An Act requiring the Department of Agriculture and the President of the University of the Virgin Islands to develop a territorial agriculture plan and providing an appropriation of $180,000 from the General Fund to the University of the Virgin Islands assist with developing the plan.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. (a) The Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and the President of the University of the Virgin Islands shall develop a territorial agriculture plan.

(b) The territorial agriculture plan, known as the “agriculture plan” must contain policy and funding recommendations to support and expand the local food system, to increase locally grown food production and to provide food security for the Territory. The agriculture plan must include short-term and long-term goals, including proposals for legislative enactment.

(c) The agriculture plan must be comprised of:

(1) A comprehensive regulatory component for the territory’s farming industries;
(2) Business models for profitable and sustainable community-based local food and farming businesses;

(3) A plan for the development of a position for and the hiring of a local food and farm coordinator to carry out programs and to coordinate efforts within 180 days of submission of the plan;

(4) The creation of a local food and farm fund from voluntary sources to support initiatives, and agriculture-related activities;

(5) Recommendations for the establishment of a local food and farm advisory committee, composed of seven members, including the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture or the Commissioner’s designee, the Executive Director of the Economic Development Authority or the Executive Director’s designee; two members from the University of the Virgin Islands, including the President of the University of the Virgin Islands or the President’s designee and the Dean of Agriculture or the Dean’s designee and three other members appointed by the Governor, with those three being farmers from each island, to create and oversee the local food and farm fund, participate in the grant decision-making process, disburse resources from the fund, advise the Local Food and Farm Coordinator, collect and evaluate critical local food systems production and marketing data and, respond to any requests by the Legislature for policy or funding recommendations;

(6) The creation of a "local food symbol" that can be placed on stickers, posters, stamps, etc. for sale;

(7) The Development of education and training programs for local food farmers, entrepreneurs, and processors; and

(8) The collection of data, creation of benchmarks, and assessment of progress on the building of the local food and farm economy.
SECTION 2. (a) The Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and President of the University of the Virgin Islands shall submit the agriculture plan to the Governor and to the Legislature not later than 180 days after the enactment of this act.

(b) A request to the Governor for an extension for the submission of the agriculture plan may be considered upon proof that substantial work on the plan has been completed.

SECTION 3. 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 under section 2 (a).

SECTION 4. The sum of $180,000 is appropriated in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2021, from the General Fund to the University of the Virgin Islands to assist the University of the Virgin Islands in developing the agriculture plan mandated in section 1 of this act.

BILL SUMMARY

Section 1 of this bill directs the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture to develop a territorial agriculture plan. Subsection (c) of section 1 lists the components of the agriculture plan.

Section 2 requires the agriculture plan to be submitted to the Governor and to the Legislature within 180 days after this bill’s enactment, but allows for an extension. Section 3 requires a five-year review of the agriculture plan. Section 4 appropriates $180,000 to the University of the Virgin Islands to defray the cost of developing the plan.