



# Local Food and Farm Council

## Meeting Minutes

### March 20, 2026

Location		Present	Absent	Start Time	End Time	Recorder
via Zoom Video Conferencing/*-		11	10	9:10 a.m.	10:33 a.m.	Jacquette Maynard
<b>This Council is composed of the following agencies, farmers, and restaurateurs:</b>	University of the Virgin Islands (UVI)	Department of Agriculture (VIDA)		Department of Education (VIDE)	Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR)	Economic Development Authority (USVI EDA)
	Farmer (TBA)	Farmer (TBA)		Farmer (TBA)	Restaurateur (TBA)	Restaurateur (TBA)
<b>Present:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-chair Designee: Dr. Usman Adamu – Dean and Director of the School of Agriculture (UVI)</li> <li>• Member: Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., – Chief Executive Officer (EDA)</li> <li>• DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife</li> <li>• VIDE Designee: Ms. Cydney Meadows – Territorial Director of Sustainability &amp; Agricultural Education</li> <li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Royce Creque – Greenridge Guavaberry Farm</li> <li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Dr. Nate Olive – Ridge to Reef Farm</li> <li>• Shanta Roberts – Director, Agriculture Business Center (AgBC)</li> <li>• Dara Cooper – SBDC Agribusiness Consultant</li> </ul>					
<b>Absent:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-chair: Dr. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., – Commissioner (VIDA)</li> <li>• Co-chair: Dr. Safiya George – President (UVI)</li> <li>• Member: Jean-Pierre L. Oriol – Commissioner (DPNR)</li> <li>• Member: Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington – Commissioner, VI Department of Education</li> <li>• VIDE Designee: Mr. Harith Wickrema – President of Island Green Living</li> <li>• VIDE Designee: Dr. Renee Charleswell – Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction</li> <li>• DPNR Designee: Dr. Sennai Habtes – Bureau Chief, Fisheries</li> <li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Ms. Abeba Sellassie – Ityopia Rootz Farm</li> <li>• Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Edmon Titre – New Breed Farm</li> <li>• Honorary Fisher Member: Mr. Winston Ledee</li> <li>• Honorary Fisher Member Ms. Mavel Maldonado</li> <li>• Dr. Rick Nader – Vice President for Research and Economic Development (UVI)</li> <li>• Local Food and Farm Coordinator: Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown – VI Good Food Coalition Program</li> </ul>					

#### I. CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS

- Dr. Adamu, Co-Chair Designee of the Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and welcomed members and participants. A quorum was confirmed as the meeting progressed.

#### II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Dr. Petersen presented the meeting minutes of **February 20, 2026**, for approval.

#### Actions:

- **Motion:** A motion to approve the meeting minutes was moved by Dr. Olive and seconded by Mr. Creque.
  - **Vote:** The motion carried unanimously. There were no objections or abstentions.

#### III. Local Food Symbol and Integrity Subcommittee Update

Dr. Adamu invited Director Roberts to provide an update on the Local Food Symbol and Integrity Subcommittee. Director Roberts reported that the subcommittee recently met to discuss the development of a territorial labeling and branding initiative intended to identify products that are grown, caught, or produced within the Virgin Islands. The subcommittee initially explored the “Reef Responsible” model as a possible starting point but later agreed that a distinct territorial brand would better represent Virgin Islands products while remaining separate from the Council’s organizational logo.

Director Roberts noted that the label should be simple, recognizable, and practical for packaging, including use on small produce stickers and product labels. The purpose of the label is to clearly indicate that products originate in the Virgin Islands, rather than to imply organic certification or other production standards.

#### **Discussion**

- Mr. Creque shared a preliminary label design for consideration. Members acknowledged the design and noted that additional refinement may be needed to ensure usability for product packaging.
- Dr. Olive referenced a draft strategic plan circulated to the subcommittee that outlines potential marketing strategies for Virgin Islands agricultural products. He emphasized that marketing remains a key challenge for farmers and suggested that a strong territorial brand could support both local consumption and broader market recognition.
- Dr. Olive also referenced the Georgia Grown program as a potential model, noting that similar programs often include certification agreements requiring producers to verify that products bearing the label are genuinely produced within the region. Members were encouraged to review the draft strategic plan for further discussion at future meetings.

#### **IV. Administrative Update – IRS Exemption Form**

Dr. Adamu referenced documentation circulated for signatures related to IRS compliance requirements. Mr. Creque confirmed that he had signed the form earlier in the week.

Ms. Maynard reported that all required signatures had been obtained and that Dr. Petersen had forwarded the completed form to the attorney's office for review and processing.

#### **V. Presentation – Overview of the UVI School of Agriculture: Dr. Usman Adamu, Dean and Director UVI SOA**

Dr. Adamu delivered a presentation providing an overview of the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) School of Agriculture.

Dr. Adamu began by providing background on the establishment of the School. He explained that the School of Agriculture was officially created in June 2020 following approval by the UVI Board of Trustees. The School was formed by integrating two long-standing institutional components:

- The Agricultural Experiment Station
- The Cooperative Extension Service

These programs have historically operated as part of the University's land-grant mission. With the addition of an academic program component, the School of Agriculture now fulfills the traditional land-grant model of research, teaching, and extension. Dr. Adamu explained that the School's mission is to provide innovative and responsive research, teaching, and outreach programs that address the educational, economic, environmental, and social needs of the Virgin Islands and the broader Caribbean region.

The School's vision is to become recognized locally, regionally, and internationally as a center of excellence in agricultural education and research while maintaining a supportive and welcoming environment for students, faculty, and staff.

Dr. Adamu then described the organizational structure of the School of Agriculture, which includes several key departments and units. These include:

- Agricultural Experiment Station (research programs)
- Cooperative Extension Service (community outreach and education)
- Agriculture Academic Programs (degree and certificate programs)
- Communication Technology and Distance Learning
- Facilities and Personnel Management

He noted that the School currently employs approximately 50 faculty and staff members, making it one of the larger academic units within the University.

Dr. Adamu presented academic programs offered through the SOA. These include certificate, associate degree, and bachelor's degree programs in areas such as agribusiness, horticulture, agroecology, animal science, aquaponics, and agritourism. He shared that the School currently offers 15 academic programs, many of which are structured using a stackable curriculum model. This approach allows students to complete certificates or associate degrees that can later be applied toward a bachelor's degree. Dr. Adamu noted that the School expects to celebrate a significant milestone in the coming academic year, as the first cohort of students enrolled in the bachelor's degree programs is expected to graduate in Spring 2026.

The presentation also highlighted several major research areas supported through the Agricultural Experiment Station, including agronomy, horticulture, biotechnology, agroforestry, and animal science. Dr. Adamu emphasized that the School is

increasingly focusing on applied research that can provide practical solutions for farmers, particularly in areas such as small ruminant production.

Dr. Adamu concluded by outlining several major events organized or supported by the School of Agriculture. These include:

- World Food Day awareness activities
- The annual Agriculture Fair
- Agricultural Field Day events
- The Caribbean Food Crop Society conference
- Student recruitment open houses and information sessions

These events help promote agricultural education, strengthen community engagement, and increase awareness of agricultural opportunities within the Virgin Islands.

Following the presentation, Council members expressed appreciation for the overview and discussed opportunities for continued collaboration between the School of Agriculture and the Local Food and Farm Council, particularly in areas related to farmer outreach, marketing, and agricultural development within the territory.

#### **VIII. Adjournment**

- There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Director Biggs and seconded by Mr. Creque. Hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 10:33 a.m.
- Dr. Adamu thanked the members for their continued engagement and contributions.

#### **IX. Next Meeting**

- The next meeting is scheduled for March 20, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.