





Dr. David Hall, PresidentUniversity of the Virgin Islands

The Honorable Commissioner
Positive T.A. Nelson
VI Department of Agriculture

Dr. Kendra Harris

Dean of the School of Business

University of the Virgin Islands

Dr. Usman Adamu
Dean of the School of Agriculture
University of the Virgin Islands

Diana Collingwood
Assistant Commissioner
VI Department of Agriculture

Hannah Carty, Executive Director VI Office of Cannabis Regulations

Harith Wickrema, President
Island Green Living Association
& Philanthropist

Dr. Nate Olive, Director Ridge to Reef Farms

Dale Browne, Farmer Sejah Farms

Royce Creque, Farmer
Greenridge Guavaberry Farms



The Act mandated that Positive T.A. Nelson, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Commissioner Department of Agriculture, and Dr. David Hall, President of the University of the Virgin Islands, work to develop a comprehensive Agricultural Plan for the Territory.

The final agriculture plan must contain policy and funding recommendations to support and expand the local food system, increase locally grown food production, provide a food security plan and include short-term and long-term goals.

The Act is comprised of eight (8) mandates.

Signed into law on December 11, 2020

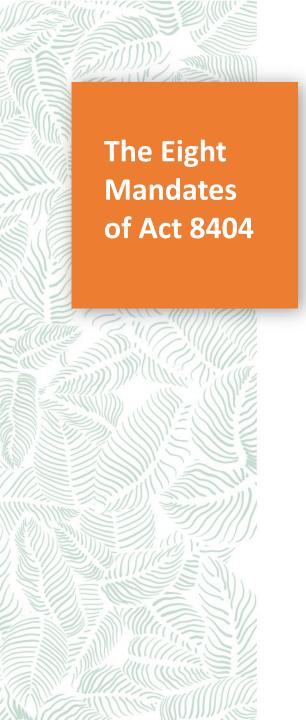
Honorable Governor of the Virgin Islands, Albert Bryan, Jr., and passed by the 33rd Legislature

Senator Sponsors

President Donna Frett-Gregory
Janelle K. Sarauw
Kurt A. Vialet
Dwayne M. DeGraff
Athneil "Bobby" Thomas
Allison L. DeGazon

Co-Sponsor

Steven D. Payne, Sr.



A comprehensive regulatory component for the Territory's farming industries.

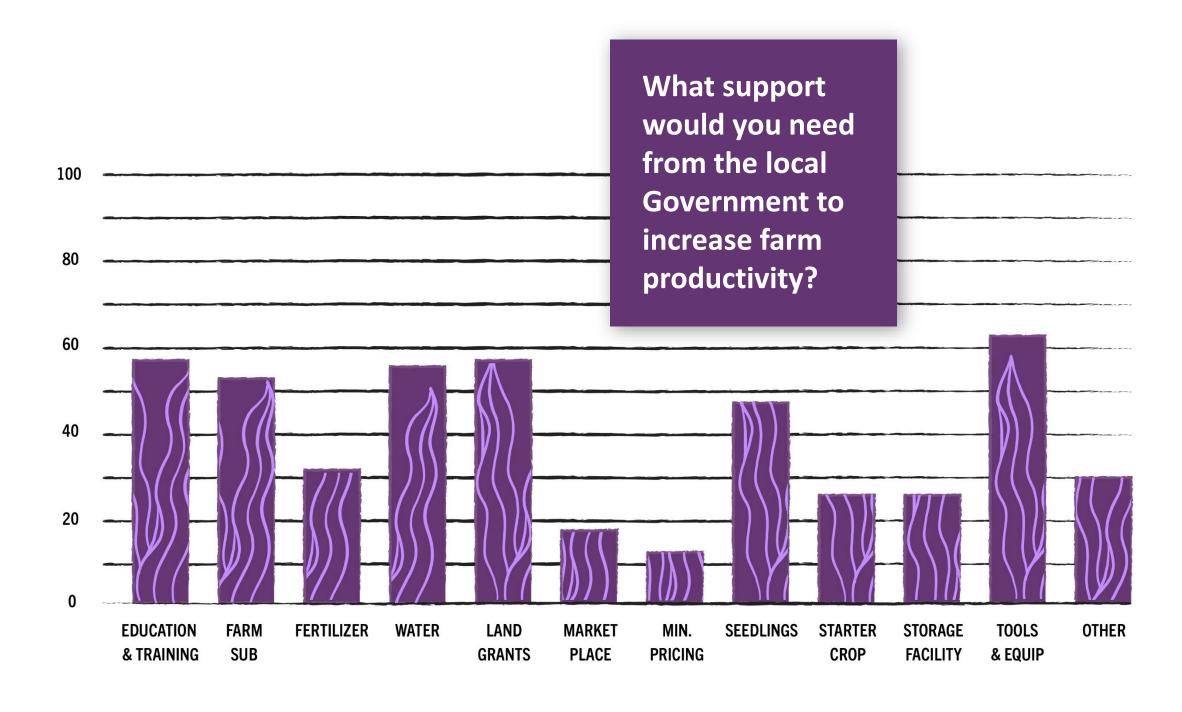
- Recommendations for the establishment of a local food and farm advisory committee, composed of seven members.
- Business models for profitable and sustainable community-based local food and farming business.
- The creation of a "local food symbol" that can be placed on stickers, posters, stamps, etc. for sale.
- A plan for the development of a position for and the hiring of a local food and farm coordinator.
- The development of education and training programs for local food farmers, entrepreneurs, and processors.
- The creation of a local food and farm fund from voluntary sources to support initiatives, and agriculture-related activities.
- The collection of data, creation of benchmarks, and assessment of progress on the building of the local food and farm economy.

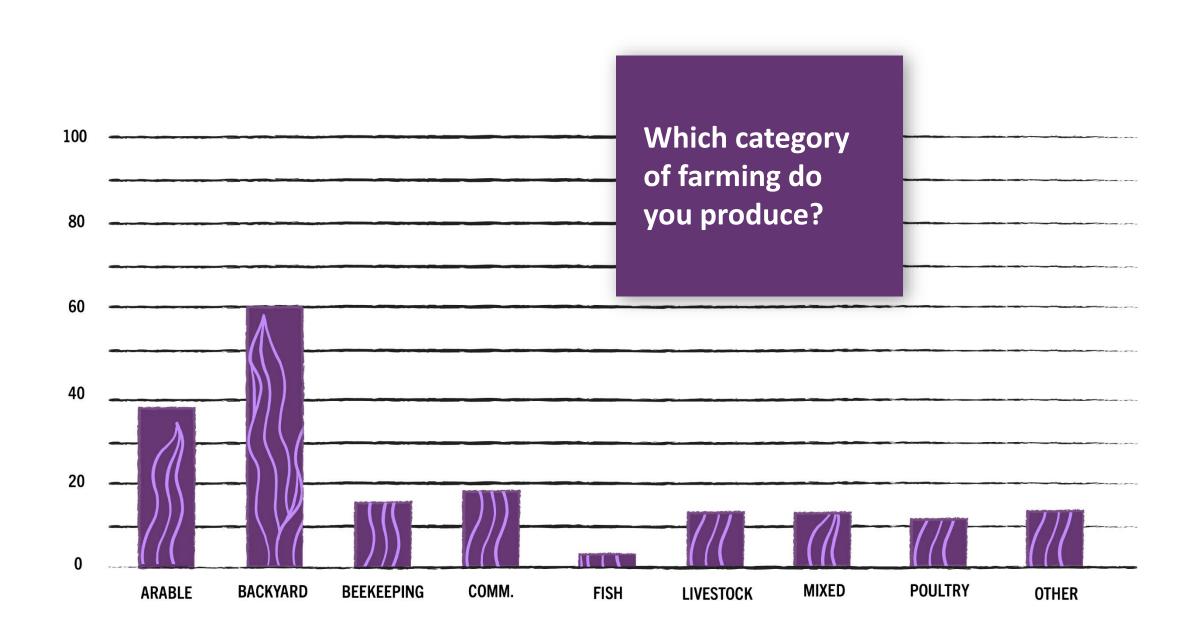


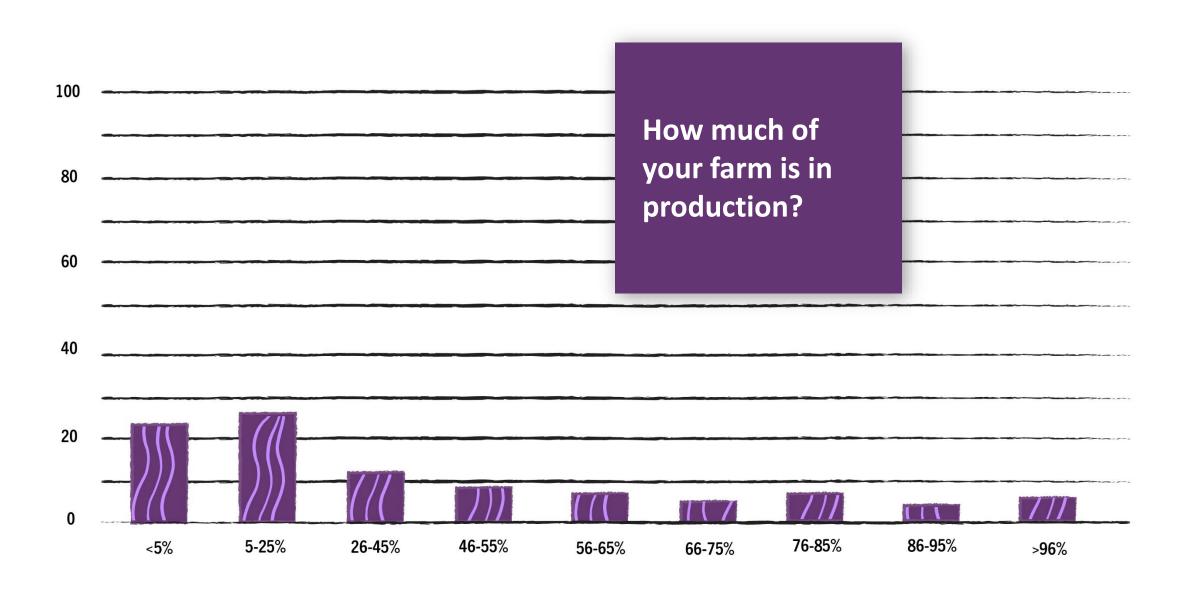
- Conducted three Town Hall meetings for Farmers
- Developed and distributed three active engagement surveys
- Reviewed previous Agriculture plans issued in 1999 and 2008
- Analyzed the latest Agricultural census developed by USDA in 2018
- Reviewed Vision 2040 and its implications for agricultural productivity and economic impact

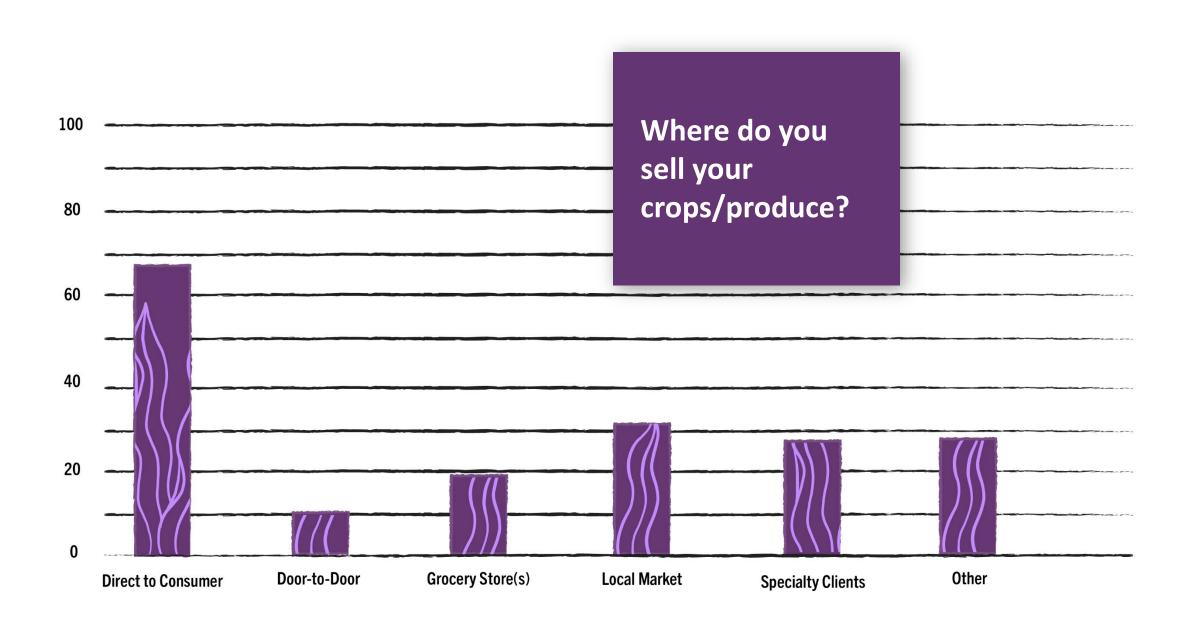
- Interviewed former Commissioners of Agriculture: Dr. Louis Petersen & Mr. Carlos Robles
- Selected three local graphic design artists to create the local food symbol
- Secured the services of the UVI Caribbean Green Technology Center to conduct a study on irrigation and water supply
- Collaborated with the VI Department of Education on Education & Training recommendations
- Secured the services of Mr. Errol Chichester to perform outreach on the Farmer's Survey

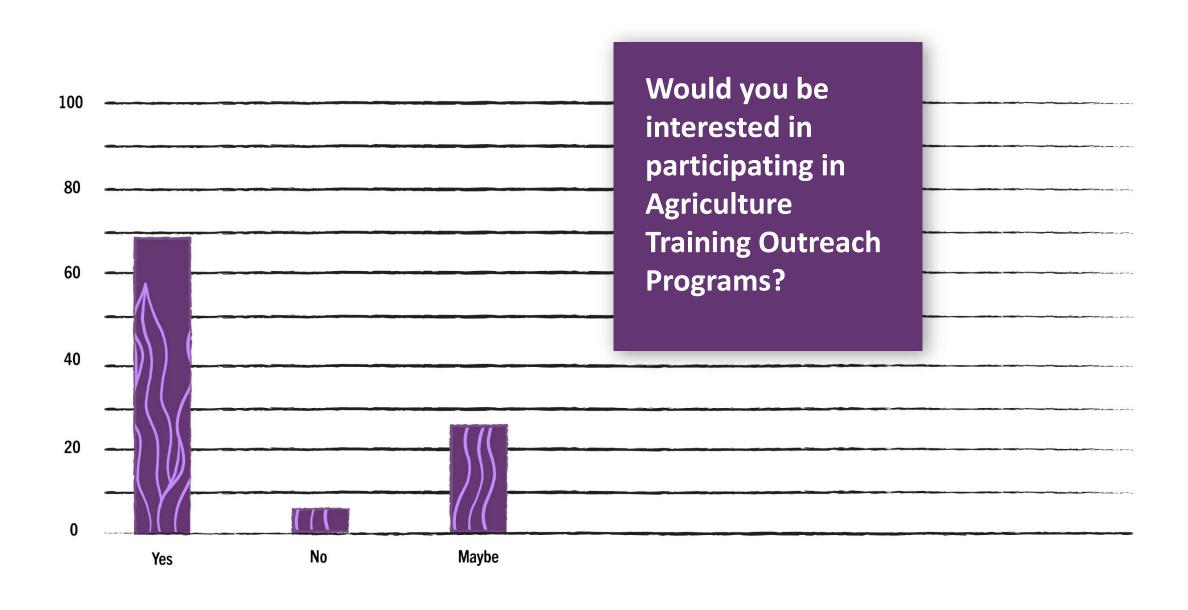






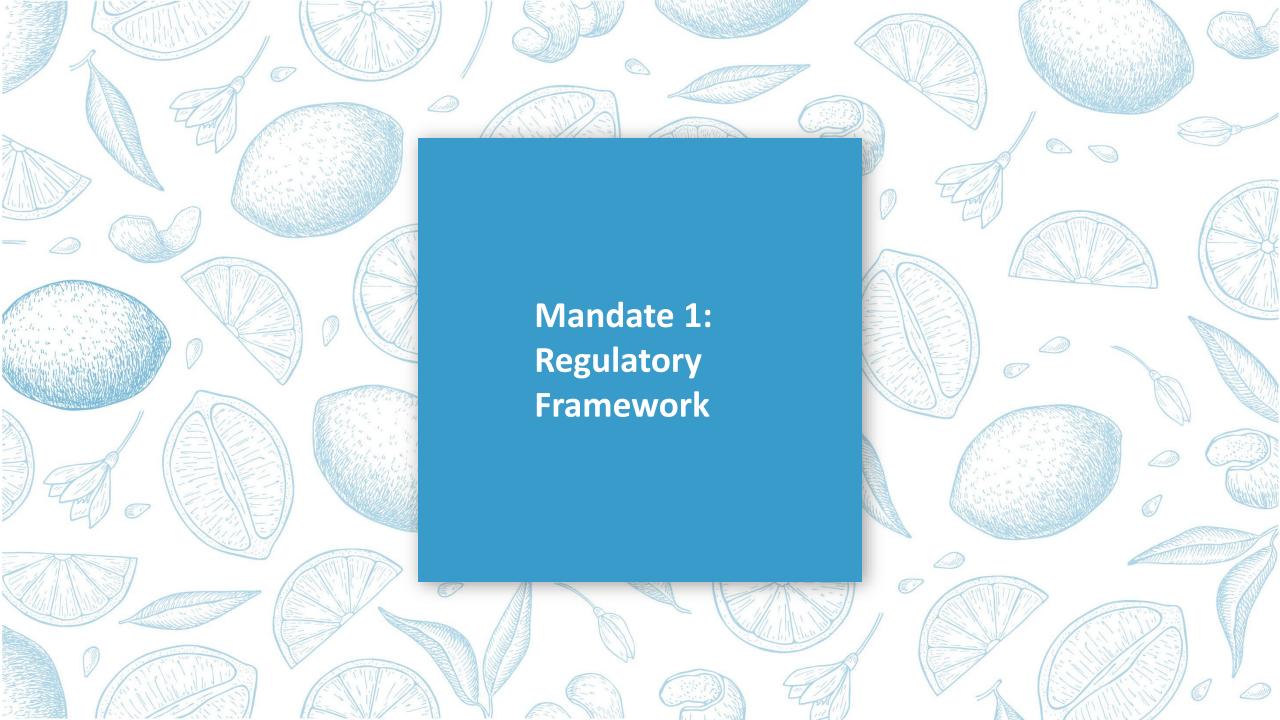


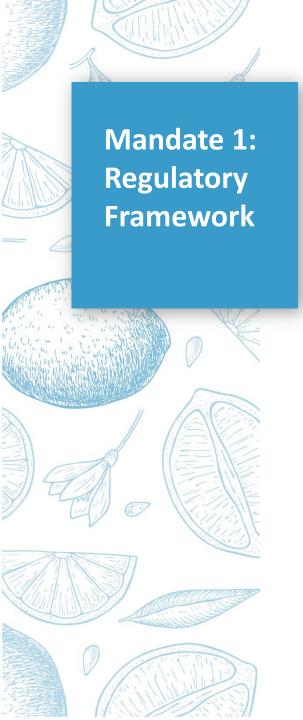












Provide funding for each of the following legislative initiatives as relevant and meaningful ways to increase agriculture productivity and enhance the state of agriculture in the Territory.

Example of Legislation passed without funding, with recommendations:

- I. Land Management: Organic Materials Recycling Program (RENAME)
 - a. Provide annual budget for Organic Materials Recycling Program including
 - i. Territorial Personnel or Service Contract
 - 1. Office Coordinator
 - 2. Composter / Mulchers
 - 3. Laborer / Distributer
 - ii. New Equipment



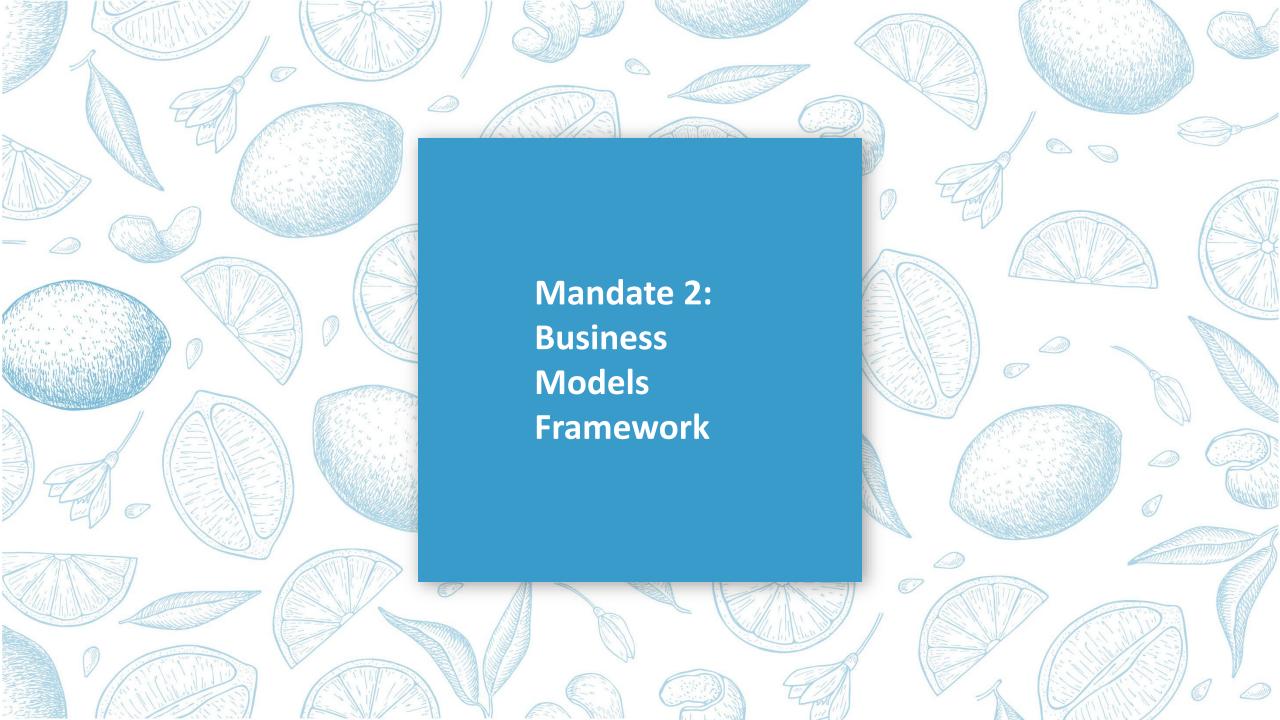
Amend or repeal existing laws that no longer provide any meaningful contribution to agriculture.

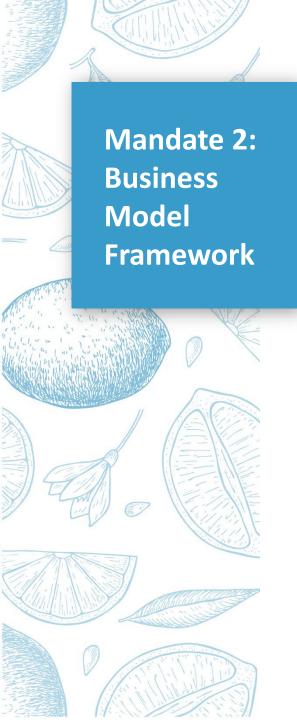
Example of Amend / Repeal Items:

- I. Unfunded Items:
 - a. If the body decides not to fund any of the aforementioned items they should be repealed or amended.

To streamline the use of the VI Code regarding agriculture provisions, we recommend that certain provisions are duplicative and should be combined or condensed. Part of the ongoing process of the Task Force is to determine which legislations will be combined.

Because this Agriculture Plan provides a comprehensive approach to the development of agriculture in the Virgin Islands, it is recommended that this report is enacted by the Legislature, signed into law by the Governor and funded appropriately.





Traditional Small Private Businesses

The Small Business Development Center, Cooperatives and any other entities, will work together to conduct consulting and training directed specifically to farmers to assist with farmers' accounting, financing, bookkeeping, and other related business records needs, under an **Agriculture Business Center.**

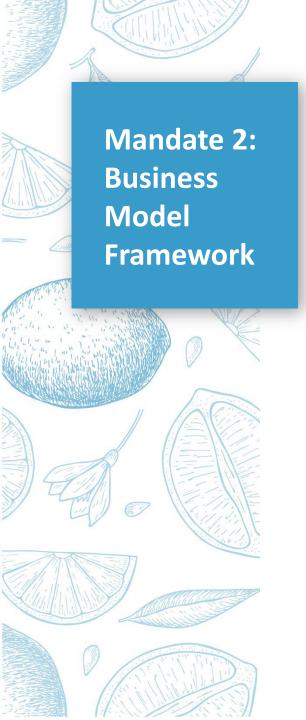
Communication has been made with the Cooperative Extension Service to work with the SBDC to provide assistance where needed, especially as it relates to specific farm related technical issues.

Farming Cooperatives

With this initiative VIDA will promote and help to facilitate the creation of Farming Cooperatives.

Advantages of Cooperatives

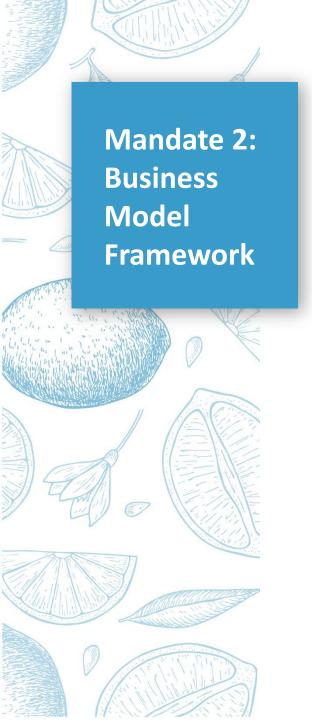
- Sharing of best practices
- Increased farming and business operations knowledge
- Increased buying power based on collective action
- More competitive selling rates based on collective action
- Possibly increased/better usage of governmental resources (e.g., equipment)
- Shared expenses of farm supplies and equipment



Public-Private Agriculture Partnerships

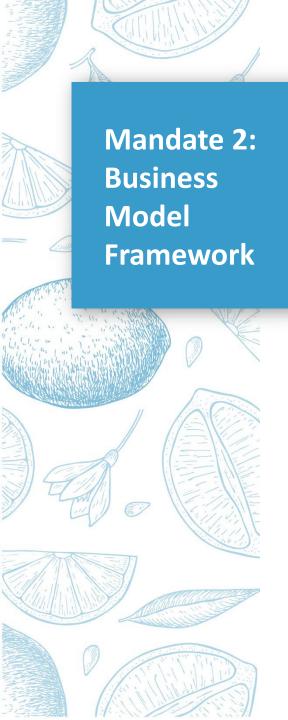
Increase productivity and transform the role of farming in the Virgin Islands with strategic investment by the government into specific farm operations and types of farming.

- Stimulate more "controlled environment agriculture" in the Territory to overcome lack of capital and expertise.
- A revenue-sharing model or increased tax revenue can be part of the arrangement so the local government can continue to invest in the model.



Requirements for Farmers Adhere To

- a. Engage in a minimum level of "continuous improvement" training practices regarding their farming strategies.
- b. Agree to report on authentic production/yield information.
- c. Engage in standard business practices (e.g., tax reporting).
- d. In addition to farmers' efforts, we understand that farm support and communication from the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture will be critical to the success of any business model.



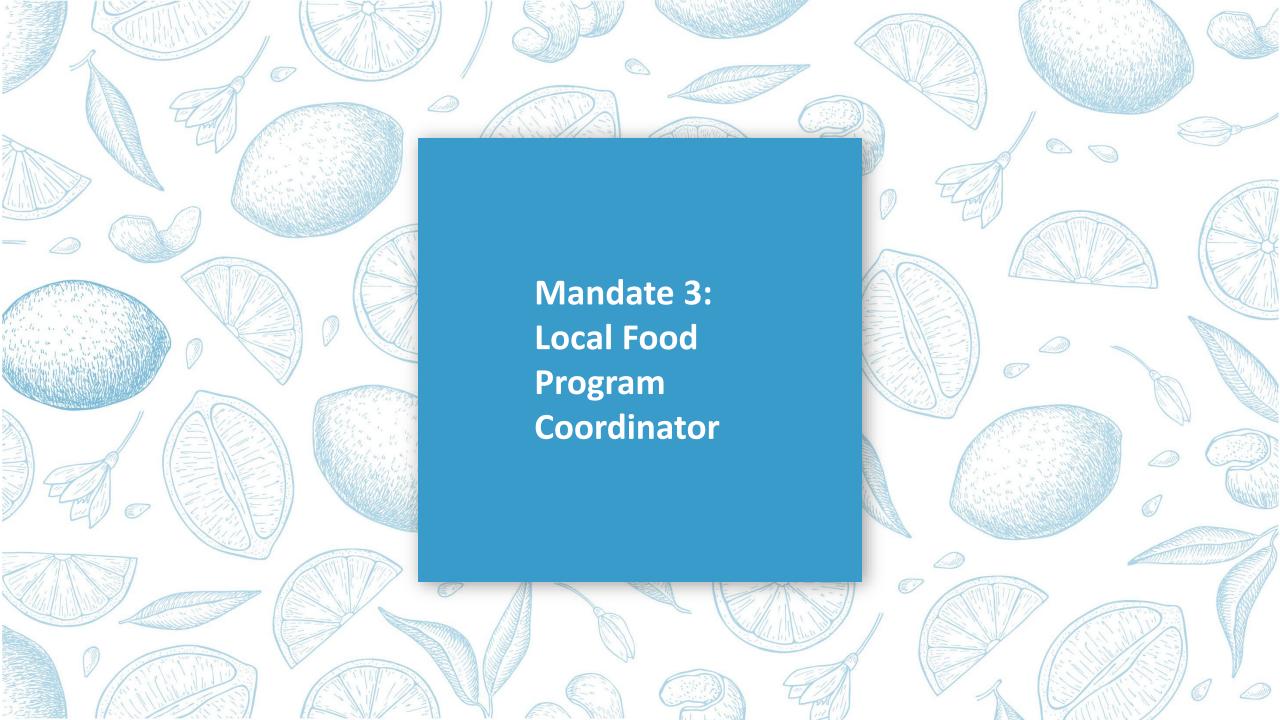
Other Considerations

Additional business-related initiatives and approaches that the Legislature should consider to enhance agriculture productivity in the Territory.

- Provide incentives for local retailers and restaurants to buy local food instead of importing from outside the Territory.
- Ensure that all farmers are complying with USDA standards regarding safety and health. This will also assist farmers when exporting produce is standard practice.
- Consider imposing import controls on certain crops, fruits, and other products for periods when those products are in abundance in the Virgin Islands.

Consideration should also be given to how to expand and include **EXISTING** farmers in the cultivation of cannabis, hemp, and hemp-related products market.

Provide financial incentives for farmers' heirs to entice continued active farm production.





Local Food Program Coordinator

The position of Local Food Program Coordinator, along with the Advisory Committee mandate in Act 8404 create a new approach to the advocacy, implementation and monitoring of agricultural productivity in the Territory.

The Farm Coordinator will be an employee in the Department of Agriculture but would report directly to and work very closely with the Advisory Committee that the Act recommends.

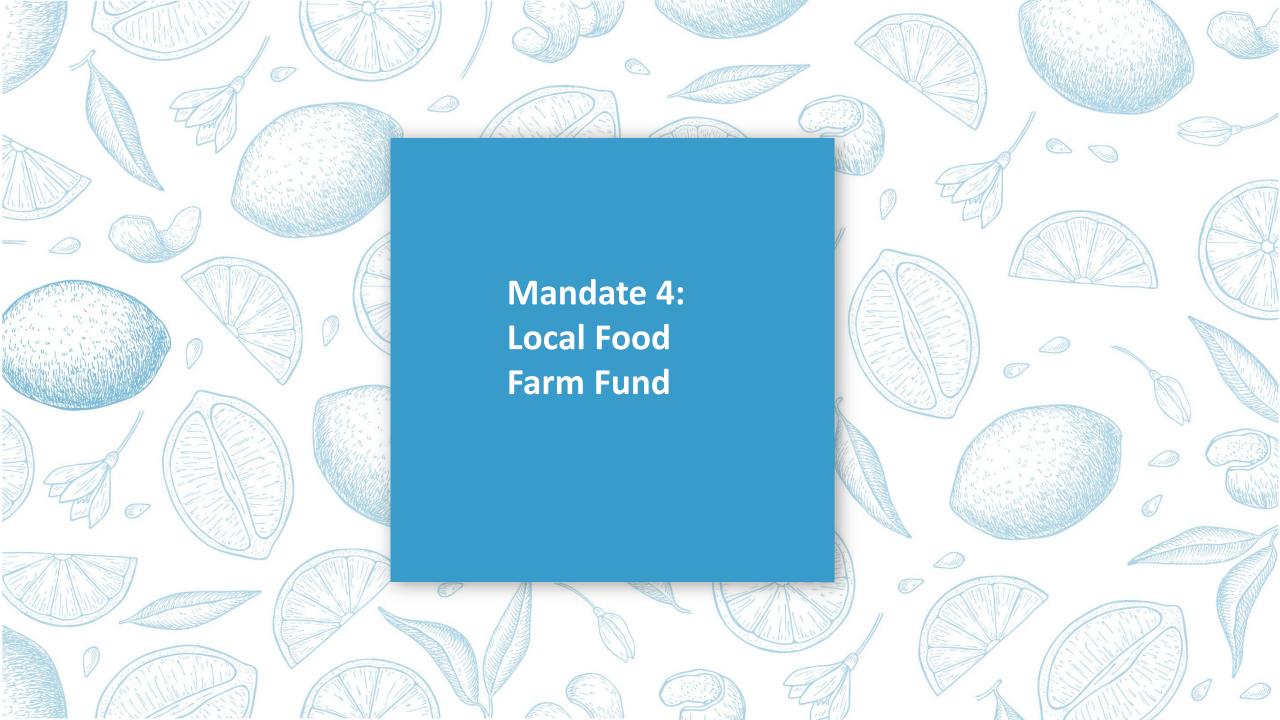
The candidate would work with various stakeholder groups.



Local Food Program Coordinator Priority Duties

- Monitor the implementation of the Agricultural Plan under the guidance of the Advisory Committee.
- Develop specific outreach efforts and trainings to encourage more individuals to engage in home and community gardening.
- Manage the the annual data collection to ensure the process is occurring in a professional and thorough manner.
- Cultivate more trusting relationships across the various stakeholder groups involved in the local industry.

- Develop a local fundraising strategy for the Local Food and Farm Fund.
- Promote the local farm symbol and ensure it is being used across the various stakeholder groups.
- Identify and share grant opportunities with farmers and other appropriate entities.
- Promote the benefits of Farm Cooperatives.

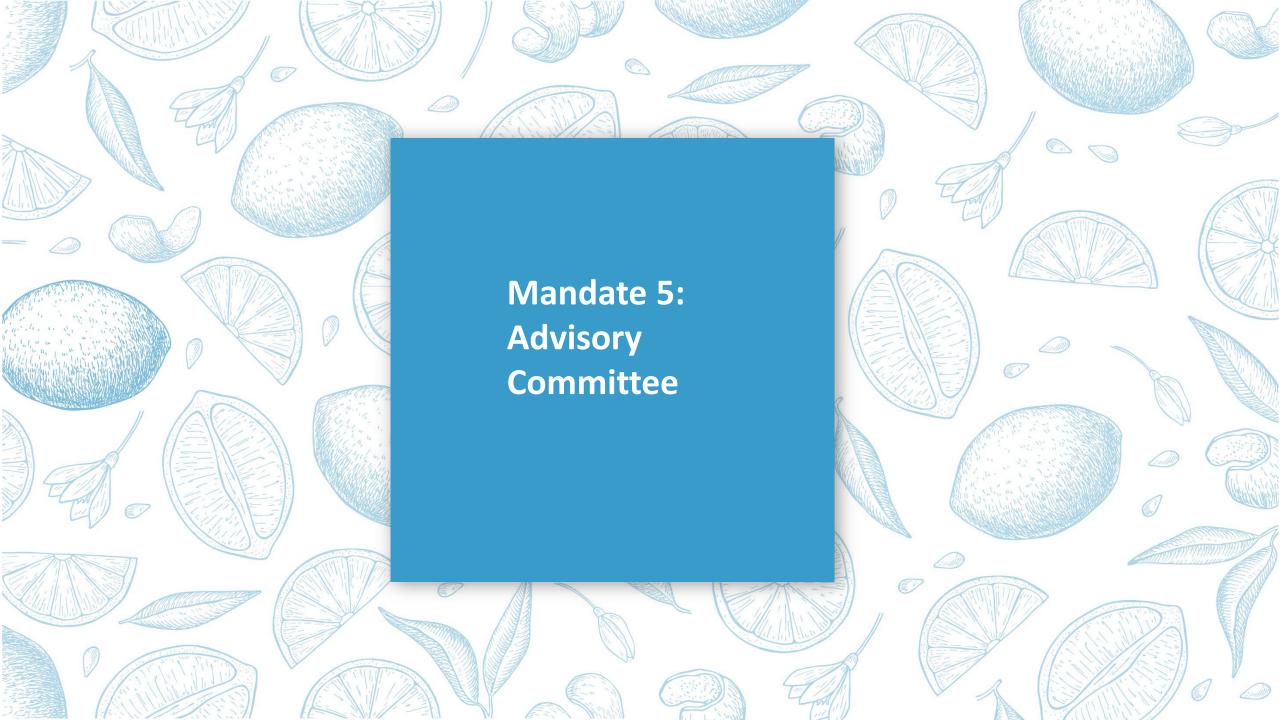




The Task Force recommends that the Agriculture Advisory Committee be responsible for creating a 501(C) (3) Foundation, similar to the University of the Virgin Islands Foundation, that will serve as the legal entity into which funds are deposited, invested, and disbursed.

- The Advisory Committee will serve as the Board of Directors for the foundation and thus for the fund. There should be an annual solicitation of contributions in addition to grants and other major gift solicitations.
- The Advisory Committee will compile a list of agriculture initiatives and projects that the funds would be used to support.

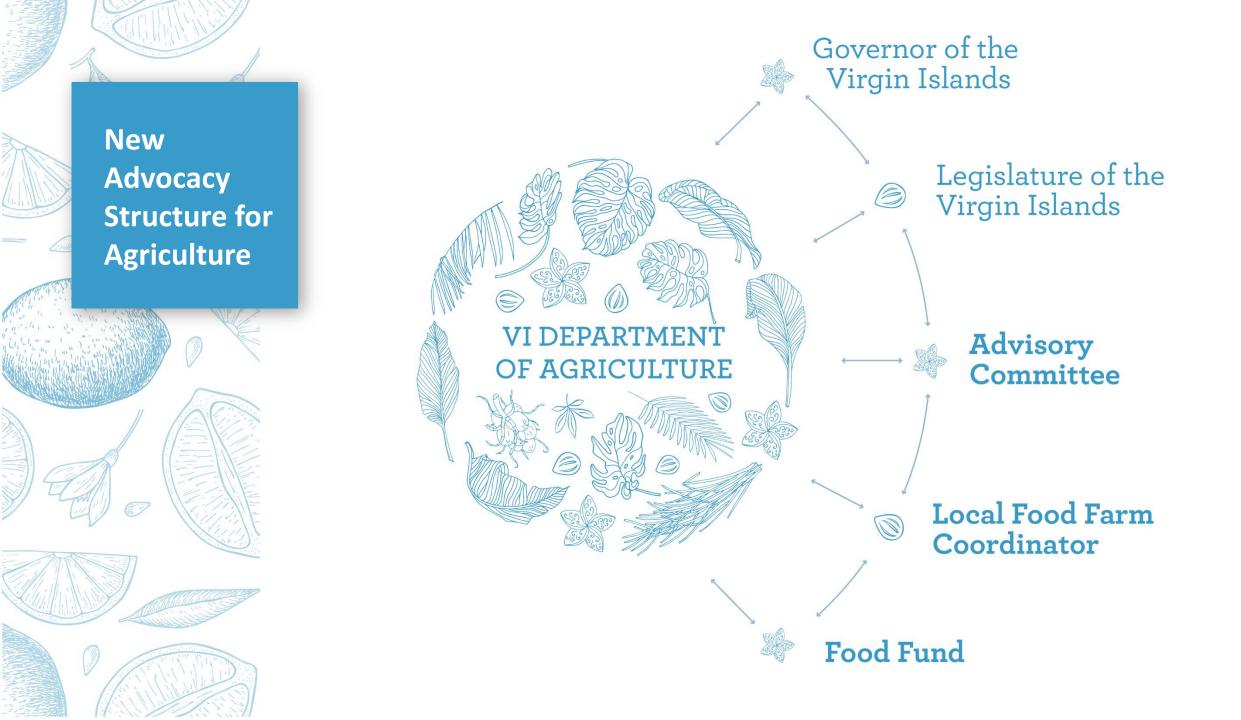
- The funds should have a particular focus on encouraging home gardens and community farming to supplement the work of the farmers in the Territory as another means of obtaining food sovereignty.
- An annual reporting to the Legislature of the amount of funds raised and disbursed should occur as mandated.



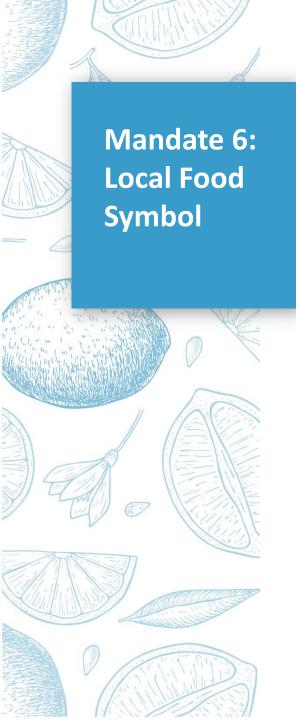


- Establishment of a Local Food and Farm Advisory Committee to consist of the following seven members as mandated by ACT 844 Bill No. 33-0376:
 - Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture
 - Executive Director of the Economic Development Authority
 - President of the University of the Virgin Islands
 - UVI Dean of Agriculture
 - Three Farmers: from STX / STT / STJ appointed by the Governor

- To ensure that there is representation from other agencies involved in the agriculture industry, it is recommended that the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources be appointed to the Advisory Committee.
- Due to the high emphasis on training and educational enhancement in the agricultural field. It is recommended that the Commissioner of Education be appointed to the Advisory Committee.







Establish a brand and promote agriculture's benefits in the United States Virgin Islands.

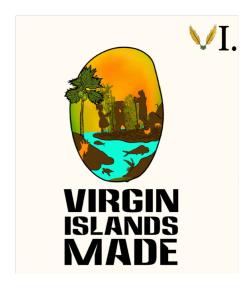
Develop a compelling and appropriate local food symbol that will be a marketing tool to convey the importance of food sovereignty in the Virgin Islands, encourage the importance of "home grown" produce and elevate the importance of agriculture throughout the Territory.



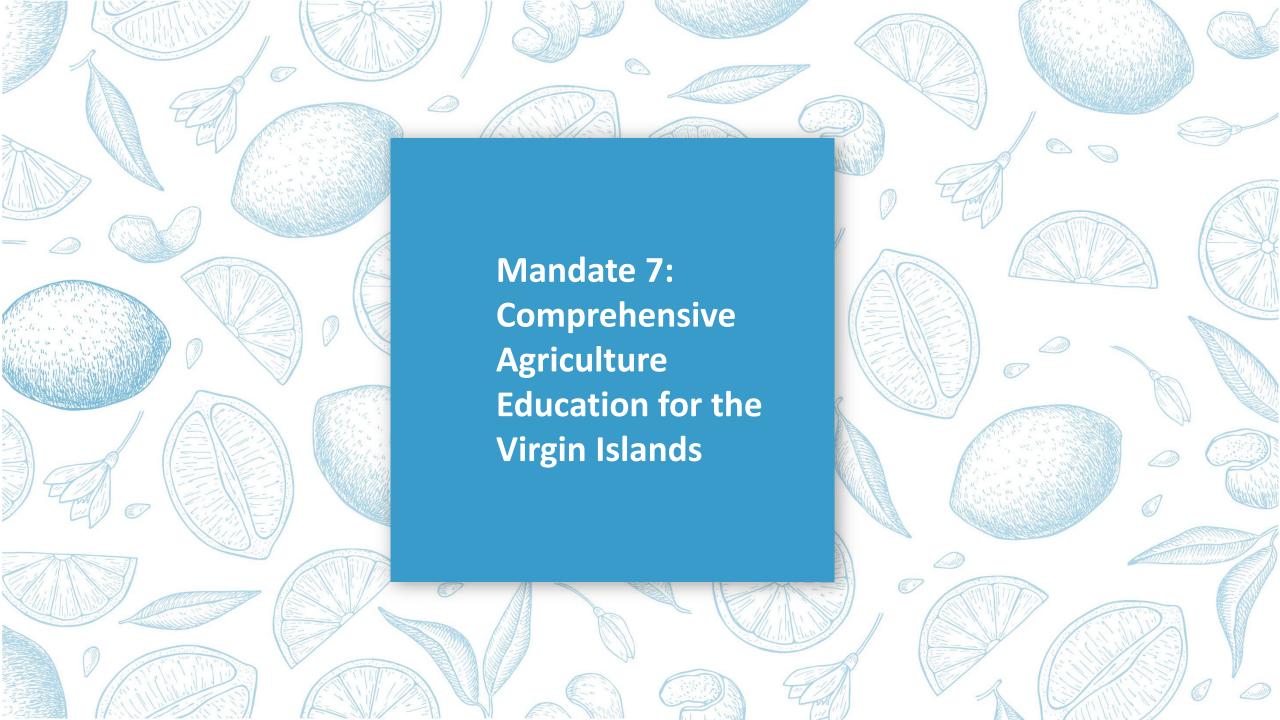
Symbol 1
Jenne Dee Creative



Symbol 2
Joshua the Jenius



Symbol 3
Love Art Group





PreK - Elementary

The Plan recommends establishing and funding the USDA Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) program/initiative in the Virgin Islands at the pre-kindergarten and elementary levels.



Middle-High School

The Virgin Islands
Agricultural Education
System Curriculum
Frameworks developed
in 2002 by P.E.A.C.E.
International LLC
contains all the
necessary courses that
meet the standards and
criteria for an agricultural
education program.

Comprehensive Agriculture Education for the USVI



Farmers Education

Non-Formal

Education and training programs for local farmers, agricultural entrepreneurs, including food processors, and other related stakeholders are available at UVI and in various local government departments and agencies.

Informal

The learning activities — Conversation, Forum, Social Media, Messaging App, Mentoring, Volunteering, Book Clubs, Trips and Travel

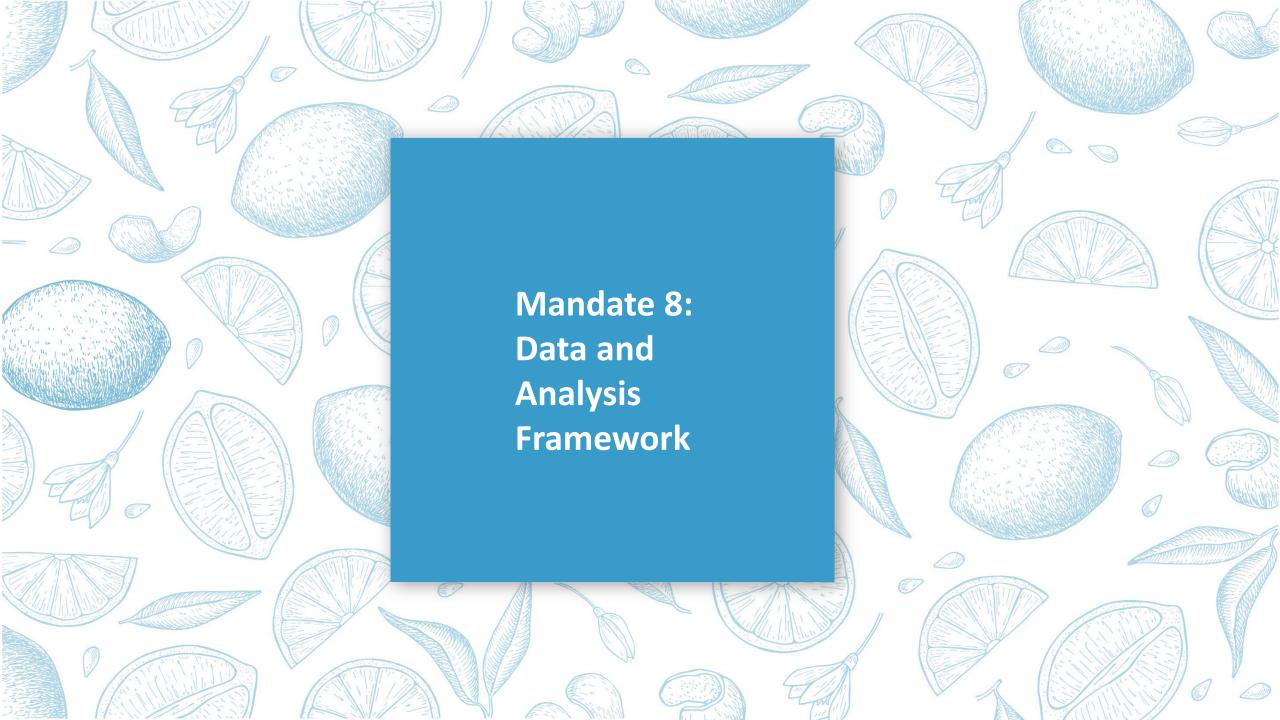


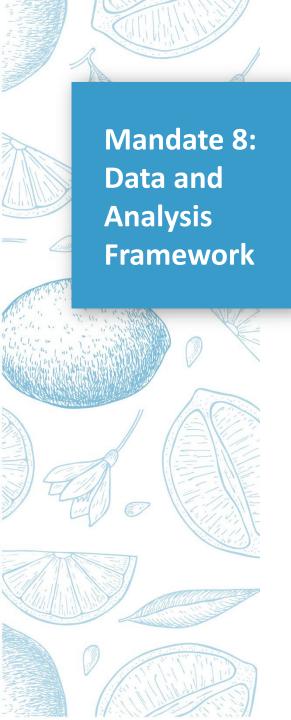
College Level

Certificates and Associate of Applied Science degrees are designed to prepare students for entry-level jobs and career opportunities in agriculture and agriculture-related fields.

Programs

Animal Science, Agricultural Business, Agritourism, Agroecology, Aquaculture, Nursery Management, Forestry, Horticulture, Cannabis Science, Regulatory Science, General Agriculture





- Develop and fund a systematic approach to data collection.
- Adopt and utilize a list of data collection points to collect this information annually, except during the years when the Agriculture Census is being conducted.
- The Agricultural Advisory Committee
 will commission an annual data collection
 process and create a database to collect
 necessary information to measure
 agricultural productivity.
- The Agricultural Advisory Committee will conduct an annual assessment of the effectiveness of the Agriculture Plan on an annual basis and deliver a report to the Legislature and the Governor.

Develop the following benchmarks to monitor progress towards achieving food security.

- Increasing local agricultural productivity by 2% each year in order to increase locally consumed products from 3% to 35% according to the goal in Vision 2040.
- Increasing the acreage in production by 10% each year.
- Increasing the number of licensed farmers by a 5% each year.
- Increase the number of individuals engaged in home gardening and community growing by 10% each year.
- Reducing the number of agricultural imports by 2% each year.





General

Create a water management board

Water Resources

- Fix and repair existing Infrastructure
- Improve pond capacity dredging, relining, investing in equipment
- Expand usage of publicly owned cisterns

Distribution Network

- Repair distribution networks
- Backup power supply for pumps (solar + battery if possible)
- Purchase water truck for Bordeaux

Farmers

- Demonstration projects and training on water conservation and irrigation methods
- Create a data repository on climate impacts, location of water resource assets and status, solutions, etc.

The College of Science and Math UVI Caribbean Green Technology Center The School of Agriculture

 Measuring, increasing and enhancing the supply and distribution of water to farmers



Water Resources

- Improve drainage capacity of guts and clean up debris
- Institute and support Water Co-Ops and VI Soil and Conservation District

Distribution Network

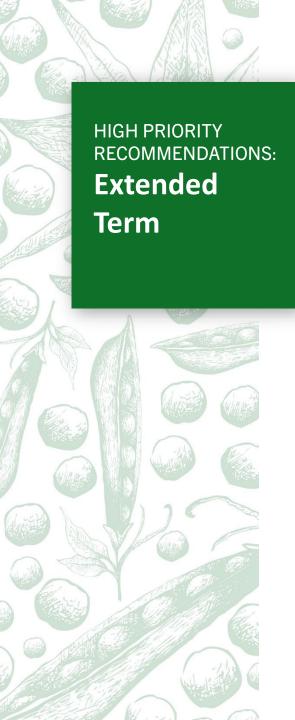
Increase number of water trucks

Farmers

- Water subsidy to purchase water during drought
- Water monitoring and new irrigation technologies for community garden farmers on St. Croix

Capacity

- Create short and long-term plans for drought and soil management
- Increase technical capacity at VIDA



Water Resources

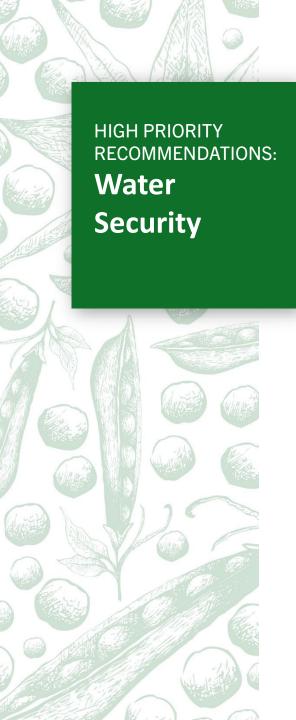
- Desalination plant for Bordeaux
- Work with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to Repair Creque Dam
- Expand NOAA Co-Op weather network to better understand drought processes

Farmers

- Create water management plan and database of water conservation technology best practices
- Create network of smart irrigation tools for remote sensing of soil and plant conditions

Capacity

Create a VIDA/CES Vocational Training Program



Recommendations to provide an overview of the water system for farmers in the USVI. To achieve water security, it is important to:

- 1. Monitor the sources and ensure that they are well managed
- 2. Monitor the distribution network
- 3. Maintain water resources and distribution infrastructure
- 4. Work with farmers to ensure that they use and/or have access to the latest water conservation technologies

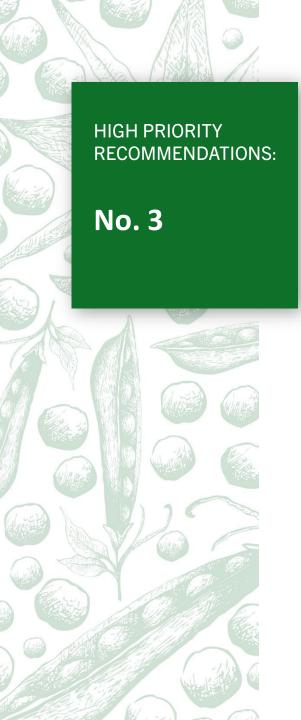


Infrastructure Tools and Equipment Support

The Department of Agriculture should be provided the funds to significantly increase its equipment pool and provide personnel to operate key equipment to support agriculture development.

For example:

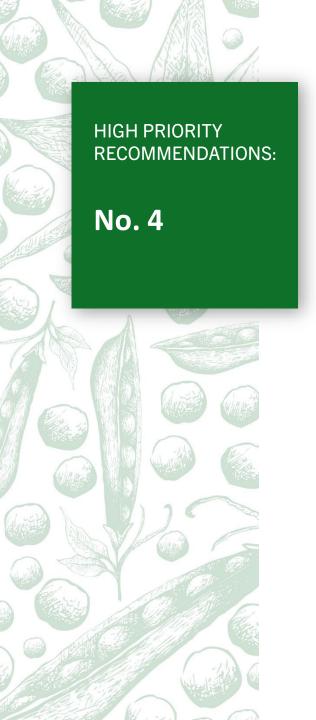
- Tractors
- Lawn Preparation
- Bulldozers
- Traxcavator



Increase Personnel at VIDA

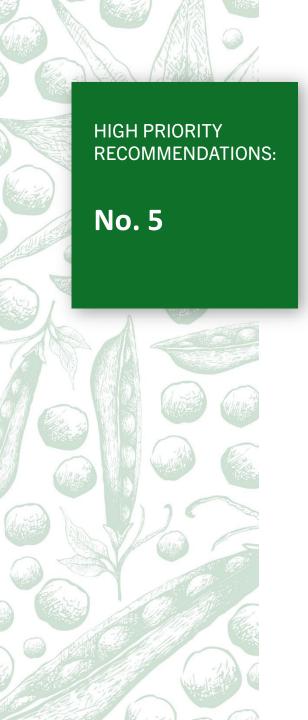
A key strategic position to be filled and appropriate funding provided to the VIDA regularly.

- Civil Engineer
- Plant Pathologist
- Soil & Water Conservationists
- Soil Scientist
- Entomologist
- Lab Technicians
- Ag Law Enforcement Officer



Strategic Orchard Development Initiative

Tracts of Governmental farmland to be set aside for specific development of fruit orchards. These initiatives can increase local productivity and be a source for the eventual development of a food processing plant. Farmers will be selected to develop their orchard on leased farmland. There will be provisions for funding.



Enhance Grant Writing at VIDA

- VIDA to work with the University of the Virgin Islands sponsored programs.
- VIDA to be provided funds to hire three full-time Grant Writers.
- VIDA will work with the Advisory Committee and the Local Farm Food Coordinator.



- The plan will require significant governmental investment supporting one-time and recurring recommended provisions.
- 2. After intense research, analysis and input from the farming community, the Task Force has developed the final budget estimates.
- 3. Funding Source and Recommendations
 - Local Government: \$10,436,100
 - One-time Investment Initiatives over 3 years: \$3,500,000
 - Funding Request from Federal Agencies: \$50,477,000



MANDATE	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL FUNDING NEEDED
Mandate I	Unfunded Positions per VI Code/Additional VI Personnel Plan Request	\$1,084,490
Mandate II	Business Center/Equipment/Supplies/Travel/Promotions	\$2,681,650
Mandate III	Hiring of Local Food Coordinator & Assistant Coordinator/Operating Expense	\$480,000
Mandate IV	Operational Expense for establishing a 501(c) (3)/ Accounting Audit Expense	\$12,800
Mandate V	Honorarium and travel expenses for Advisory Committee members	\$20,000
Mandate VI	Advertisement/Signage/Promotions	\$151,520
Mandate VII	Informal & Non-Formal Education and Training to Farmers / Pre-k thru 12 grade Education	\$6,380,040
Mandate VIII	Development of a Data Collection System	\$150,000.00



ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL FUNDING NEEDED
Additional Recommendation I	Comprehensive Irrigation System and Water Supply System	\$50,477,000
Additional Recommendation II	Infrastructure, Tools and Equipment Support	\$250,000
Additional Recommendation III	Increase Personnel at VIDA	\$357,000
Additional Recommendation IV	Strategic Orchard Development Initiative	\$500,000
Additional Recommendation V	Enhance Grant Writing at the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture	\$346,000











