

March 5th 2025

To: Secretariaat Formatie 2025 – Government of Aruba

Subject: Key Agricultural Priorities for Policy Consideration

Dear Formateurs and committee members,

The United Farmers of Aruba Association (UFA) presents the following key priorities based on extensive input from local farmers growing both in soil-based and advanced technology systems (e.g., hydroponics). These findings are derived from a member-driven ranking process and are aligned with previous formal communications to the Government of Aruba. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensuring a resilient and sustainable agricultural sector that enhances local food security and economic stability.

1. Land Accessibility and Infrastructure Regulation Modernization

Farmers consistently highlight the lack of accessible farmland as a major barrier to growth. Many lease applications for government land (huurgrond) remain unanswered for a number of year, creating uncertainty and limiting investment in agriculture. Furthermore, transparency in land availability and conditions to apply is necessary.

The modernization of lease contracts and infrastructure requirements is essential. The current regulations are outdated and create unnecessary hurdles for expansion.

2. Water Access and Quality Improvement

Reliable and affordable water access is a persistent challenge, both for those using hydroponic and soil-based farming. Expanding infrastructure for irrigation and increasing the capacity of water reservoirs (dams) is critical.

The water quality available to farmers must be improved to ensure optimal crop growth and reduce dependency on expensive imported solutions.

3. Strengthening Support for Farmers and Agricultural Institutions

Santa Rosa's role must be strengthened to better support farmers through soil testing, pest control assistance, and technical advisory services.

Farmers require easier access to funding, subsidies, and training programs that support new entrepreneurs in agriculture.

4. Electricity Costs

High electricity costs hinder the economic feasibility of advanced farming technologies such as hydroponics and climate-controlled greenhouses. Furthermore, the gated access to the electricity infrastructure and possibilities for own investment in renewable energies combined with requirement on high investments in shared transformer stations is a large challenge to be overcome.

5. Customs clearance procedures

Customs clearance procedures should be streamlined and updated to facilitate the importation of modern agricultural technologies, reducing administrative delays and costs.

6. Market Access and Protection of Local Agriculture

The establishment of government-supported farmer's markets would provide direct access to consumers, reducing dependency on large retailers and improving profitability.

Imported agricultural products that compete with local produce should meet the same sustainability and regulatory requirements or be subject to higher import tariffs, similar to policies adopted in Curaçao.

Conclusion

The farming community in Aruba is eager to contribute to the island's food security and sustainability. However, without immediate action on these core issues, the sector remains vulnerable to economic pressures and climate-related challenges. We urge the incoming government to prioritize these concerns, facilitate open dialogue with UFA representatives, and implement effective policies that support agricultural growth.

We look forward to working together to build a more sustainable and productive agricultural sector for Aruba.

On behalf of the board of the United Farmers of Aruba,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Diego Acevedo
President

Ranking of Farming Issues to be Addressed

United Farmers of Aruba Association

#	Issue	Average Rating
1	Modernization of building and requirements for 'huurgrond'	4.45
2	Land accessibility for farming	4.40
3	Water accesibility	4.35
4	Increasing capacity of dams and improving water quality	4.30
5	Support Santa Rosa to help support farmers better (soil samp...	4.25
6	Streamlining custom clearance procedures and updating to inc...	4.25
7	Educational programs to support new farmers	4.15
8	Support to new entrepreneurs in farming	4.14
9	Water pricing	4.14
10	Electricity pricing	4.05
11	Electricity connection	3.95
12	Update education/awareness programs of locally produced food...	3.85
13	Requirement for imported products that compete with local pr...	3.85
14	Nutritional density as a leading factor for pricing on foods...	3.74
15	Labor flexibility and support to employees in farming sector	3.60
16	Government sponsored farmer's marketplaces	3.57
17	Establishment of local GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) reg...	3.25

Additional Comments from Farmers

1. I have a land but need manpower, water and support. Been waiting years for support from Santa Rosa and nothing yet.

2. Better transparency on government serious involvement in this sector, (Agricultura, Cria y Pesca). Eg. Restrict local Fisherman from fishing freely, while giving consession to foreign companies all freedom to fish in our waters.

3. Lot of people paid for a piece of property (huurgrond) online at DiP and never heard or got an answer, will it be handled will they reinburse or just keep it

4. Facilities to support farmers from idea phase to scale up phase

5. I do not want GAP. It make harder for new farmers to get in to farming.

Higher tariffs will hurt local farmer in the long term. Let market set the price.

6. DIP not working on extending huurgrond contracts eventhough on repeated times trying to contact them, start ups/entrepreneurship no guidance on where to begin.

7. Farmers keeping tax free status indefinitely.

The right to save seed irrespective of patent or trademark for the purpose of increase indigenous endophyte populations within seeds and making stronger and more resilient crops specifically adapted to thrive for the environment of Aruba.