

PRESS RELEASE

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World Food Day 2026 Market and Food Fair Championed Food Security

Release Date: 22 October, 2026



The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries joined the rest of the world in observing World Food Day 2026 with a Market and Food Fair on October 16 under the designated theme, **“Innovate Today, Nourish Tomorrow”**.

The event drew a large turnout of residents and visitors who came together to celebrate local food production and agricultural innovation, and to recognise the importance of strengthening food security in The Virgin Islands.

Local farmers, fishers, egg producers, value-added entrepreneurs and food vendors, showcased locally grown produce, innovative products, fresh seafood and traditional cuisine. The event also encouraged greater appreciation of local producers' contributions to the Territory's food supply and economy.

Seedlings for Household Food Production

A highlight of the day was the Department's free distribution of approximately 1,000 seedlings, including tomato, cabbage, arugula, eggplant, kale and cucumber, along with parsley seeds. The initiative aims to encourage backyard gardening, promote household food production and empower residents to contribute to food security. It also reflected the department's commitment to making agriculture more accessible and demonstrates how small-scale gardening can help build a more self-reliant, food-resilient Territory.

Innovation and Education on Display

Participating educational institutions demonstrated practical approaches to food preservation, value addition and waste reduction.

Students at Imagination Academy showcased the versatility of locally grown produce through pickles, chutneys, and eggplant-based products, including muffins and beverages. Agape Total Life Academy presented products derived from locally available plants, including lemongrass oil for aromatherapy and trumpet leaf iced tea, highlighting opportunities to transform local plant resources into value-added products.

The H. Lavity Stoutt Community College (HLSCC) Culinary Department presented on reducing food waste by using vegetables fully through preservation techniques

such as salt and sugar pickling, emphasising efficient use of available produce and extended shelf life.

Steakation Butchers conducted two practical demonstrations on filleting and pickling red snapper and on traditional fish-salting techniques, highlighting opportunities for seafood preservation, value addition, and reducing post-harvest losses in the fisheries sector.

Remarks from Government Officials

Premier and Minister of Finance Honourable Dr. Natalio Wheatley highlighted the Government's role in supporting agricultural development and its commitment to advancing the Virgin Islands towards becoming a more food-resilient Territory, underscoring the importance of strengthening local food production and building a sustainable agricultural sector.

Premier Wheatley said, "When local produce is available, buy local first. When locally produced poultry, eggs and meats are available, buy local first. When our fisherfolk bring fresh fish and seafood to market, buy local first. And our hotels, restaurants and households must increasingly consider how menus can reflect what we grow, raise and harvest locally. Buying local keeps more money circulating within our economy. It supports Virgin Islands families and businesses. It encourages greater production. And, importantly, it strengthens our ability to withstand the next international disruption."

Acting Chief Environmental Health Officer Ms. Henrietta Alexander emphasised the essential link between food security and food safety, reminding attendees that a reliable food supply must be matched by measures to protect public health, and highlighting the role of environmental health services in ensuring that food produced, prepared and offered for consumption meets appropriate safety standards.

Director of Agriculture and Fisheries Mr Theodore James stressed that building a food-secure Virgin Islands is a collective responsibility, requiring the participation and commitment of everyone, from farmers and fishers to consumers, educational institutions and the wider community.

A Platform for Community and Collaboration

More than a celebration of local agriculture and fisheries, the Market and Food Fair provided a platform for knowledge-sharing, innovation, community engagement and sustainable food practices. Through educational demonstrations, local product showcases, and seedling distribution, the event showed practical ways individuals and organisations can help build a more resilient local food system.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries sincerely thanks all participating farmers, fishers, vendors, educational institutions, demonstrators, government representatives and members of the public for their contributions and support.

Reflecting on the day's success, Mr. James paid tribute to the Coordinator and the department's staff.

"As Director, I am most proud of our World Food Day 2026 Coordinator, Fisheries Assistant Ms. Nichollicia Kitaman Sampson, and of the entire Department of Agriculture and Fisheries team," Mr. James said. "An event of this scale does not happen by chance. It took careful planning, long hours and a genuine commitment to the people we serve. Ms. Kitaman Sampson led with energy, vision and attention to detail, and our team rose to the occasion, from preparing and distributing a thousand seedlings to welcoming every vendor, student and visitor to the park. This was a job well done, and I extend my sincere congratulations and gratitude to every one of them."

As The Virgin Islands continues its journey towards greater food security and resilience, the department encourages residents to support local producers, embrace sustainable food practices and recognise the role each individual plays in shaping the future of agriculture and fisheries in the Territory.

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