

STATEMENT

Tel: (284)468-2730

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Remarks by Hon. Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley Premier of the Virgin Islands on Contract Signing Farmers Reservoir at Paraquita Bay

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Hon. Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley

Premier of the Virgin Islands

Contract Signing

Farmers Reservoir at Paraquita Bay

13 May, 2025 - 10:00 am

BVI Finance Conference Room

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, a very pleasant good morning. I acknowledge the protocols that have already been established.

For generations, the lands in the Paraquita Bay area have been recognised for their fertility and productivity. Our farmers have cultivated these lands for decades, consistently yielding various food crops. These include bananas, tomatoes, pumpkins, celery, corn, parsley, breadfruit, cucumbers, peppers, mangoes, soursop, etc. In addition to crop production, they also raise livestock and poultry.

Those engaged in agriculture are deeply passionate about their work and take great pride in contributing to the nourishment and well-being of communities. However, one of their most persistent challenges remains access to an adequate and reliable water supply for crop irrigation, livestock care, and overall farm operations. This issue has long been a concern, and like many of our other enduring national challenges, we have spent years discussing potential solutions. Yet, we remain short of turning those discussions into decisive action.

My Administration is firmly committed to charting a new path that moves us beyond the cycles that have held back progress for far too long. We have shown the courage to make bold, forward-looking decisions that others may have hesitated to make. I believe wholeheartedly that “where there is a will, there is a way.” When a government is truly dedicated to an outcome, solutions will emerge. Change may not come all at once, and the journey may unfold in phases, but every step forward brings us closer to our goals. What matters is that we begin with purpose, hope, and confidence in the future we are building together.

Food security is one major challenge facing countries in today’s geopolitical environment. In recent years, we have witnessed what happens when supplies and supply chains are disrupted. In this regard, we must take the issue of food production and food security more seriously. Our people need food to survive. Our tourism industry needs food to serve guests. Agriculture, like tourism—and like financial services—puts food on tables, pays rent and utility bills, and puts children through school and college.

If we want our local food producers to help us become more food secure, we must work closely with them, ensure they have the necessary resources to be productive

and viable, and support and encourage them.

The water supply issue is perhaps the most urgent challenge for our farmers in the Paraquita Bay area. Hence, we have decided to prioritise the construction of this reservoir, which will enable farmers to irrigate their crops better and care for their livestock, reducing losses and increasing production. We are also continuing work on the Agricultural and Fisheries Complex, making more land available for food production, and introducing a programme of grants to empower farmers and fishers.

Of course, we will continue working with our food producers to identify other interventions to ease their difficulties.

I want to thank our farmers for their patience and cooperation, and underscore my Administration's commitment to the sector.

I look forward to the completion of this reservoir and to seeing more locally produced food in our supermarkets, restaurants, and homes. I also hope that our farming community will grow in numbers as the situation improves.

I thank you; have a blessed day.