



Disaster Recovery: St. Croix's Agricultural Sector

Preparing for the future: a resilient food system

This research seeks to understand how individuals within the Virgin Islands food system have been affected by Hurricane Maria and how they are recovering or can improve their pre-disaster food system. The initial discussions focused on understanding production within St. Croix and their connection to existing markets. The initial report provides ideas generated for quick-win projects that will assist producers in their recovery efforts since Hurricane Maria. Following, a collective group will work together to develop future resiliency strategies for the food system in St. Croix and the larger Virgin Islands.





Planning for Our Future

#1 Producer Disaster Preparedness Checklist

Create a pre- and post-hurricane checklist for producers. The pre-hurricane checklist may include best practices for infrastructure, storage, livestock, crops, and general preparedness strategies including a plan for both home and business operations. The post-hurricane checklist will include best practices in recovering and building back. Once the checklist is created, intermediate goals are to test crops for resiliency during hurricanes, as well as storage opportunities that can withstand hurricane winds.

#2 Beginning Farmer Packet

Many new and beginning farmers need more access to information on the logistics and opportunities that exist in farming. A formal packet with materials on needed registrations, business development tools, grants, etc. will help producers quick-start their business. Packet information may include: registration, land access, business plan development, best-practices for record keeping, organization directory, and ways of accessing markets. Initial work for this will include meeting with producers to understand the "need-to-know" information.

#3 Producer Networking + Working Group

A needed networking group for farmers will be developed in an effort for farmers to share best practices and struggles occurring on farm. This will assist with collective problem solving and new partnerships. Short term, Good Food will help facilitate conversations between farmers. Intermediate goals are to participate in the ISU Community Food Systems program for a more collective food systems coalition that long term develops into a food policy council.

Community Food Systems Program + Assessment

The ISU Community Food Systems process will help with coalition development and a community food systems assessment with a resiliency focus. Following this, the coalition will determine collective strategies for place-based food systems projects to contribute and assist local farmers and food businesses in the efforts to develop a resilient St. Croix food system. Current discussion of projects include: a local farm revolving fund, youth agriculture programs, consumer education, improved value-added production and storage, and policy change.

Farmer Conversations



7 interviews

- 1 residential farm
- 3 primary farm businesses
- 1 research farm
- 1 extension personnel
- 1 non-profit organization

Common feedback: lack of resources and recovery support post-hurricane; need for additional assistance and resource recovery; cooperation between producers

2 Farmer Conversations

- 50 total participants
 - Participants in farm to school; community planning; value added production; farm businesses (part and full time); Department of Agriculture; University of Virgin Islands; St. Croix Foundation, USDA, FEMA

Common feedback included lack of support for recovery, need for materials and equipment, preparedness information, need for information on supporting organizations, education and workshop options