

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND AGRICULTURE

04/11/2023-REPORTED OUT TO THE FLOOR

03/08/2023-REPORTED OUT TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY

BILL NO. 35-0049

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

March 2, 2023

An Act amending title 7, chapter 1, of the Virgin Islands Code by adding subchapter VIII, establishing a Local Food and Farm Council in accordance with mandate five of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan

PROPOSED BY: Senators Donna A. Frett-Gregory, Angel L. Bolques, Jr.,
Javan E. James and Diane T. Capehart
Co-sponsor: Samuel Carrión

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. Title 7, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code is amended by adding a new subchapter VIII that reads as follows:

“Subchapter VIII. Virgin Islands Agriculture Plan Act

§ 29a. Local Food and Farm Council

(a) A Local Food and Farm Council is established within the University of the Virgin Islands for budgetary purposes only. The Local Food and Farm Council is composed of 11 members, with each nongovernmental member serving a three-year term. A member may serve until the member’s successor is appointed and qualified. The Governor may remove any member.

(b) The Local Food and Farm Council is composed of:

(1) The Commissioner of the V.I. Department of Agriculture, or designee.

(2) The President of the University of the Virgin Islands, or designee;

(3) The Dean of the University of the Virgin Islands School of Agriculture, or designee;

(4) The Executive Director of the V.I. Economic Development Authority, or designee;

(5) The Commissioner of the V.I. Department of Education, or designee;

(6) The Commissioner of the V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources, or designee;

(7) Five community members appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Legislature, including three licensed Virgin Islands farmers of livestock or crops—one from St. Croix, one from St. Thomas and one from St. John, and two food industry representatives—one from each district, being either a licensed wholesaler, grocer or restauranter.

(8) Each member of the Council shall receive \$100.00 for each day or part thereof spent in the attendance of official meetings, plus actual travel expenses when the member must travel from the island of his residence to attend an official meeting.

(c) The Local Food and Farm Council, among other responsibilities prescribed in the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan, shall:

(1) Make necessary amendments to the Virgin Islands Agriculture Plan;

(2) Make recommendations for changes to existing law or policy and respond to any requests by the Legislature for policy or funding recommendations as legislated;

(3) Advise the Local Food and Farm Coordinator;

(4) Collect and evaluate the production and marketing data of critical local food systems;

(5) Participate in grant decision-making processes, in an advisory capacity;

(6) Collaborate with local and federal governmental agencies, non-profit organizations and business to research, explore, and enhance food security opportunities available to the Virgin Islands;

(7) Conduct community outreach and engagement surveys, townhalls and other meetings;

(8) Promulgate guidelines for the use of the Local Farmers Food Fund;

(9) Promulgate regulations in furtherance of the implementation and development of the Agricultural Plan;

(10) Regularly monitor the Agricultural Plan, conduct an annual assessment of its effectiveness, and deliver a report to the Legislature and the Governor; and

(11) Perform any other tasks assigned the Governor or prescribed by law to carry out its objectives of sustaining and supporting the growth of agricultural productivity over time.”

BILL SUMMARY

This bill amends title 7, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code by creating subchapter VIII and establishing a Local Food and Farm Council in accordance with the Agricultural Plan submitted on December 29, 2021.

BR23-0032/February 27, 2023/HLF