



Grow Local

Presented by:

The Hon. Diallo Rabain, JP, MP

Ministry of the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation

29th May 2026

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the launch of the Grow Local initiative by the Department of Planning, developed in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Mr. Speaker, the agriculture industry has long played an important role in Bermuda's history, culture, and resilience. However, over many decades, agricultural activity has experienced a steady decline, which has made us increasingly reliant on imported food, and more vulnerable to

supply chain disruptions, extreme weather events, and international price volatility.

Mr. Speaker, according to information held in the planning system, Bermuda currently has approximately 737 acres of designated agricultural land. However, only around half of this is currently being used for agricultural purposes, meaning that we have substantial capacity to increase local crop production.

Mr. Speaker, during the preparation of development plans, the Department of Planning receives multiple requests for the removal of protective agricultural designations in the interests of maximising the development potential of land. Whilst it is recognised that people will naturally seek to maximise the value of land within their ownership, one of the principal rationales offered in support of requests for the removal of Agricultural Reserve designations is a belief that there is no demand for agricultural land, due to the decline of the industry.

Mr. Speaker, this assertion is in contrast to the experience of officers within the Department of Environment and Natural Resources who

receive multiple enquiries each month from people looking for land to farm. Such requests are not only from existing commercial farmers, but also from individuals looking to establish themselves in the sector, as well as those looking for small plots for domestic-scale crop production.

Mr. Speaker, the Grow Local initiative has been developed to address this disconnect. Central to the initiative is an online platform, which seeks to connect willing landowners with prospective farmers to maximise farming opportunities across the island. Through the platform, landowners will be able to market land within their ownership which they are willing to make available for farming opportunities, prospective farmers will be able to view details of available sites and the Department will be able to make landowners aware of any enquiries received and make the necessary connections.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to highlight that the platform is a facilitation tool, and any decisions regarding the use of land within private ownership will remain entirely at the discretion of the landowner. Any subsequent arrangements or agreements will be at the discretion of the participants.

Mr. Speaker, the initiative will not be restricted to designated agricultural land; any sites suitable for farming purposes could be included. Furthermore, I would like to make clear that any sites which enter into this initiative which do not currently have an Agricultural Reserve designation, will not be designated as Agricultural Reserve through this process. The aim is not to re-zone, it is only to explore potential.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has previously confirmed the preparation of an Integrated Agricultural Strategy for the island, with stated objectives for the emerging strategy including:

- the need to make better use of technology to improve domestic food production;
- to explore means of making more land available for production; and
- encouraging greater participation in the agriculture sector.

The Grow Local initiative directly supports these objectives and will play a complementary role to the advancement of the strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we need to think of more creative ways of boosting local food production, and while there has been some local

traction in relation to alternative farming techniques, there is clearly still a place for traditional crop farming in Bermuda, and I hope the Grow Local platform will assist in increasing the supply of land available for farming.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude my statement by encouraging members of the community to view the Grow Local initiative as an opportunity to participate in a collective national effort which can deliver meaningful long-term benefits for Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, increasing local food production is directly connected to food security, public health, environmental sustainability and our long-term resilience as an island community. Greater access to fresh, locally grown produce benefits all of us, while also helping to reduce our reliance on costly, and often lower quality, imported food.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Bermuda possesses both the land and the people necessary to help strengthen our domestic food supply, and I hope that the Grow Local initiative will help to connect more members of our community with agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, for further details of the Grow Local initiative, please visit the Department of Planning website at planning.gov.bm.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**