

# Virgin Islands USDA Newsletter- July 2025

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USVI FSA & NRCS Updates July 9, 2025

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## Farm Service Agency

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### Nominations Open for the 2025 County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) is now accepting nominations for county committee members and encourages all farmers, ranchers, and FSA program participants to take part in St. Croix County Committee election nomination process.

Elections will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for members. LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction. For St. Croix County, elections will take place in LAA 1 which consists of St. Croix County. Customers can

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identify which LAA they or their farming or ranching operation is in by using our GIS locator tool available at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections).

County committee members make important decisions about how Federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2025 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2025.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in a USDA program and reside in the LAA that is up for election this year, may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits.

Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority producers, women, and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of 3 to 11 members who serve three-year terms. Committee members are vital to how FSA carries out disaster programs, as well as conservation, commodity and price support programs, county office employment and other agricultural issues.

For more information on FSA county committee elections, including fact sheets, nomination forms and FAQs, visit [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections).

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## Update Your Records

FSA is cleaning up our producer record database and needs your help. Please report any changes of address, zip code, phone number, email address or an incorrect name or business name on file to our office. You should also report changes in your farm operation, like the addition of a farm by lease or purchase. You should also report any changes to your operation in which you reorganize to form a Trust, LLC or other legal entity.

FSA and NRCS program participants are required to promptly report changes in their farming operation to the County Committee in writing and to update their *Farm Operating Plan* on form CCC-902.

To update your records, contact your St. Croix County USDA Service Center at 340-773-9146.

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## USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Farmers can use USDA farm ownership microloans to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013.

Microloans can also help with farmland and building purchases and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program, contact your St. Croix County USDA Service Center at 340-773-9146 or visit [fsa.usda.gov/microloans](https://fsa.usda.gov/microloans).

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## Selected Interest Rates for July 2025

<u>Farm Operating - Direct</u>	<u>5.000%</u>
<u>Farm Operating - Microloan</u>	<u>5.000%</u>
<u>Farm Ownership - Direct</u>	<u>5.875%</u>
<u>Farm Ownership - Microloan</u>	<u>5.875%</u>
<u>Farm Ownership - Direct, Joint</u>	<u>3.875%</u>
<u>Financing</u>	<u>3.875%</u>
<u>Farm Ownership - Down Payment</u>	<u>1.875%</u>
<u>Emergency Loan - Amount of Actual</u>	<u>3.750%</u>
<u>Loss</u>	

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## Natural Resources Conservation Service

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## Then and Now: The Power of Agriculture

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NRCS is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year. We began our celebration by posting [a blog](#) and [an interactive timeline](#) about NRCS history and [a video](#) about how we've helped farmers over the years. We've also been sharing some historical photos on social media that show how our mission has changed and stayed the same over the years.

Now, we'd like for you to join us in our celebration. We'd like to hear your stories and see photos of your operation – Then and Now.

Does your agricultural operation have a fascinating history you'd like to share? Are there interesting stories about how your operation came to be or how it's evolved? Do you have photos of your operation from its beginnings to the present day? If so, we want to hear from you!

**This summer, we want to highlight how things have changed on your operation over the years in our #ThenAndNow campaign on NRCS and FarmersGov social media.**

Here's how to participate:

- Find a few historical photos of your operation from when it began - Then.
- Using your smartphone or digital camera, take photos of your operation - Now.
- In a few sentences, tell us: how has your operation changed over the years? How has it expanded, modernized equipment and practices, or transformed with conservation?
- Include your name, the location of your operation, and links to any social media accounts you manage to promote your operation.
- Submit the above to [SM.FPAC.NRCS.Facebook@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FPAC.NRCS.Facebook@usda.gov) by **Friday, August 1, 2025**.

*Please note that by submitting your photo/video, you are granting USDA permission to use these materials for outreach and education purposes.*

Follow NRCS on [X](#) and [Facebook](#), and FarmersGov on [Facebook](#), [X](#), and [Instagram](#). We look forward to seeing and sharing your stories!

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## **Conserve the Caribbean: You Can't Control the Weather, but You Can Control your Water**

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Water can be tricky, especially in the farming community, there always seems to be either too much or not enough. But what if you had the ability to actively control the water on your farm?

Drainage Water Management (DWM) may be your answer. DWM is a conservation practice that allows farmers to manage the timing and amount of water leaving their fields through the subsurface drainage system. Instead of allowing water to flow freely through the drainage system, farmers can strategically manage it using water control structures, which slows or stops the outflow of water when drainage is not needed. This simple yet powerful adjustment can have far-reaching benefits for both the farm's productivity and the community's environmental wellbeing.

At its core, DWM involves placing a water control structure, typically a series of adjustable boards or gates, at the outlet of a drainage system. By strategically raising or lowering these boards, farmers can manage the water table in their fields. During the growing season or periods of heavy precipitation, boards can be removed to promote proper drainage for planting and field access. In contrast, during the non-growing season or drought, boards can be installed to hold water in the soil profile. This stored water can reduce nutrient loss, especially nitrates, by slowing the movement of water through the soil and keeping valuable nutrients in place for future crops.

One of the primary benefits of DWM for farmers is reduced nutrient loss. This is achieved by reducing the total drainage volume and associated nutrient loads from the drainage system. Additionally, in times of drought or inconsistent rainfall, fields with managed drainage may retain more moisture, improving crop yields. This contributes to better water quality downstream, helping protect rivers, lakes and other local waterbodies from nutrient loading and harmful algal blooms.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers support to farmers interested in implementing DWM. Through technical planning and financial assistance programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), NRCS can help landowners design and install appropriate water control structures tailored to their fields. NRCS staff work directly with producers to evaluate the landscape, determine the feasibility of the practice and develop a site-specific drainage water management plan, where appropriate. With the right tools, planning and support, this practice can make a real difference on your farm and beyond.

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