLY	109000	\$50,000	DIR HORTICULTURE & AGRONOM	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-049	ATARAH	GARIB	111024	\$76,000	CHIEF PROCUREMENT OFFICER	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-050	MICHELLE	TUITT-ELLIOTT	94337	\$71,500	ADMINISTRATOR, FISCAL, PERSONNEL SERVICES	EXEMPT	STX
283-000-004	SHANIKA	MATURIN	98221	\$30,597	COLLECTION AGENT	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-005	DIANA	RIVERA	112377	\$27,040	CUSTODIAL WORKER II	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-014	OSVALDO	LOPEZ	77783	\$36,071	HEAVY EQUIP OP II	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-016	TROY	KING	92903	\$29,665	LABORER II - STT	CLASSIFIED	STT
283-000-017	ANDY	WILLIAMS	77379	\$36,176	AGRICULTURAL TECHN	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-025	WAYNE	SOBRATTI	88098	\$29,665	LABORER II	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-026	JAMES	BENNERSON	111119	\$27,040	LABORER II	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-027	RUPERT	LEWIS	94705	\$29,665	LABORER II	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-028	TOM	JOSEPH	75441	\$39,904	HEAVY EQUIP MECHANIC	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-029	WESLEY	JOSEPH	31118	\$42,800	HEAVY EQUIP MECHANIC	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-031	XAVIOR	SMITH	112033	\$30,477	WELDER	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-033	SHAWAKI	MURRAY	80298	\$27,177	MAINT. MECHANIC	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-034	ROLAND	HORSFORD	76937	\$39,904	HEAVY EQUIP MECHANIC	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-037	LARRY	CHRISTIAN	112352	\$27,195	HEAVY EQUIP OP II	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-038	LAURITZ	CANTON	30088	\$34,858	BUTCHER	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-040	ROBERTO	VELEZ	98653	\$30,370	BUTCHER - STX	CLASSIFIED	STX

283-000-041	CALLIXTE	EUGENE	109244	\$30,370	BUTCHER - STX	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-042	PEDRO	REYES	80807	\$37,903	CHIEF BUTCHER	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-043	EUGENE	BRADY	74474	\$29,665	LABORER II - STJ	CLASSIFIED	STJ
283-000-045	HENRY	PRENTICE	88857	\$36,568	MAINT ENGINEER I	CLASSIFIED	STT
283-000-046	TREVOR	ALDRIDGE	81281	\$42,501	SUPV AGR PEST CONTROL	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-048	AYANNA	SIMON	99107	\$55,874	OFFICE MANAGER	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-049	TYRONE	LAKE JR	88924	\$36,180	VETERINARY TECH	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-051	DERICK	HODGE	74109	\$33,685	HEAVY EQUIP OP II	CLASSIFIED	STT
283-000-052	JONATHAN	SANTIAGO	112351	\$27,195	HEAVY EQUIP OP II	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-053	PATTERSON	ALLEYNE	97391	\$37,326	HEAVY EQUIPMENT OP II	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-054	JERRILYN	ABRAHAM	68785	\$58,109	FINANCIAL MGNT SPVR	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-055	CHARICE	JACKSON	83399	\$34,508	ACCOUNTANT I	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-056	RENNEY	CHARLES	88528	\$62,850	FISCAL OFFICER	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-057	ANTHONY	BROWN	111552	\$27,195	BUTCHER	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-059	PATTERSON	ALLEYNE III	112034	\$27,040	LABORER	CLASSIFIED	STX

**57 ACTIVE      \$2,547,782**

POS CONTROL #	First Name	Last Name	EMPLOYEE ID	SALARY	JOB TITLE	CLASS	TERR
183-000-007	JENNIFER	CARTER	VACANT	\$53,000	EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-013	JAWANZA	HILAIRE-WALLACE	VACANT	\$51,000	DIR AGRICU DEV	EXEMPT	STT
183-000-015	VACANT	VACANT	VACANT	\$50,000	FOREST STEW COORD	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-029	VACANT	VACANT	VACANT	\$33,500	PROPERTY MANAGER	EXEMPT	STX
183-000-034	DAMIAN	LANG	VACANT	\$39,000	SPECIAL ASSISTANT	EXEMPT	STX
NEW	VACANT	VACANT	VACANT	\$65,000	DIR, HEMP PROGRAM	EXEMPT	
283-000-006	VACANT	VACANT	VACANT	\$27,040	CUSTODIAL WORKER II	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-013	KENNETH	EMMANUEL	VACANT	\$32,555	HEAVY EQUIP OP II	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-015	DILLON	SIMMIOLKJIER	VACANT	\$32,555	HEAVY EQUIP OP II	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-021	ORLANDO	MELENDEZ	VACANT	\$30,370	HEAVY EQUIP OP II	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-022	DAVE	SAMUEL	VACANT	\$27,040	LABORER (ABATTOIR)	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-023	WILFREDO	NIEVES	VACANT	\$13,520	LABORER	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-039	VACANT	VACANT	VACANT	\$13,520	BUTCHER - STT	CLASSIFIED	STT
283-000-044	VACANT	VACANT	VACANT	\$15,168	MAINT. ENGINEER	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-058	ANTONIO	SIMON	VACANT	\$27,195	BUTCHER	CLASSIFIED	STX
283-000-060	VACANT	VACANT	VACANT	\$13,520	LABORER	CLASSIFIED	STX

**16 VACANT      \$523,983**

<b><u>FILLED POSITIONS</u></b>	<b><u>Positions</u></b>	<b><u>Cost</u></b>
Exempt	26	\$1,452,209
Classified	31	\$1,095,573
Total	57	\$2,547,782

<b><u>VACANT POSITIONS</u></b>	<b><u>Positions</u></b>	<b><u>Cost</u></b>
Exempt	6	\$291,500
Classified	10	\$232,483
Total	16	\$523,983

**TOTAL POSITIONS**                      **73**                      **\$3,071,765**

Exempt	32	\$1,743,709
Classified	41	\$1,328,056
St. Croix	47	
St. Thomas	8	
St. John	2	57

100% Federally Funded

As of February 2023



**St. Croix District**

TAG #	MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COLOR	VIN Number	Division Assigned To	Status
DA 25	Chevrolet	Service Truck (HE)	2008	White	1GBE5C39X8F417450	Garage - Fuel	Fair
DA 27	Chevrolet	3500 HD (HE)	2008	White	1GBJK34638E212182	Garage - Welding	Good
DA 29	Chevrolet	Mack Truck C8500	2003	White	1GBV8J4C33F516349	Food Prod. - Tractor Head	Fair
DA 33	Chevrolet	3500 HD (HE)	2010	White	1GB6KZB69AF106766	Garage - Service Truck	Fair
DA 35	Ford	Tractor 7610 (HE)	2002	Blue	263637M	Food Production	Fair
DA 39	New Holland	TS110A Tractor (HE)					
DA 41	New Holland	Powerster 110 (HE)	2018	Blue	ACP277229	Food Production	Poor
DA 43	Ford	Front End Loader (HE)	1990	White	E1RT5110WLE51003 BC64746	Food Production	Good
DA 44	New Holland	110 Tractor (HE)	2019	Blue	AKLE50851	Food Production	Good
DA 47	New Holland	Flat Bed Trailer (HE)		Blue	160220000	Food Production	Good
DA 48		Water Tank (HE)		Silver	TTT-5146	Food Production	Fair
DA 52	Chevrolet	3500 HD (HE)	2008	White	1GBJK74619E114860	Garage - Tire Truck	Fair
DA 54	New Holland	Backhoe B-95 (HE)	2009	Yellow	B95-699800781	Food Production	Fair
DA 55	New Holland	Tractor 5050 (HE)	2008	Blue	Z9JH08467	Food Production	Fair
DA 56	Tailbert	Lowboy Trailer (HE)	2001	Yellow	40FR0322913020705	Food Production	Fair
DA 57	Mack	GU713 (HE)	2018	White	1M2AX07Y2JMO40940	Food Production - Hauler	Good
DA 58	Mack	GU713 (HE)	2017	White	1M2AX04C1HM033660	Food Prod. - Water Truck	Good
DA 73	Case	Tractor L620 (HE)	2022	Red	ELRFC075AMAP01081	Food Production	New
DA 75	Mack	Trailer 33 Yards (HE)				VIDA	Good
	New Holland	Skid Steer L170 (HE)	2009	Yellow	N9M400130	Food Production	Fair
	Link Belt	Excavator 210XL (HE)	2006	Gray	K3D6-1115	Food Production	Good
	Caterpillar	963D Traxcavator (HE)	2009	Yellow	C6E21066	Food Production	Fair
	Caterpillar	D6KXL Dozer (HE)	2009	Yellow	CAT00DD6KHFHB01503	Food Production	Fair
	New Holland	Crawler Tractor (HE)	2020	Blue	ZLDK00836	Food Production	Good
	Various Impliments, Mowers & Pumps						

**St Thomas/St. John District**

Link Belt	210LX (HE)	Gray	SE-43708	VIDA	Good
-----------	------------	------	----------	------	------

New Holland	L170 (HE)		Yellow	N9M400106	VIDA	Good
Caterpillar	D6K (HE)		Yellow	CAT-00D6KLFBH01502	VIDA	Good
Caterpillar	953 (HE)		Yellow	CAT-0953CJBBX03034	VIDA	Good
Machinery	Traxcavator, Excavator				VIDA	Fair



Government of the United States Virgin Islands  
**Department of Agriculture**



ST. CROIX: #1 Estate Lower Love, Kingshill, V.I. 00850 • T: (340) 778-0997 • F: (340) 778-0997  
 ST. THOMAS: #7944 Estate Dorothea, St. Thomas, V.I. 00802 • T: (340) 774-5182 • F: (340) 774-1823  
 ST. JOHN: #11 Estate Carolina, Coral Bay, V.I. 00830 • T: (340) 776-6274 • F: (340) 693-5065

**Division of Property Management**

The Property Management division has four leases currently being processed through the Department of Property & Procurement. The two leases below have already been signed by the lessee's and The Department of Agriculture and awaiting approval from the Legislature.

1. Good Morning Market (Plot 4-SA Community Gardens)
2. Veggie 4 Life (Plot 4U-12 Community Gardens)

The remaining two leases are being processed and we have submitted the required supporting documentation to move forward with said leases.

3. Michael Durant (Plot 1-A Bethlehem Middle Works)
4. Efrain Bermudez (Plot 10-B VI Corps Land)

Our division is trying to encourage more farmers to complete their lease packages which includes, Updated Business License, Business Plan, Liability Insurance, Letter of Good Standing at potential occupant's bank and The Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture initial lease package. This will allow more farmers to have leases to occupy farmlands for a term of twenty years.

Please find below details on total occupancy and vacant plots.

DISTRICT	TOTAL FARMERS ON VIDA LAND	TOTAL ACRES
STX	126	1370
STT & STJ	50	110

VACANT PLOTS	ACREAGE
#2 Upper 2Bethlehem	4.6
Plot 3 VICORPS	180
10G VICORPS	13.6
22 E, F, G & H Estate Plessen	24
Windsor (Old Dairy Farm)	246
11-23 Estate Dorothea	1
4B-D Dorothea	1
<b>TOTAL ACREAGE</b>	<b>470.2</b>

**The Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture  
Federal Grants Status Update**

**2020 Specialty Crop Block Grant**

Awarded: \$241,757.76

Grant period: September 30, 2020 – September 29, 2023

Amount expended: \$72,166.12.

Remaining balance: \$170,671.99

**Ongoing Projects**

- **Backyard Farmers Development Project**

Budget: 129,409.21

Amount expended: \$95,234.12 (Funds were expended on gardening tools/supplies and training.) Remaining balance: \$34,175.09

**Purpose:** To increase access and awareness of locally grown crops by providing education & technical assistance to Backyard Farmers to enhance and encourage the competitiveness of locally grown crops in the USVI.

**Accomplishments:**

VIDA assisted 50 Backyard Farmers in developing their backyard garden; to date, Participants have received their supplies and are currently planting and harvesting crops.

- **Growers Capacity Building Program.**

Budget: \$40,000

Amount expended: \$0.00

Remaining balance: \$40,000.00

**Purpose:** To provide education and technical assistance to develop farmers' ability to produce more crops in the USVI.

**Accomplishments:**

Applications for this program have been acquired and will undergo a competitive review process.

VIDA will provide the selected four individuals (two in each district) with education in Plant and Soil Nutrition Management, Irrigation Systems, and Pest Management. In addition to materials and supplies, such as land preparation, seedlings, fencing, water tanks, irrigation, soil, ground cover, fertilizer, tiller, etc., to grow a crop.

- **Development of Local Organic Pesticide from Jicama**

**Sub-award recipient: University of the Virgin Islands**

**Budget: \$50,000.00**

Amount expended: \$ 12,204.16.

Remaining balance: \$37,795.84

**Purpose:** To conduct an experiment to evaluate extracts from various parts of the Jicama plant for the development of an organic pesticide for local use.

### **2021 Specialty Crop Block Grant**

Awarded: \$244,6036.26

Grant period: September 30, 2021 - September 29, 2024

Amount expended: \$3,621.25.

Remaining balance: \$240,982.01

### **Ongoing Projects:**

- **Establishment of an Agriculture Development Pilot Program for (at risk) Youths living in Public Housing Communities in collaboration with Senator Genevieve Whitaker and Senator Carla Joseph**

Budget: \$108,900.00

Amount expended: \$3,141.00 (Travelled to St. Thomas to visit the housing communities and held

a Town Hall Meeting)

Remaining balance: \$105,759.00

**Purpose:** To establish a Youth Agriculture Development Pilot Program to teach youths in public housing communities how to access, grow, market, and consume locally grown crops.

The three-housing community selected for the program are Aureo Diaz Heights, Candido Guadeloupe, and Kirwan Terrace. From each housing community, ten youths will be selected to participate. They will be provided with education and technical assistance to grow crops, which will be purchased by VIDA marketing division.

- **Promote Julie Mango as the Fruit of Choice of the US Virgin Islands.**

Budget: \$52,629.00

Amount expended: \$480.00 (Mango trees were purchased for grafting demonstration)

Remaining balance: \$52,149.00

**Purpose:** To Promote Julie Mango as the fruit of choice in the USVI according to Title 7 of the Virgin Islands Code. This project will seek to solicit sixty participants (in territory) to receive training on grafting, pruning and General tree care and maintenance. Next,400 mango seeds will be planted to produce the mango seedlings, which will be used for the

grafting component of the training. Every selected participant will seek to successfully graft at least 5 trees.

- **Development of Wild Cinnamon for the USVI Nursery Industry**  
**Sub award recipient: University of the Virgin Islands**

Budget: \$59,998.00

Amount expended: \$ 17,767.48.

Remaining balance: \$42,230.52

**Purpose:** Wild Cinnamon, a native tree in the Virgin Islands, is uncommon in general production due to difficulties in propagation. Therefore, the University is conducting research to develop an efficient propagation technique for the local nursery industry.

## **Veterinary Services Federal Grants**

### **Tropical Bont Tick Eradication Program**

Awarded: \$63,623.49

Grant period: August 1, 2021 – March 31, 2023

Amount expended: \$53,506.04.

Remaining balance: \$10,117.45

- This program is focused on maintaining quarantine of the index farm, continuing surveillance and treatment of all livestock and farms within a 3 km zone, submission of all tick samples for identification and weekly updating of the VI Farmer data base and EMRS.
- Funding supports purchase and maintenance of animal handling equipment and animal health supplies, fuel, maintenance of vehicles and spray rigs.
- Challenges: lack of staff to perform the physical surveillance of animals

### **Animal Disease Traceability**

Awarded: \$11,539.00

Grant period: September 13, 2022 – March 31, 2023

Amount expended: \$2,750.00.

Remaining balance: \$8,789.00

- The objectives of the VI ADT plan are to improve animal disease traceability by tagging, microchipping, and registering native animals, identifying animal premises through geospatial coordinates and Premise Identification Numbers, regulating imports and exports, and maintaining the VI Farmer data base.
- Traceability is critical to protecting animal health and preventing disease outbreaks.
- Funding supports the purchases of identification equipment and supplies, internet connection and travel to St. Thomas and St. John

## **Umbrella Programs**

Awarded: \$8,049.00

Grant period: September 13, 2022 – August 21, 2023

Amount expended: \$4,048.30.

Remaining balance: \$4,000.70

- The Virgin Islands is an active border of the United States. Surveillance and educational outreach are essential tools in protecting against disease outbreaks in the game bird, commercial poultry, and swine populations. With Avian Influenza spread across the US and African Swine Fever diagnosed in the DR, this program supports VIDA in protecting animal health and preventing disease outbreaks.
- Surveillance testing of swine and of poultry is the first step in disease outbreak protection.
- Funding supports purchase of equipment, PPE and sampling supplies, sample testing, fuel and travel to St. Thomas and St. John

## **National Association of Conservations Districts (NACD)**

Awarded: \$244,603.26

Grant period: June 7, 2021 – September 30, 2024

Amount Expended: \$3,621.25

Remaining balance: \$240,982.01

VIDA/VICD is mindful of the U.S. Virgin Island's location compared to the rest of the world and the disasters that plague this region. Hurricanes, earthquakes, worldwide pandemics, and climate change affect U.S. Virgin Island farmers' and residential gardeners' ability to harvest and feed their families and community. These disasters have brought about major droughts, erosion, and water contamination that alter the soil that the farmers need to grow their food for themselves and their livestock. We have observed how these disasters continue to affect the landscape and recognize the agricultural struggles in the U.S. Virgin Island farming community.

VIDA/VICD researched how we can help the public conserve their natural resources through the collection and evaluation of data. We constructed a plan, and a course of action by creating timelines, providing deliverables, and meeting milestones for the outcome of these activities.

VIDA/VICD, in identifying the concerns of the community reached out to the public through workshops, outreach programs, and presentations. We sort out reputable, experienced, and educated presenters to deliver information that will be beneficial to the community. We partnered with organizations to deliver the message of sustainable living. We provided resources, literature, advertisements, and information.

On November 12, 2022, in St. Thomas, Tutu Park Mall, the VIDA/VICD Hosted 1 of 3 presentations on Backyard composting. The workshops were based on food waste reduction

strategies using composting. The method that was used were kitchen scraps, freshly cut grass, dried leaves, and composting worms. These items most people found around their homes. The public learned how to reuse, recycle, and reduce not just for themselves but their community. The second Backyard presentation was hosted on January 14, 2023, in St. John in collaboration with Island Green Living and the final Workshop will be on St. Croix, February 4, 2023.

### **Urban & Community Forestry Grant**

The Urban & Community Forestry Division has two sub awards that are active.

**1. The Mahogany Road to Jolly Hill Nature Trail** – The sub-recipient has been awarded \$20,000.00 to construct a nature trail from Mahogany Road to Jolly Hill. This project will provide brochures and publications on the environment during tours; the planting of Native non-invasive trees and Educational hikes with signage that provide cultural & medicinal information.

#### **Progress to date:**

Key players have been identified: Arborist support (from UVI), Landscaper, School teachers (to take part in hikes) and lastly, an endorsement by the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works Commissioner. The trail is clear and research for the brochure and a video documentary has begun. This project was approved in December of 2021 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

**2. Preserving Our Tree, Saving Our Lives (Elementary School Program)** - \$20,000.00 has been awarded to Claude O. Markoe Elementary School. This program offers experiential learning through a Forestry curriculum that will be implemented incorporating the application of science, historical events, math and writing skills. It is designed to enable students to develop positive attitudes towards science through Forestry and Agriculture.

#### **Progress to Date:**

UVI staff has visited and identified applicable trees on the campus and made recommendations. Benches have been constructed and delivered; a schoolwide list of plants and trees for research has been completed and some trees/supplies have been purchased. Field trips have been conducted for students to begin their research of the trees and plants they selected. Teachers, students, and staff has already submitted their Urban Forestry presentation to the computer teacher to be compiled for publication.

The U&CF division is currently in the process of developing two more grants that are signage projects. The first is the Roadside signage project to erect 20 signs on the three islands aimed at informing the public that there is a governing tree law protecting native and heritage trees. This is an important precursor to giving the fines that much of the public is demanding as they see trees being damaged lately. The other project is a project to install signs for the mango tree orchard on the grounds of the department.

The program has a total of \$386,684.00 to spend on salary, supplies, equipment, and sub-awards.



## VIDA Upcoming Non-Competitive USDA Federal Grant Opportunities

### BIL Revegetation Funding Proposal due Feb. 14/23

Urban and Community Forestry Program \$49,500

Forest Stewardship Program \$49,000

To move VI Forest Action Plan priorities forward. VIDA to focus on FS Staff – 1 FS Greenhouse Technician and 1 student intern.

### State and Private Forestry (UCF) Urban and Community Forestry IRA Proposal due Feb. 28– (\$50 million available to territory over 5 yrs.)

Long-term growth and development of UCF programs to support:

- ⇒ Increased and equitable access to urban tree canopy and associated human health, environmental and economic benefits in *disadvantaged* communities,
- ⇒ Broadened community engagement in local urban forest planning.
- ⇒ Improved resilience to climate change, pests and storm events through best management and maintenance practices.

#### *Funding priorities:*

- Pursue and leverage competitive sub-granting, contracting and direct granting authorities to local government, non-governmental and community-based organizations, and other strategic partners to maximize UCF investments in *disadvantaged communities*.
- ⇒ A minimum of 80% awarded to States must be competitively sub-awarded to deliver UCF program benefits at the community level for *underserved populations*.

### BIL Revegetation Funding FY 22 & FY23 Proposals due early March recurring through FY24 & FY25 – for nursery development

Urban and Community Forestry Program \$75,000 per year

Forest Stewardship Program \$75,000 per year

#### *Funding Criteria:*

1. Inadequate Capacity - to carry out present and future reforestation needs.
2. Current/Future Tree Seedling Need Demonstrated
3. Appropriate Seed (ensure the reliable availability of source-identified, genetically appropriate seed)



Government of the United States Virgin Islands  
**Department of Agriculture**



ST. CROIX: #1 Estate Lower Love, Kingshill, V.I. 00850 • T: (340) 778-0997 • F: (340) 778-0997  
 ST. THOMAS: #7944 Estate Dorothea, St. Thomas, V.I. 00802 • T: (340) 774-5182 • F: (340) 774-1823  
 ST. JOHN: #11 Estate Carolina, Coral Bay, V.I. 00830 • T: (340) 776-6274 • F: (340) 693-5065

The St. Croix Abattoir has faced many obstacles; however, we have successfully served the community with fewer interruptions this past year. USDA Inspectors from Puerto Rico have found our facility and operating procedures acceptable as per USDA standards. Our employees continue to be trained on USDA program procedures to remain in compliance. To better serve our farming community, we are researching new programs such as blood, tripe, and bull foot processing which should increase slaughter count. The slaughter count for 2022 is as follows:

ANIMAL	QUANTITY
Cattle	77
Sheep	326
Goat	36
Pig	193 (26 from St. Thomas)

To ensure efficient functioning of the abattoir, additional staffing is required. With two long serving employees looking to retire, butchers need to be hired to learn the related skills to ensure there is no gap. Additionally, the new processing programs will require the hiring of butchers and laborers.

The St. Thomas Abattoir will be demolished based on instruction from The Office of the Governor. A grant application has been submitted to the University of the Virgin Islands for a mobile abattoir while VID A seeks available land and funding to facilitate the construction of a new facility.

## **Path Moving Forward for Territorial Agriculture Plan**

VIDA's role is to oversee, support, and solidify the progression of the implementation of the Territorial Agricultural Plan, directed by Act 8404, as it endeavors to increase agricultural productivity locally to make food security and sovereignty a reality.

The Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture shall review the agriculture plan and submit any recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature every five years beginning from the date on which the agriculture plan was submitted to the Governor and the Legislature

The aim of the Territorial Agricultural Plan is to develop five Related High Priority Projects as derived from the assessments of the Farmers and Community Engagement Surveys:

- (1) Comprehensive Irrigation System and Water Supply
- (2) Enhanced Infrastructure, Tools, and Equipment
- (3) Strategic Increase in Personnel at the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture
- (4) Support for an Orchard Development Initiative
- (5) Enhanced Grant Writing at the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture

To do so, the Department will need to either contract businesses, hire individuals, or work with other governmental bodies to perform these tasks including:

Market Inspectors & Cost Analyzers (VIC 3 § 291 a3, a5, a13)

Positions Required:

- (4) Market Inspector / Cost Analyzers
- (1) Fertilizer Inspector (Soil Specialist) (VIC 3 § 291 a6)

Service Contract Required:

Position Required:

- (1) Agronomist (potentially through UVI)

Local Food Promotion (VIC 3 § 291 a2, a11)

Position Required:

- (1) Local Food Promoter & Culture Bearer
- Animal, Insect, & Plant Disease Inspector (VIC 3 § 291 a8, a14)

Position Required:

- (1) Entomologist

Aquaculture Enforcement

No programs exist; support could be provided through DPNR and DPW.

Public Veterinary Clinic Supervisor

Maybe integrated under the responsibilities of VIDA's current Veterinary Program

Due to the volume of responsibilities under Title 7 of the VI Code, the following items will be required for compliance:

Livestock for Breeding Purposes (VIC 7 § 4d)

- Animals will need to be provided for distribution to the farmers especially during territorial emergency. This can be done through purchase or husbandry program.

- VIDA will need to include this in their annual budget request.

Purchase of equipment and supplies for farmers (VIC 7 § 5)

- Department or other agencies will need to purchase excess equipment to be available for rental to farmers.
- Develop a maintenance and protection team for equipment
- Develop fund & budget to provide repairs of farm equipment, at cost to licensed farmers

Land management: organic materials recycling program (VIC 7 § 7)

- Provide annual budget for an Organic Materials Recycling Program including:
  - a. Service contract

Commissioner's Responsibilities (VIC 7 § 9)

- Protect and purchase agriculturally zoned lands for agriculture (VIC 7 § 9a)
- Procurement of a processing and marketing facility (VIC 7 § 9b)
- Appoint /Hire the following Individuals (VIC 7 § 9g):
- Environmental Enforcement Officers (VIC 7 § 9g)
- To be integrated with DPNR and provide environmentally specific enforcement for VIDA issues.

Positions Required:

(2) Environmental Officers

Research & Data Collection Staff (VIC 7 § 9d)

Positions Required:

(1) Data Analyst and Researcher

(1) Data Entry Specialist

Grant Writers (VIC 7 § 9d/g)

- Budgeted in the "Additional Recommendations" Subsections

Mechanics & Heavy Equipment Operators (VIC 7 § 9e)

- To demonstrate farm equipment and Agriculture Techniques

Positions Required:

(2) Heavy Equipment Mechanic

(1) Small Engine Mechanic

Agriculturists (VIC 7 § 9h)

- To be promoted under the Agricultural Development Division & new UVI programming

Cooperative Agreement Coordinator (VIC 7 § 9j)

- To be integrated under Marketing Division & Local Food/Farm Coordinator

Loan Specialist (VIC 7 § 9k)

- To be integrated with EDA & SBDC

Promotion of the Agricultural Industry

- Redevelopment of Agricultural Curriculum (please refer to the recommendations from the Education Subcommittee)

Hiring of individual to focus and facilitate the following outreach programming (VIC 7 § 16)

- Prisons Outreach
- Department of Education Outreach
- Agricultural Caribbean Conference Facilitator

Position Required:

- (1) Territorial Outreach Coordinator

Homesteading/ Housing on Public Farmland

- Masonry housing exists on farmland
- Clear regulatory guidelines need to be in place
- VIDA Departmental Rules and Regulations need to be revised through legal counsel and review.

Enforcement Officers needed (VIC 7 § 9g)

Positions Required

- (2) Agricultural Enforcement Officers

Farmers are not in compliance with code requirements and VIDA standards

- Virgin Islands Fruit of Choice
- No funding is provided for this legislation utilizing the term “from time to time”
- VIDA does not usually include it in their annual budget request.
- Additional suggestions are listed in the repeal or amend proposal section of this document

-

Agriculture Business Incubator (VIC 7 § 301 - 309)

- School and Satellite Farm Coordinator must be funded and must be updated to match with the requirements of the Code.