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News Release

For Immediate Distribution

AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES SELECTIONS FOR THE 2021-2022 MICRO-GRANT FOR FOOD SECURITY PROJECT

September 9, 2022, US Virgin Islands – The Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture (VIDA), was approved by the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) to release the list of 23 projects selected for the 2021-2022 Micro-Grant for Food Security Project. The award of $5,000 per recipient was offered to individual crop and livestock farmers, back yard gardeners, schools, and school gardening clubs, through a competitive application process that began this past December.

The objectives of the Food Security Project are to increase the quantity and quality of locally grown food for food insecure individuals, families, neighborhoods, and communities; to increase food security for at-risk members of the community through the development and enhancement of local agricultural resources and strategies; and to provide knowledge of food security. Assistant Commissioner, Diana Collingwood remarks, "The 202 applications submitted from USVI residents were of a very high caliber and demonstrated the dire need for support with the farming resources and equipment necessary to address food security concerns territory wide."

The independent review committee selected to score the applications consisted of industry professionals from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), UVI School of Agriculture, and the USDA Forest Service; and they were challenged with the review and scoring of the 202 applications, all vying for $5,000 to enhance food production, food purchasing, food safety, and food preparation skills in the USVI.

A total of $115,000 will be disbursed to the 23 top ranked candidates. The list of qualifiers can be viewed via the VIDA Press & Media page (https://doa.vi.gov/press-media/), following the link included in the most recent MicroGrant Award post. Each grantee will be contacted directly by VIDA staff based on information included on their application. Grant recipients will be required to submit an updated budget for the $5,000 award and will be responsible for reporting and documenting appropriate expenditures as specified by their respective grant proposals. Qualifiers who are non-responsive, or who do not comply within the established timelines will be replaced by the next ranked candidates.

VIDA thanks the Ag Industry Professionals who served as Grant Reviewers, all 202 applicants, and USDA Agricultural Marketing Service for this opportunity.

All **questions** about the award can be submitted via email to grants@doa.vi.gov or via phone at (340) 725-5268.

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