GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

# PRESS RELEASE

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# Agricultural and Fisheries Officials Empowered at International Workshop

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Permanent Secretary in the Premier’s Office, Mrs. Carolyn Stoutt Igwe, and Director of Agriculture and Fisheries, Mr. Theodore E James, have returned to the Territory inspired and enlightened, having attended a five-day workshop on Building Climate-Resilient Food Systems.

The workshop, which was held from 1st to 5th December in Tahiti, French Polynesia, was organised by Green Overseas and funded by the European Union.

The main objectives of the workshop were to:

- Build capacity and share experience and knowledge on the development and implementation of food systems that are resilient to the effects of climate change, with a focus on real challenges, practical solutions and their limitations;
- Continue developing the network of actors facing common problems in order to share their experiences and lessons learned to further strengthen the Green Overseas community “Resilience to Climate Change”; and
- Collect practices and perceptions regarding sectoral vulnerabilities/capacities, helpful in finalising the development of the catalogue of case studies and good practices.

The workshop facilitated peer-to-peer learning and experience-sharing among participants from Overseas Countries and Territories through roundtable discussions, group activities, and field visits.

“The workshop reiterated the need to pay greater attention to the agricultural and fisheries sectors, with policies and programmes developed to promote food security and food sovereignty,” said Permanent Secretary Stoutt-Igwe. “Some beneficial ideas were shared during the workshop regarding the types of emphasis countries have implemented to boost agricultural production.

She added that the field trips were especially enlightening, as participants observed production levels across various farms and the value-added services being implemented to increase access to healthy food choices. She pointed out that while there are common challenges in agricultural production across the OCTs, one thing is clear: significant investments are required, and greater public-private

partnerships are needed to bring about meaningful change.

According to the Permanent Secretary, the information gathered will definitely assist the Premier’s Office and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries as they seek to develop policies and plans for various aspects of the sectors and continue the conversation in the new year with farmers and fishers.

Director James stated, “Attending the workshop offered a compelling look at innovation rooted in culture. At the John Doom School, a leading vocational institution for agriculture, students were transforming seaweed and other seafoods into market-ready, packaged foods—showing how secondary education can power real-world value chains.”

Mr James said he was equally encouraged by fisherfolk leading fisheries management and conservation through strong local associations. He noted that in beverages, while some factories imported inputs, local farmers were the production backbone of vibrant fruit drink and wine production.

According to the Director of Agriculture and Fisheries, the workshop also underscored the importance of equipping agricultural and fisheries departments across UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) with trained personnel to deliver effective extension services to farmers and fishers. “It re-emphasised the need to collect, analyse, and apply data to ensure data-driven investment and production. Across the islands, I saw pride in farming and fishing, a commitment to personal investment, and a practical business mindset. It was an experience of deep culture paired with a modern, resilient vision for production.”

**###**

**Photo Credit: Green Overseas**

**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.

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## Additional Documents or Media

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