GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

# PRESS RELEASE

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# Premier's Office hosts Successful Farmers and Fishers Meeting

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**Government, Farmers, and Fishers Unite to Shape Future of Agriculture and Fisheries**

(Premier's Office hosts Successful Meeting)

The Premier’s Office has successfully hosted a meeting bringing together farmers, fishers, and key stakeholders to develop a shared vision for the future growth and sustainability of the industry.

The one-day planning meeting, held on Friday 3 October, 2025, brought together officials from the Department and the Premier’s Office, including Premier, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Carolyn Stoutt-Igwe, Deputy Secretary, Dr. Lavon Chalwell-Brewley, and Director of the department, Mr. Theodore James.

In her welcome remarks, Permanent Secretary Stoutt-Igwe said: “Agriculture and fisheries are not just subjects under the Premier’s portfolio, but vital sectors for our Territory’s sustainability. It is often said that the health of a nation is the wealth of a nation. At the heart of this statement is the importance of agriculture and fisheries. What we eat has a major role to play in how healthy we will be.”

She pointed out that in anticipation of the coming into force of the Food Security and Sustainability Act, the Premier’s Office has established an Agriculture and Fisheries Management Unit. She said the unit and department will seek to engage more frequently with stakeholders and this meeting was the first of many conversations.

At the meeting, several key topics were discussed relating to the ongoing development of the agriculture and fisheries sectors, including legislative and policy matters, learning and development opportunities, the promotion of school gardens, and plans for World Food Day 2025 and Agriculture and Fisheries Month 2026. Capital projects were also reviewed and the farmers and fishers were updated on the designation of agricultural lands in Anegada.

Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley told the farmers and fishers of key initiatives aimed at strengthening the Territory's economic and environmental sustainability. He emphasised the importance of direct investment in the private sector as a means to stimulate growth and innovation, highlighted the need for effective marketing strategies to better connect local products with consumers, and addressed the importance of the responsible use of resources to support long-term productivity.

The Premier further outlined plans for establishing a farming and fishing complex, noting that the agriculture and fisheries sectors hold significant potential to generate revenue and contribute meaningfully to the economy. He stressed the need for sustainable financing mechanisms to ensure the continuity and growth of these initiatives for future generations.

In leading out in a visioning exercise, Deputy Secretary in the Premier's Office, Dr. Lavon Chalwell-Brewley reminded the farmers and fishers of the importance of their role, stating: "Farmers and fishers are the heart of our food system. You live the reality of farming and fishing every day, and your ideas will shape the future of these sectors. Without your voice, the vision would not reflect reality."

She said the session provided an opportunity for participants to share their insights and contribute meaningfully to shaping the direction of these sectors, and they now have a clearer understanding of the vision for agriculture and fisheries in the Virgin Islands.

Based on the feedback received and the discussions held, the next step will be to reconvene and agree on a finalised vision that reflects the collective input of all those present.

**###**

**About:**

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is a division of the Premier's Office of the Government of the Virgin Islands. We are mandated to promote and regulate the agricultural and fisheries sectors to ensure that food produced and harvested within the Territory is safe, nutritious, and sustainably produced, while protecting

the natural environment, enhancing economic growth, and improving the social well-being of Virgin Islanders.

**Photo Credit**: Mr Franklyn Skerritt, Department of Information and Public Relations

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