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**THE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM - A VEHICLE TO
MEET EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES**

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"The only thing that one really knows about human nature is that it changes." Change is the one quality we can predict" (Oscar Wilde, 1985). This statement is very appropriate for what the Cooperative Extension System is all about.

The Cooperative Extension System's mission is to help people improve their lives through an educational process which uses scientific knowledge on issues and needs. The Extension System's vision is future-oriented and self-renewing. The system serves as a national educational network focused on contemporary issues which employs an interactive education process with state-of-the-art technology.

The U.S. Cooperative Extension System is comprised of 74 universities in the 50 states, American Samoa, Guam, Micronesia, Northern Marianas, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

The Extension Service carries out its educational mission through base programs and target programs. Base programs are the major educational efforts central to the mission of the System and common to most Extension units. The base programs are the ongoing priority program efforts of the system, involving many discipline-based and multidisciplinary programs. They can be thought of as the foundation of a building, while the target programs rise from the base to receive special emphasis for a period of time. The following are the educational base programs of the Cooperative Extension System:

- Agricultural Competitiveness and Profitability
- Community Resource and Economic Development
- Family Development and Resource Management
- 4-H and Youth Development
- Leadership and Volunteer Development
- Natural Resources and Environmental Management
- Nutrition, Diet and Health

The target programs are the Cooperative Extension System's commitment to respond to important societal problems of broad national concern with additional resources and significantly increased effort to achieve a major impact on national priorities. The following are the current target programs of the Cooperative Extension System:

- Food Safety and Quality
- International Marketing

- Revitalizing Rural America
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Waste Management
- Water Quality
- Youth at Risk

The Extension System uses the following methods to deliver base and target programs:

- Written method - bulletins, factsheets, leaflets, new articles and columns, personal letters, circular letters and newsletters.
- Spoken method - office consultations, site visits, telephone calls, seminars and radio, conferences and workshops.
- Visual method - result and method demonstrations, charts, exhibits/posters, video/television, slides, films and photographs.

The System's contacts are classified as follows:

- Individual contacts - site visits, office/lab consultations, telephone calls, letters, results and method demonstrations.
- Group contacts - club meetings, leader training sessions, clinics and workshops, field tours.
- Mass contacts - publications, radio and newspapers, television/video, exhibits and fairs, documentary films.

The Cooperative Extension Service of the University of the Virgin Islands is fully committed to carrying out the missions and goals of the Extension system. The base and target programs at the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Service (VICES), proposed in the four-year plan of work for FY 1992-95, are:

Base Programs

- **Beef Production.** Technical assistance to beef producers will be strengthened and the Beef Cattle Improvement Program will be expanded to include new beef producers.
- **Dairy Production.** Technical assistance will be extended to dairy producers to improve the genetic base of dairy cattle as well as the net income of dairy farmers by demonstrating proper milking procedures, disease control, reproduction and nutrition. Dairy producers will also be encouraged to register in the Dairy Herd Improvement Association program.
- **Small Livestock Production.** The Breeders Exchange Program will be expanded to increase participation of livestock producers in this program. Small livestock producers will be provided with continuous scientific and relevant information to ensure that proper

management practices are followed. Various workshops, short courses and demonstrations on small livestock production are planned.

- **Soil and Water Conservation.** There will be an increase in the awareness of soil and water conservation as it relates to recovery work from the hurricane, and VICES will be carrying out this program in conjunction with the U.S. Virgin Islands Government Comprehensive Development Program, Land and Water Use Plan for the Year 2000.
- **Soil Characterization.** The agriculture and natural resources program will continue to provide plant, soil and water analysis through the Extension Diagnostic Laboratory.
- **Pasture and Forage Management.** Continued awareness of pasture and forage management and conservation will be the emphasis of this project.
- **4-H Club System.** VICES will develop a systematic approach to improve 4-H Club enrollment and activities. A new, comprehensive 4-H curriculum will be designed. Activities to increase 4-H visibility and youth and volunteer enrollment will be held. VICES will establish 4-H Clubs in 50% of the schools in the territory. An effective fund-raising system and a quarterly 4-H newsletter will be initiated.
- **4-H Youth Summer Day Camp Program.** The 4-H summer camp program will be continued by increasing camp enrollment by 20% annually. All the counsellors hired for the summer camp program will be trained in volunteerism and leadership skills. Summer employment for vacationing college and high schools students will be increased. Quality leisure programs will continue to be designed, especially for those with special needs, and a curriculum will be established for five program tracts.
- **Improving Nutrition, Diet and Health.** VICES will help develop the interest and skills needed by families to establish vegetable gardening projects. Proper handling and management of food will be emphasized. Clientelle will be encouraged to establish and practice good food selection and eating habits for optimum health. Clientele will be taught dietary practices to minimize hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and drug mismanagement. Assistance will be given to clientele in proper identification of food choices from the limited food supplies available in the territory.
- **Developing Marketable Skills.** To improve the quality of life for the residents of the territory, VICES will provide clients with educational opportunities for human resource development to learn skills needed for career development and income supplementation.
- **Extension Information Dissemination.** The objectives of this project plan are to enhance public awareness of VICES outreach efforts by reaching the various media outlets on the island.

A new series of educational bulletins and factsheets on herbs, drip irrigation systems, vegetable and fruit production, ornamentals, livestock, insects, pests and plants of the Virgin Islands are planned.

- **Virgin Islands Extension Exhibition/Fairs.** VICES will continue to provide assistance and leadership in the organization of the annual Agriculture and Food Fairs and in the observance of World Food Day celebrations in the territory, and to increase the public's awareness of the potentials of the local production of agricultural items, their raw material input uses and consumption.
- **Integrated Farm Management Systems.** Before the hurricane, UVI/CES had enrolled farmers in the Integrated Farming System program. Their participation in the program improved production, marketing and overall management practices on their farms. However, the hurricane destroyed 80% of the farms enrolled in the program. This program will encourage existing and new farmers to participate and assist the Virgin Islands Department of Economic Development and Agriculture in upgrading and expanding their marketing program and centralizing marketing facilities for the local farmers. This project is also an impact study to ascertain the effort of a total integrated technology on small farms.
- **Eastern Caribbean Extension Outreach and Interchange.** To fulfill the goals of the new President of the University and be part of the USDA/ES international outreach program, educational linkages will be strengthened between ten Eastern Caribbean islands. The range and diversity of agricultural training, research and development activities and resources of UVI Land-Grant Programs will be made available to the Eastern Caribbean countries. Opportunities will be provided for the training and growth of Eastern Caribbean youths, leaders and volunteers in youth organization development. Food and nutrition training programs will be provided to 500 homemakers on five Caribbean islands. VICES will provide leadership to the Caribbean Food Crops Society in program coordination, publication, and planning of educational workshops and training programs, and will continue to be actively involved as co-organizers, co-sponsors or participants of their annual meetings.
- **On-Site Compliance Reviews.** VICES will ensure that civil rights/equal opportunity laws and regulations are complied with, all outreach programs are available without regards to race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age and handicap, and that the programs are communicated and written in such a way that they convey a non-discriminatory image.
- **Civil Rights Training.** VICES will continue to familiarize employees with local and federal civil rights laws, rules and regulations. New employees will be given orientation on civil right laws. Annual civil rights seminars will continue to be given to VICES employees and periodic training will be held for civil rights officers to effectively enforce civil rights requirements.

- **Public Notification.** VICES will continue to inform the community of availability of outreach programs to all without regards to race, color, national origin, religion, handicap, sex and age and to inform CES clientele of the non-discriminating requirements of Extension communications and written materials released to the public.
- **EEO.** UVI/CES will continue to maintain equal opportunity for under-utilized and under-represented employees and applicants regardless of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, handicap. All employment barriers will be continued to be removed with regard to equitable hiring, promotion, training and separate rates for protected groups. Finally, training will be continually given to EEO officer to effectively enforce EEO requirements.
- **Program Delivery.** UVI/CES will continue to establish educational programs and activities to meet the needs of under-represented groups as a means of increasing their participation and to increase the participation of under-represented groups that serve on program planning and advisory committees.

Target Programs

- **Integrated Pest Management.** Clientele will increase use of recommended pest management practices which involve alternatives to chemical pest control, such as rotations, biological control and reduced pesticide use as shown in various Extension educational outreach programs.
- **Pesticide Impact Assessment.** VICES will establish and maintain cooperative relationships and linkages with public agencies, private organizations and Extension and non-Extension initiative programs on pesticide impact assessment matters. Databases on pesticide usage will be developed and maintained.
- **Pesticide Applicator Training.** Training workshops/seminars and certification courses will be conducted to increase pesticide applicators' knowledge on the use of safe, environmentally sound pesticide practices.
- **Environmental Education.** VICES will conduct environmental education programs designed to create environmental awareness and enhance the development of an environmental ethic in adults and youth. VICES will also serve as a catalyst to develop and deliver research-based environmental education programs to targeted audiences to help private citizens solve environmental problems.
- **Water Quality Program.** Water quality and water resource concerns will be addressed in this initiative. Agricultural producers will reduce/prevent water degradation from plant nutrients, pesticides and animal wastes. Protection and improvement of private water supplies of targeted clientele will be encouraged, along with

awareness in all segments of the population on water quality issues. VICES will collaborate with various agencies in carrying out this initiative.

- **Urban Gardening.** Low income adults and youths will be targeted for participation in urban gardening projects. Knowledge and awareness of urban food production will be increased through the use of efficacious and environmentally sound practices. Food preservation through the use of safe and proven methods will also be taught in this program.
- **Sustainable Agriculture in the Virgin Islands.** The viability of Virgin Islands agriculture has become increasingly dependent upon the ability of local producers to maintain competitiveness in a changing Caribbean and world market. Alternative agricultural opportunities will be the focus of this challenging project.
- **Volunteer Development and Management.** An initiative will be undertaken by VICES to train middle management functions and leadership skills to staff, volunteers, resource persons, officers and chairpersons of Extension related programs and organizations. External linkages will be established with various schools and community-based volunteer organizations.
- **Youth at Risk.** VICES will help communities in the territory to establish child care educational programs for children of ages 5-14 and will encourage existing child care providers to adopt the Extension curriculum. VICES will enhance the reading and science/technology literacy of program participants. Commitment will be obtained from other academic departments of the University and other community agencies to provide training and to satisfy the educational needs of high risk youth. The University will sponsor a conference in 1992 to coordinate all formal youth activities in the territory and to address critical issues in youth development.
- **EFNEP.** VICES will improve and increase recruitment efforts to increase enrollment of qualified families in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). EFNEP families and youth will acquire knowledge, new attitudes and changed behavior patterns necessary for the maintenance of nutritionally sound diets that will contribute to their personal development. Inter-agency cooperation with government and civic agencies will be increased to provide assistance in improving the quality of life for VICES clientele.
- **Food Safety and Quality.** Proper handling of food will be the focus of this new target program which will provide guidance, education and information to those in the business of selling, handling and providing food to the public at large. The targeted audiences are mobile food van operators, restaurateurs, food vendors, consumers, homemakers, the elderly, food handlers, farmers, home growers and special groups like day care centers, soup kitchens, institutional operations, etc.

- **Limited resources/low income individuals/families.** VICES will train staff and volunteers to effect behavioral change with limited resource adults and youth through coordinated efforts in two or more subject areas (e.g., money management, nutrition and health, and individual and family development). VICES will also establish, maintain and enhance linkages with other agencies in support of CES programs for limited resource adults and youth. Limited resource participants in VICES programs will improve basic life skills.
- **Parenting and Family and Family Youth Programs.** Parents and youth will acquire knowledge and skills associated with effective parenting, improve parent-youth relations, understand and use effective family coping strategies and set and achieve financial goals.
- **Programs for Multicultural Diversity.** VICES will achieve and maintain multicultural diversity within the work force and with its clients. VICES has developed excellent cultural diversity in its employees. The Virgin Islands population is 73% black, 13.5% white, 13% Hispanic, and 0.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, with a combined total of about 102,000. VICES has 50 employees, of which 70% are black, 22% white, 4% Hispanic, and 4% Asian/Pacific Islander. This impressive cultural diversity in the workforce, representing the population of the Virgin Islands, will be sustained.

Specifically, this Plan of Work is an action plan to achieve the following objectives, derived from the above considerations:

- Recovery from Hurricane Hugo by reestablishing facilities, programs and clientele services, and developing better impact evaluation procedures.
- Implement the new University President's vision and strategic plans by further strengthening Extension programs and developing scientific and technological expertise to interpret and transfer new technologies so as to make VICES a center of excellence in community-based programming for the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean.
- Promote local food production through sustainable agricultural systems that are compatible with environmental and social values.
- Provide information and technical assistance on safe, affordable and nutritious food for conventional and specially targeted families.
- Address critical social issues facing youth and families.
- Promote conservation and enhancement of natural resources.
- Promote integrated pest management and integrated resource management systems through inter-disciplinary efforts.

In conclusion, the Cooperative Extension System has three features:

- **It is an educational system and not a public assistance program.**
- **Programming is based and tied to research.**
- **It is a partnership between central or federal government, state or provincial government and the local communities.**