

U.S. Virgin Islands

Caribbean territory builds organic capacity through tropical fruits, tourism, and island food sovereignty

A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
 State Module | August 2026

The U.S. Virgin Islands has 1 certified organic operation, reflecting an emerging organic sector with significant growth potential. With just 1 certified organic operation and 14 certified acres, the U.S. Virgin Islands has the smallest certified organic footprint of any U.S. jurisdiction — a figure that reflects structural constraints, not a lack of agricultural potential. The USVI imports more than 97% of its food, leaving extremely limited arable land under cultivation of any kind. Hurricanes Irma and Maria (2017) delivered catastrophic back-to-back blows to the territory's small farming sector, destroying infrastructure and displacing agricultural investment for years. The real opportunity lies in the islands' thriving tourism economy: resort buyers pay premium prices for locally grown Caribbean produce, and organic certification could unlock those markets for producers who rebuild. TOPP engagement in the USVI would need to begin with basic infrastructure — cost-share, Spanish and English outreach, and on-island technical assistance.

1	14	Data Limited	Emerging
CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	CERTIFIED ACRES	ORGANIC SALES DATA	SECTOR TRAJECTORY

STATE PROFILE

AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	1 (U.S. territory)
Certified organic acres	14
Organic sales data	Not reported (territory data limited)
Primary challenge	97%+ food imports; limited arable land
Primary opportunity	Tourism economy premium local demand

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop farm-to-resort organic supply chains on St. Thomas and St. John, leveraging the territory's multi-billion dollar tourism economy as a premium organic buyer.
- Expand organic vegetable and tropical fruit production on St. Croix's relatively flat agricultural land to reduce the territory's high food import dependence.
- Build USVI organic agritourism experiences connecting visitors with the islands' agricultural heritage, tropical biodiversity, and authentic Caribbean food culture.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Tropical Fruits:** organic mangoes, papayas, and bananas supply local and resort buyers.
- ▶ **Vegetables:** St. Croix organic vegetables supply direct markets and resort buyers.
- ▶ **Herbs & Specialty:** organic culinary herbs and specialty crops supply USVI restaurants.
- ▶ **Root Crops:** organic sweet potatoes and root crops supply local food markets.

BARRIERS

- Severe hurricane risk and the 2017 experience of Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated agricultural infrastructure, creating ongoing vulnerability for organic producers.
- Very limited arable land constrains organic farm scale and total production potential across all three main islands.
- High cost of organic inputs, equipment, and shipping creates economic barriers that are significantly higher than mainland U.S. agricultural operations.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The U.S. Virgin Islands' single certified organic operation is not a measure of interest or potential — it is a measure of how many structural barriers remain: hurricane devastation, 97%+ food import dependence, extremely limited arable land, and minimal USDA certification infrastructure. The tourism economy creates real premium-market demand for local organic produce, making TOPP cost-share and technical assistance the highest-leverage entry points for growing the USVI certified sector.

Resources for Farmers

USVI organic farmers are supported by the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture, University of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Experiment Station, the USVI Farmers in Action organization, and the Southeast TOPP region. These partners deliver certification, technical assistance, and market development resources across the territory.

VI Department of Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- VIDA organic program certification oversight and producer support
- NRCS USVI: EQIP Organic Initiative and Organic Transition Assistance programs
- Agricultural recovery and food sovereignty grants for USVI organic producers

vifresh.com

UVI Agricultural Experiment Station

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic tropical fruit, vegetable, and root crop research and extension for the USVI
- UVI aquaponics and sustainable agriculture research and demonstration programs
- Tropical soil health, pest management, and hurricane recovery resources for organic producers
- Island-wide extension outreach serving all USVI agricultural communities

uvi.edu/research/agricultural-experiment-station

USVI Farmers in Action

FARMER ADVOCACY & PEER LEARNING

- Primary USVI farmer advocacy and sustainable agriculture education network
- Farmer peer learning, market development, and organic producer support programs
- Farm-to-resort and direct-market connection services across the territory
- Post-hurricane organic farm resilience and agricultural recovery resources

farmersinaction.org

Southeast TOPP (FOG-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves AL, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, PR, VI
- Paid organic mentor matching for tropical fruit, vegetable, and root crop operations
- Workshops on organic transition, Caribbean production, and certification in USVI
- Market access and mainland U.S. organic buyer connections for USVI producers

organictransition.org/region/southeast

DID YOU KNOW? U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

The U.S. Virgin Islands imports approximately 97% of its food, making local organic agriculture a critical food sovereignty and economic resilience priority for the territory's 100,000 residents. Every pound of food grown organically on St. Croix, St. Thomas, or St. John reduces both the islands' dependence on imported food and the vulnerability created by supply chain disruptions during hurricanes and other crises. UVI's agricultural research and Southeast TOPP's mentorship programs are actively supporting USVI organic producers in building the local food production capacity that underpins both economic resilience and food security for the territory.

KEY SOURCES

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2022 Census of Agriculture. USDA NASS, 2024.

Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture. Organic Program. VIDA, 2023.

University of the Virgin Islands. Agricultural Experiment Station Programs. UVI AES, 2023.

USVI Farmers in Action. Programs and Resources. FIA, 2023.

Find additional resources at:
organictransition.org/region/national

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THE ORGANIC SPECIALISTS



NATIONAL
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PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

