



and Food Security Inc.

Collective Work and Responsibility

How the Island Food Security Network
functions to address member needs

▣ Local Conference Presentation

July 15, 2026

✦ UVI Albert A. Sheen Campus, St. Croix



Opening

Thanks to the VI Agricultural Caribbean Conference and the Caribbean Food Crops Society.

This Presentation is around collective work and responsibility — Ujima — as a practical operating principle, not a slogan.

Today, I want to frame this presentation around the principle of collective work and responsibility — Ujima. But I do not want to use Ujima as just a theme or slogan. In our work, Ujima must function as a practical discipline. It means that farmers, growers, educators, agencies, markets, and community partners all have a role in identifying problems, sharing responsibility, and moving toward coordinated solutions. For the Island Food Security Network, collective work becomes real when member needs guide the agenda, partners commit to action, and the results are measured by whether producers and communities are actually strengthened.

The focus today is how Island Food Security Inc. uses a network approach to help farmers, growers, educators, and partners solve shared problems together.



2 Food Security Is a Network Function

The territory's context requires coordination



97%

of the U.S. Virgin Islands food supply is reported as imported in the 2021 Territorial Agricultural Plan.

\$4.2M

total agricultural products sold by USVI farms in the 2023 Census of Agriculture; average sales were \$6,787 per farm.

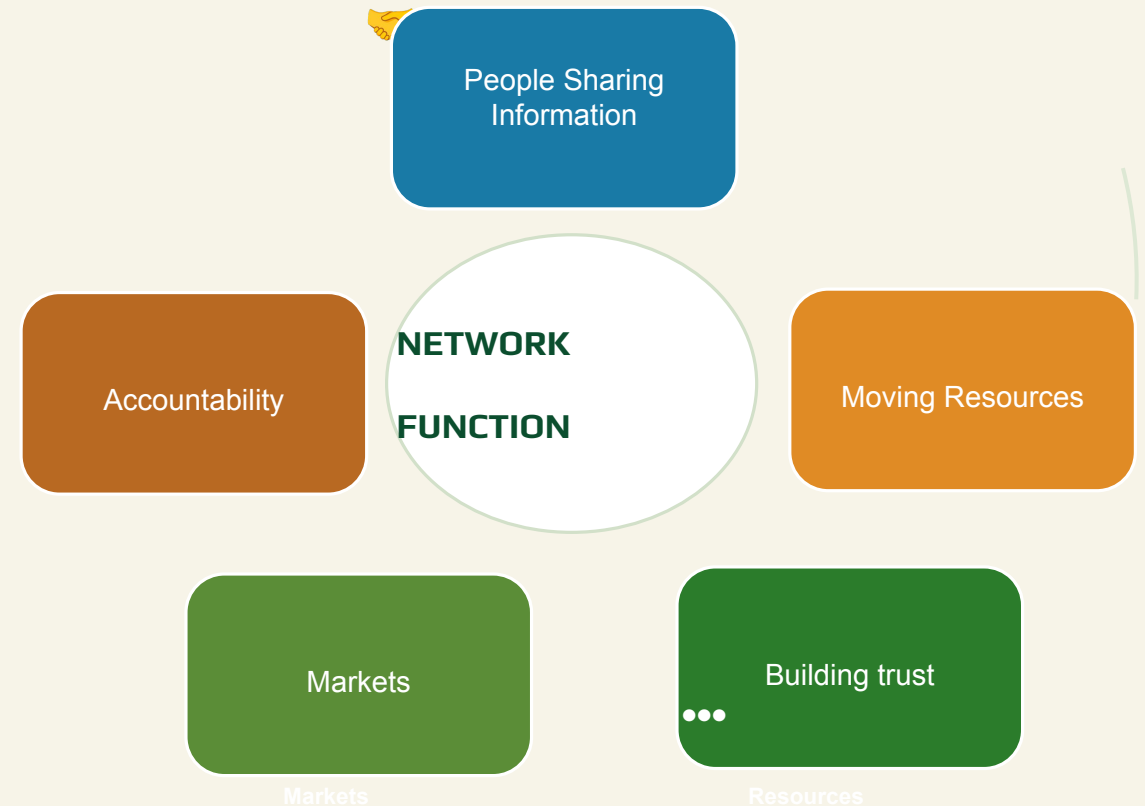
The gap between reliance on imports and the scale of local production shows why food security must be organized as a network — not a single-project effort.

2 The Collective Message

Food security is not built by one farm, one organization, or one grant.

It is built by a functioning network: people sharing information, moving resources, building trust, and turning member needs into coordinated action.

- Member needs drive the work



3 Who the Network Connects

Island Food Security Network

A food system network must connect the people who grow, move, teach, fund, and advocate for local food.



Farmers & livestock producers



Home growers & foragers



Extension, educators & youth programs



Markets, restaurants & consumers



Agencies, funders & policy partners

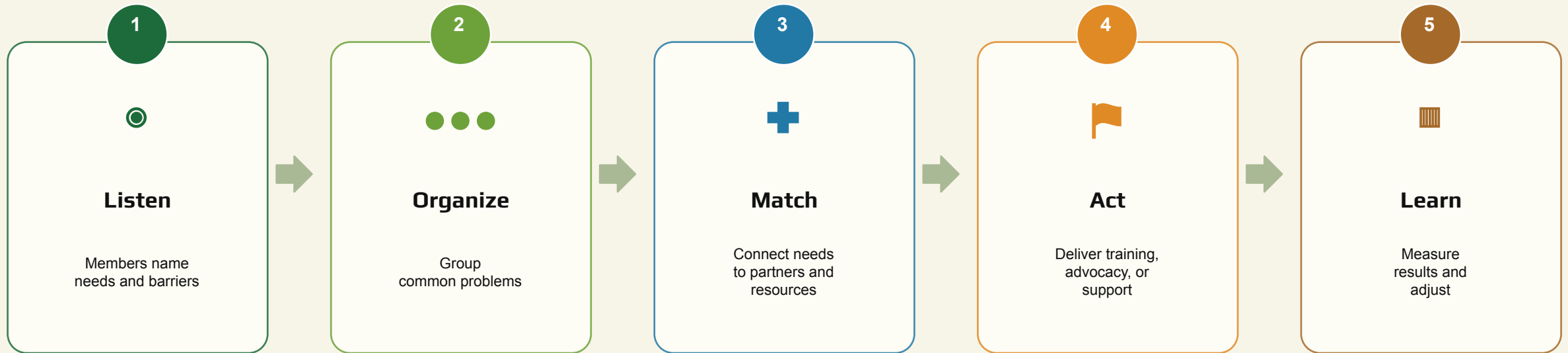


Community organizations

4 How the Network Functions

From member voice to shared action

A simple operating cycle keeps the work grounded in member needs.



The key discipline: do not design for members without members.
The network functions best when producers help define the problem, shape the solution, and evaluate whether it worked.

Member Needs the Network Must Address

Members are asking

The network becomes useful when it responds to practical needs that affect production, income, and resilience.



Network responsibility:
turn needs into coordinated commitments

Network responsibility:
turn needs into coordinated commitments



Production support

seedlings, livestock health, feed, water, inputs



Market access

buyers, aggregation, pricing, consistent outlets



Infrastructure

cooling, processing, transportation, equipment



Training & TA

business planning, compliance, conservation, technology



Trust & communication

clear information, follow-through, peer learning



Policy voice

representation in funding, land, labor, and food security decisions

6 Collective Work in Practice

What shared responsibility looks like

Collective work is not everyone doing the same thing. It is each partner doing the right part with accountability to the whole.



Member voice
Farmers identify the barriers and test the solutions.



Partner capacity
Partners bring training, resources, data, and institutional access.



Coordinated action
The network coordinates so efforts do not duplicate or compete.



Measurable benefit
Members receive clear next steps, not just another meeting.



Member voice

Farmers identify the barriers and test the solutions.



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Measurable benefit

Members receive clear next steps, not just another meeting.



Follow-up is the responsibility that builds trust.



Shared outcomes protect the network from one-time project thinking.



Success is measured by producer benefit and system resilience.

Workstreams

How needs become programming

The network can organize around concrete workstreams that respond to recurring member priorities.



Farmer learning circles

peer problem-solving,
demonstrations,
field days



Market coordination

aggregation, buyer
relationships, local
food promotion



Infrastructure access

cooling, post-harvest
handling, processing,
transport



Technical assistance

grant readiness,
conservation plans,
business records



Youth & workforce pipeline

farm exposure,
skills training,
cultural continuity



Advocacy table

member priorities
translated into policy
recommendations



Each workstream should have an owner, a member feedback loop, and a measurable outcome.

8 Measuring What Matters

Accountability to members

The network is only as strong as the benefits members experience.



Member-defined indicators
that reflect real needs



Track progress
and document results



Share learning
and improve together



Communicate impact
to members, partners,
and funders

**Accountability builds trust.
Results build the movement.
Together we build food security.**

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enefits



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Ujima

Collective work.
Shared responsibility.
Stronger food
systems



Thank You

Let's continue the work —
together.

*#9P Estate Castle Burke,
Frederiksted VI 00840*

*P.O Box3443 Kingshill, St. Croix
USVI 00851*

*Tel: (340)-340277-9392 /
340-277-6046*

*E-mail:
islandfood2014@outlook.com*

© islandfoodsecurity.org

f o @islandfoodsecurityvi

Island Food Security



Contact Me



Jael Browne



Interim Executive

Director



340-474-7858



jaelpaulsfvi@gmail.com