



Local Food and Farm Council

Meeting Minutes

December 12, 2025

Location		Present	Absent	Start Time	End Time	Recorder
via Zoom Video Conferencing/*-		13	10	9:04 a.m.	10:41 a.m.	Jacquette Maynard
This Council is composed of the following agencies, farmers, and restaurateurs:	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)
Present:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-chair: Dr. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., – Commissioner (VIDA) Co-chair Designee: Dr. Usman Adamu – Dean and Director of the School of Agriculture (UVI) DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife Member: Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., – Chief Executive Officer (EDA) VIDE Designee: Ms. Cydney Meadows – Territorial Director of Sustainability & Agricultural Education Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Royce Creque – Greenridge Guavaberry Farm Honorary Farmer Member: Dr. Nate Olive – Ridge to Reef Farm Honorary Fisher Member: Mr. Winston Ledee Director Shanta Roberts – Director, Agriculture Business Center (AgBC) Local Food and Farm Coordinator: Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown – VI Good Food Coalition Program Dara Cooper - Agribusiness Consultant Dr. Ali Mohamed – Consultant / Retired Director Environmental Systems / National Institute of Agriculture (NIFA) USDA Dr. Carollyn Boykins-Winrow – UVI Associate Professor and TAP Fellows 					
Absent:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-chair: Dr. Safiya George – President (UVI) Member: Jean-Pierre L. Oriol – Commissioner (DPNR) Member: Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington – Commissioner, VI Department of Education VIDE Designee: Mr. Harith Wickrema – President of Island Green Living VIDE Designee: Dr. Renee Charleswell – Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction DPNR Designee: Dr. Sennai Habtes – Bureau Chief, Fisheries Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Edmon Titre – New Breed Farm Honorary Farmer Member: Ms. Abeba Sellassie – Ityopia Rootz Farm Honorary Fisher Member Ms. Mavel Maldonado Dr. Rick Nader – Vice President for Research and Economic Development (UVI) 					

I. CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS

- The meeting of the Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council was called to order at 9:04 a.m. by Dr. Louis Petersen, Co-Chair. Dr. Petersen welcomed members and thanked them for their continued engagement.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A quorum was confirmed and Dr. Petersen presented the November 21, 2025, meeting minutes for approval.

- Motion** to approve was made by Dr. Usman Adamu.
 - Second** provided by Ms. Cydney Meadows.
- Vote:** There were no objections or abstentions, and the motion carried unanimously, and the minutes were adopted as presented.

III. Reef Responsible Program Presentation – Presented by Dr. Nicole Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife

Dr. Angeli delivered a detailed presentation on the Reef Responsible Program. She provided a historical overview of the program, explaining that it was originally created by The Nature Conservancy and transitioned to DPNR stewardship in 2019 when the original funding ended.

Dr. Angeli explained that the program operates under an advisory board structure and has evolved to include not only environmental agencies and nonprofit organizations but also commercial fishers from each district. This expansion allowed the program to revise its sustainable species list to better reflect both ecological priorities and local fishing practices. She described how the program promotes sustainable seafood consumption through restaurant certification, public education, and regular outreach via social media. She noted that the program has expanded its certified restaurants across both St. Thomas and St. Croix and has partnered with Good Food VI to include local fishers in the territory's food directory, making locally caught seafood more accessible to restaurants and consumers.

Dr. Angeli further explained that, while the program continues to operate successfully, DPNR's capacity to manage outreach and events is limited due to staffing and funding constraints. As a result, DPNR is interested in exploring a future transition of the program to a partner organization that could more flexibly manage outreach, certification, and consumer engagement, while DPNR would continue to provide technical support.

She emphasized the importance of increasing local seafood consumption, noting that the Virgin Islands currently imports approximately twelve million dollars' worth of seafood annually, representing a significant opportunity to strengthen local food security and support local fishers.

Discussion:

- Ms. Sibilly-Brown highlighted the economic implications of the territory's seafood imports and emphasized the opportunity to redirect even a portion of that spending to local fishers.
- Members discussed the importance of educating the youths about local seafood, both in terms of cultural knowledge and practical skills such as fish preparation. The idea of workshops on fish cleaning and preparation was raised, along with the need to rebuild familiarity and pride in local seafood consumption.
- Additional discussion focused on the potential use of Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) to support pelagic fisheries, the integration of Reef Responsible into the Council's forthcoming "Buy Local" branding initiative, and clarification of the restaurant certification process.
- Dr. Angeli responded to questions regarding certification requirements, grocery store participation, and outreach efforts, and reiterated her openness to continue collaboration with the Council on the future direction of the program.

IV. TAP Academy Report – Ms. Sommer Sibilly Brown Reef

Ms. Sibilly-Brown presented an overview of the TAP Academy and TAP Fellows Program. She explained that the initiative is designed to build long-term grant-writing and project development capacity across the territory in support of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan.

She reported that two inaugural TAP Fellows had been selected: Dr. Carollyn Boykins-Winrow, whose project focuses on integrating service learning into agricultural education at the University of the Virgin Islands, and Ms. Diana Collingwood, whose work focuses on youth mentorship in agriculture.

Ms. Sibilly-Brown outlined the structure of the TAP Academy and described the upcoming three-part workshop series scheduled for January, February, and March 2026. These virtual workshops will introduce participants to grants, provide guidance on writing competitive proposals, and explore funding options including grants and loans for farmers and fishers. She noted that the workshops will be free, open to the public, and accessible through registration on the Council's website. She further explained that Council members are being asked to assist by promoting the workshops through their respective agencies and networks and by encouraging participation among farmers, fishers, and community stakeholders.

Discussion:

- Members asked several questions regarding the role of the TAP Fellows and the extent of direct support that would be provided to farmers and fishers. Dr. Muhammad explained that the Fellows would serve as the on-the-ground support team in the territory, working directly with producers and partners, while the TAP leadership team would provide technical guidance, proposal review, and strategic support.
- Members also emphasized the importance of early and broad promotion of the workshops and suggested coordination with communications and Extension teams to ensure maximum outreach and participation.

V. Adjournment

- There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Dr. Petersen, at 10:41 a.m.