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Sustainable farming at the Sail Relief Team Volunteer House

# La Finca de Hamberto

## Vieques, Puerto Rico

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*(above clockwise from top: a dog, a piglet, and a car share the dirt road leading to the Finca, wild horses and sheep graze in our main pasture, and baby chickens cluster around a water source)*

## About AVES and La Finca de Hamberto

Apoyo en Vieques para la Educación y la Sustentabilidad (AVES) is a project housed at La Finca, a learning farm co-located with the Sail Relief Team Volunteer House in Vieques, Puerto Rico. The goals of the farm are: to make the volunteer house more self-sustainable, to provide a local food source to the island of Vieques, and to offer education and gather institutional knowledge on small-scale farming, the practice of which on Vieques has been effectively lost through generations of displacement and industrialization. In Vieques about 99% of food is imported; the notoriously-unreliable

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ferry from the main island of Puerto Rico is the only source of deliveries, leaving Vieques extremely food-supply-insecure. In cases of emergency, La Finca de Hamberto can provide food that does not rely on the ferry system. The farm currently raises pigs, sheep, ducks, and chickens. There are two gardens growing crops native to the Caribbean such as yuca, yautía, gandules, plantains, and aji dulce, as well as more commonly-known vegetables like cabbage, squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, herbs, and more. We are currently expanding our gardens so that we can grow and offer exponentially more produce. Self-sustainability provides the ability to host volunteers for very little financial impact, meaning that folks can come from all over the US and the world to learn about our methods and contribute their time, labor, and resources to the project. We have also partnered with local school and youth groups to offer farm visits, where the children learn about agriculture, local crops, and where food comes from. Additionally, we run a food waste diversion program in partnership with local restaurants on Vieques that has eliminated thousands of pounds of food waste from the landfill and redirected it for use on the farm.

SINCE 2017, La Finca and the Volunteer House have:

- Collected over 18,000 pounds of food waste from local restaurants
- Collected over 1200 pallets to be repurposed at the farm
- Hosted 6 school groups and educated about self sustainability, food autonomy, and the local agricultural practices
- Hosted 3 local school groups for educational farming activities including treating animals humanely and creating mutually beneficial relationships with animals
- Took in 9 sheep, 6 pigs, 13 piglets, 6 cats, 1 dog and countless chickens
- Raised 38 ducklings
- Recycled over 2,000 pounds of materials on the island by repurposing them for the farm
- Built 3+ bird coops and 15+ pens for animals
- Had multiple successful lamb births and piglet births
- Sold lambs and piglets to a local farmer which will help provide him with an income and locally grown food for residents
- Collected over 200 chicken eggs to feed volunteers
- Collected over 800 duck eggs to feed volunteers and provide a local food source for residents
- Harvested over several hundred pounds in 2019 of produce to feed volunteers
- Utilized alternative water sources to provide drinking water for the farm animals and grazing horses