GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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VI Government Strengthening Food Security with Support for Local Producers

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Premier and Minister of Finance the Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley has called on residents, businesses and institutions to buy local and has outlined his Government's investments to boost the Territory's food security and resilience.

Premier Wheatley while addressing a ceremony to observe World Food Day 2026 said, "The day reminds us of our shared responsibility to confront hunger, improve nutrition, and build food systems capable of providing sufficient, diverse, safe and nutritious food for present and future generations."

The Premier stated that this year's theme, 'Innovate Today. Nourish Tomorrow', challenges everyone to combine forward-thinking solutions with traditional knowledge to build a better food future.

Key Government actions announced and reaffirmed by the Premier include:

- Land allocation at Paraquita Bay: Government land has been allocated for expanded farming and agricultural production to increase local output.
- Farmers Reservoir at Paraquita Bay: Construction is underway on a permanent reservoir to supply irrigation water to farmers; completion is scheduled for 2027.
- Agriculture and Fisheries Grant Policy: The policy is in effect and the first tranche of grants is in the final administrative stages, ready to support farmers, fisherfolk and food producers.
- Omar Hodge Fishermen's Wharf improvements: The Government has initiated the process to construct a fish landing site at Omar Hodge Fishermen's Wharf to strengthen the local fishing sector.

Premier Wheatley said the recent global disruptions to fuel, shipping and supply chains have exposed the vulnerability of small island economies that depend heavily on imports. "Food security is not simply about agriculture and fisheries. Food security is about national resilience," he said, urging a Territory-wide response to reduce dependence on imported food and energy.

A call to action

The Premier urged consumers, hotels and restaurants to prioritise local produce, poultry, eggs, meats and seafood when available. “Buying local keeps more money circulating within our economy, supports Virgin Islands families and businesses, and strengthens our ability to withstand the next international disruption,” he said.

Supporting farmers and fisherfolk

Premier Wheatley praised the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for organising the Farmers Market and Food Fair and for promoting food-security awareness across schools and communities. He paid tribute to farmers and fisherfolk for their labour and commitment to increasing local production, and reiterated the Government’s ongoing support for the Territory’s food producers.

“Every crop planted, every harvest gathered and every catch brought ashore contributes to our collective resilience. Rest assured, you have the support of your Government and the Territory,” Premier Wheatley said.

About:

The Premier’s Office continues to coordinate cross sectoral policies and programmes to promote the strategic development of the Virgin Islands to ensure an informed prosperous, cohesive and stable society.

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