GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

STATEMENT

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Statement by The Premier - Update on The Commercial Agriculture and Fisheries Grant Policy

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Madam Speaker,

I rise today to inform this Honourable House, and the people of the Virgin Islands, of the Government's approval and implementation of the Commercial Agriculture and Fisheries Grant Policy, entitled "From Land and Sea to Enterprise: Unlocking the Economic Potential of Agriculture and Fisheries."

Cabinet approved this policy on Wednesday, 7th January 2026, marking an important milestone in our ongoing efforts to strengthen food security, stimulate economic activity, and build resilience within our agricultural and fisheries sectors.

This policy represents a deliberate and strategic step by my government. It recognises that while agriculture and fisheries are deeply rooted in our history and culture, they must now be repositioned as viable, modern, and competitive contributors to our economy.

Madam Speaker, the Virgin Islands currently imports most of its food supply. Recent global disruptions have clearly demonstrated the vulnerability of small island states like ours to supply chain shocks and rising food costs. This policy responds directly to those realities by providing targeted financial support to farmers, fishers, agro-processors, and fish processors who are already engaged in commercial activity, as well as those who are ready to scale up viable operations.

For the current financial year, Cabinet has approved a budgetary allocation of $136,521.86 (one hundred and thirty-six thousand, five hundred and twenty-one dollars and eighty-six cents) to support the implementation of this Grant Programme. These funds will be administered in accordance with a transparent, fair, and accountable framework, with grant ceilings of up to $10,000 for small-scale, $25,000 for medium-scale, and $50,000 for large-scale commercial operations. Grants may be applied toward capital investment, operational inputs, training, innovation, and the adoption of modern technologies, excluding the purchase of land.

Madam Speaker, this is not a hand-out programme. It is an investment programme. It is anchored in clear eligibility criteria, a structured application and evaluation process, strong financial management standards, and robust monitoring and

reporting requirements to ensure value for money and public accountability.

Importantly, the policy recognises agriculture and fisheries in their broadest sense—encompassing food and non-food crops, livestock, aquaculture, agro-processing, fish processing, and innovation within the Blue Economy. It supports not only increased production, but also value-added activities, entrepreneurship, job creation, and income diversification.

The Grant Programme will be administered by the Premier's Office, the Ministry with responsibility for Agriculture and Fisheries, supported by a multi-disciplinary Grant Committee, and guided by national priorities under the Virgin Islands Food Security and Sustainability Act, 2022, and Vision 2036.

Now that we have had Cabinet approval, the implementation phase is now underway. This includes the formal appointment of the Commercial Agriculture and Fisheries Grant Committee, which will be responsible for reviewing and assessing applications and making recommendations to the Minister. I wish to note that an advertisement inviting suitably qualified persons to serve on the Grant Committee has already been issued, and appointments will be finalised in keeping with established procedures.

Madam Speaker, I wish to advise this Honourable House that the Government will launch an application process for the Grant programme on Friday, 16th January 2026. The application forms will be available on the Government's website on that day, to ensure that applicants can access the full application package.

The first call for applications will therefore open immediately following that announcement, and completed applications must be submitted by Friday, 13th February 2026.

Madam Speaker, through this policy, my government is sending a clear message: we believe in our farmers, we believe in our fishers, and we are committed to partnering with them to build a more resilient, productive, and self-reliant Virgin Islands.

I commend this policy to this Honourable House and look forward to its positive impact across our Territory.

Thank you Madam Speaker

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Additional Documents or Media

- statement_for_the_premier_grants_policy_for_agriculture_and_fisheries.pdf