

Hunger-Free SVG: My Role, My Future

I hear the weight of hunger in my cousin's voice when she calls from Sans Souci. "We're eating bread and butter again tonight," she laughs, but the sound is hollow. It isn't funny not when La Soufrière has left our soil rich and volcanic, not when the sea surrounding Bequia teems with fish, and certainly not when we are seventeen years old, studying in a nation that possesses every resource needed to feed itself. A hunger-free St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) is not merely a 2030 UN poster; it is the necessity of my plate tomorrow. That reality defines my role today.

I recognize that I cannot fix global food systems from a fast-food counter like KFC, but I can stop pretending that hunger is a distant problem. It is a matter of systems, and I participate in those systems every time I choose what to eat. My role begins with three "small rebellions." First, I plant. I do not own a farm, but a bucket and some volcanic soil provided by my aunt in Chauncey are enough. In two months, a few dasheen cuttings provided enough callaloo to feed me for a week. If 10,000 young Vincentians grew just one bucket of "provision," that represents 10,000 weeks of food we did not have to import. That is the mathematics of self-sufficiency.

Second, I buy Vincentian by design. When I choose cocoa tea produced in Vermont over imported chocolate, I am "voting" for a farmer in Marriaqua to keep his trees instead of selling his land. My five dollars is a ballot cast for a hunger-free future.

Third, I advocate. In our schools, food waste is often treated as an afterthought. My role is to be the conscious friend who encourages sharing over discarding. Shaming does not create change, but sharing does. Hunger is not solved by grand speeches; it is solved in the fifteen minutes between classes when we decide how to manage our leftovers.

For SVG, a hunger-free future must bridge the gap between land and sea. As an archipelago, our life-support system spans from the mango groves to the coral reefs of the Tobago Cays. My vision for the future treats the "Green Economy" and the "Blue Economy" as a single, inseparable heartbeat.

The 2021 eruption was a tragedy, but the resulting ash was also a gift of fertility. My future role involves championing "climate-smart" agriculture. This means moving beyond traditional plots to implement raised beds, school-based aquaponics, and the free distribution of drought-tolerant sweet potato slips. If we can engineer houses to withstand hurricanes, we can design farms to do the same.

This resilience must extend beyond the shore, as a hunger-free future requires us to embrace the Blue Economy as fully as the Green. Despite being surrounded by the Caribbean Sea, we import 80% of our food. A hunger-free future requires cold-storage hubs in towns like Barrouallie and Canouan so that our fisherfolk are not forced to sell their catch at a loss before it spoils. It involves rebranding "pests" like lionfish as a sustainable food source and developing seaweed farms in Ashton that simultaneously provide nutrition and purify our waters. The runoff from a dasheen bucket affects the reef, and the reef protects the coastline where our farms grow. We must stop treating these ecosystems as if they belong to different ministries.

Climate change is not a theoretical "topic" for us; it is the force that cancels school, floods Kingstown, and makes those "bread and butter" nights more frequent. My future role is one of active adaptation. SVG can lead the Caribbean in climate-resilient food security. We are small enough to be a laboratory for grand ideas. Imagine every secondary school equipped with a greenhouse built from repurposed storm shutters, or utilizing geothermal energy from our

volcano to power community food-dehydrators. This is not science fiction; it is Vincentian ingenuity with soil under its fingernails.

I am not writing this simply to satisfy a mark scheme or win a prize. I am writing because I am tired of the narrative that SVG is "too small" to matter. We have fed ourselves before, and we can do so again. My role is not necessarily to be a politician, but to ensure that my future self, at forty, is no longer hearing a cousin laugh about having only bread and butter for dinner or another family saying they have nothing to eat. A hunger-free SVG starts when we stop waiting for a hero and realize that the heroes are us armed with dirty hands, full buckets, and the nerve to believe that volcanic ash can grow more than just memories.