



HAWAI'I ISLAND FARMER'S GUIDE TO ACCESSING LOCAL MARKETS

Craig Elevitch • Nicole Milne • Jim Cain



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UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII
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**CENTER FOR
AGRICULTURAL
SUCCESS**



Hawai'i Island Farmer's Guide to Accessing Local Markets

By Craig Elevitch, Nicole Milne, and Jim Cain

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PREFACE

Aloha mai,

For over 20 years my family and I have been blessed to live and farm taro in Waipi'o Valley. We also operate a poi shop, King Laulau Brand Poi, where we process the taro from our 7 acre farm as well as taro we buy from other farmers, providing poi for the Hawai'i Island community. When I first went to Waipi'o almost 25 years ago, I wasn't a farmer. In fact, I had never before even stepped foot in a taro lo'i. In an effort to connect to the roots of our newly adopted home, we pursued an opportunity to open up some abandoned lo'i, followed in the footsteps of our Waipi'o kupuna, and became taro farmers.

We received a tremendous amount of encouragement and support as we opened up our lo'i. Neighbors led by example and taught us the skills necessary to succeed in our newly chosen life. Uncle Suei Kawashima, Uncle Olu and Auntie Linda Eskaran, Jason and Alberta Mock Chew, Kia Fronda, the Mendes boys, Lloyd and Moana Kaneshiro, Uncle Ted Kaaekuahiwi, Uncle Roy and Auntie Gladys Toko—the list is long of those who so willingly and generously shared with us. Of course, I am so proud of my wife Gretchen and our kids Jesilyn, Lia, and Kaua, who have worked so hard to grow taro.

Similarly, when we decided to expand our farm and develop a commercial poi shop to add value to the crops we grow, many supported our efforts. We were able to access the Honoka'a 'Ohana Kitchen, a community incubator kitchen where we had the facilities and equipment to start our business, as well as training in the entrepreneurial and business skills necessary to succeed. To learn the art of making poi in the traditional Waipi'o style, we went to the source, to the experts, to learn. It was Poi Making 101 with the Mock Chew 'ohana, commercial poi processors in Waipi'o for five generations, and the current purveyors of Moku Wai Piko Poi.

I'll never forget the first time I learned how to properly kūpele, or mix, the poi. Uncle Sam Mock Chew, in his late 70's, was my teacher. Anyone who has worked with large amounts of poi knows that it is a tricky endeavor to work with the gooey, sticky mass of carbohydrates. As I went to work with the 60 pound bucket of poi in front of me, I was soon up to my elbows, poi sticking everywhere. I glanced over at Uncle Sam who was calmly working next to me, and noticed that not a speck of poi was out of place as he effortlessly worked. His measured movements showed true mastery of the craft, making it look easy. As I looked over at him, he glanced up at me—there was laughter in his eyes and he chuckled softly. Now every week when we make poi, many years later, I think of Uncle Sam and all the many others including Papa Joe Batalona, Uncle Kimo Nakanelua, and Uncle Jackie



Kaholoa'a, who through their aloha supported my family as we strove to learn. Because the poi we make represents the accumulated knowledge and abundance that has emanated from Waipi'o for many generations, we treat what we are doing as an important kuleana.

As I learned through this experience, when it comes to producing healthy food, it all boils down to relationships. These relationships must be positive for the food to nourish. Any chef will tell you that the magic ingredient in making really 'ono food is love. The beautiful Hawaiian proverb, "Ono kahi 'ao lū'au, me ke aloha pū," reminds us that even a little taro greens are delicious when prepared with affection. From the caring, dedicated hands that tend the land and grow the crops, to the meticulous attention to detail preparing and presenting the dish, it is all about the love that goes into providing the food that makes it truly delicious and nourishing. That is why we choose to continue to farm, process poi and provide food for our community, even though it is very hard work. It is the most honorable way we know to spend our time. While our efforts support us financially, the real benefits we receive are the close loving relationships with everyone who is a part of the process of providing poi on a weekly basis—it is a labor of love that requires many hands. We have established long term, mutually appreciative relationships with our many customers, who over the years have become 'ohana. Being exposed to and relying on the elements and living so close to the land has been a humbling and spiritual experience. The concept of mālama 'āina—take care of the land and it will take care of you—is a value that has been passed down from our Waipi'o kūpuna, and gives us a solid foundation for how we conduct ourselves. Growing taro and providing poi for our community has bonded us to Waipi'o and taught us lessons that money could never buy.

As a farmer, I truly respect those who choose to produce food for their community. I appreciate the hard work and dedication that it takes to start a farm, and know how difficult it is to continue to

produce year after year. I understand the value of working together as a family, as most small-scale farming ventures are family-based. I respect those families who continue traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation, and I am inspired when I see the younger generation participate and choose to continue. It is vital that our youth carry on. I am encouraged when I hear of efforts to promote new crops and the use of both old and new methods that are based in sustainable and responsible technologies and practices.



Cain 'Ohana at their Waipi'o Valley taro farm.

To accomplish the goal of more locally produced food, we must support the farmers. The Center For Agricultural Success (CAS) in Honoka'a is a collaborative effort of many stakeholders whose stated mission is to train, educate and support small-scale farmers, with the goal of producing skilled farmers to place on our fertile Hāmākua lands and making them productive. The *Hawai'i Island Farmers' Guide to Accessing Local Markets*, a project of the CAS, introduces producers to the markets for agricultural food products on Hawai'i Island, and educates farmers on the protocols and strategies for accessing those markets. The premise for this effort is simple. There are currently over 200,000 people on Hawai'i Island on any given day, which amounts to over 600,000 meals plus snacks on a daily basis. And these numbers are growing. That is many meals to serve and is huge potential market that is currently dominated by produce that is

shipped from off-island. The goal is to replace imported food with locally produced food. This will help us achieve the larger goals of improving our food security, diversifying our local economy, and strengthening our rural community.

This educational effort is also all about relationships. This guide is meant to start conversations and initiate what will hopefully become long term, mutually beneficial relationships between producers and buyers of agricultural products. And like any healthy relationship, there must be understanding and communication from both parties. The producer must understand the requirements and constraints of the consumer, which can vary with different markets. And similarly, the consumer must understand and support the farmers who work so hard to make a living. It is our hope that this guide encourages increased understanding and communication. Everyone agrees it would be a very positive development on many levels and for many reasons, to increase the amount of locally produced and consumed food. It is heartening to hear this repeated from all sectors. From chefs to retail produce buyers to wholesale distributors to the Mom down the street, it is encouraging to hear many say that they would buy local produce, if available. It is essential that we continue to encourage and support, and provide opportunities to those who are willing to work hard to provide food for our community, just like my family was encouraged and supported 20 years ago.

Jim Cain
Waipi'o Valley, June 2012

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HAWAI'I ISLAND PRODUCE MARKETS



TYPES OF MARKETS

For the purpose of this guide, the term market refers to a group of buyers with common interests and requirements. The types of markets covered in this guide include produce distributors, grocery stores, restaurants, institutions, processors, and consumers. Each of these types of market has its own unique characteristics in terms of how goods are delivered, packaged, and priced and each market has special requirements such as quantities, quality, timing, and varieties. This guide focuses on approaches for selling your products to customers in these different types of markets. Even more important, this guide suggests strategies for establishing and sustaining sales of agricultural products to various markets over many years.



Grocery stores



Processors



Consumers



Distributors



Restaurants



Institutions

Farmers can sell to a wide range of markets that fall into general categories, as shown here. Finding customers in the right markets is a key to optimizing sales and profits.

BENEFITS OF UNDERSTANDING MARKETS

A well researched marketing plan is essential for a healthy family farm business. New and inexperienced growers often overlook market planning, but with appropriate, well considered planning, sales and income generation can be optimized.



Well thought out marketing plans are essential for the success of a small farm. Developing markets is as important as developing crop production.

It is vital to develop in-depth market knowledge of your crops as you develop your farm plan and establish your crop rotations. Have a good idea who you will be selling your produce to and for how much before you plant your crops. In other words, grow what you know you can sell. As a commercial farmer, you do not get paid until you sell your produce. All of your hard work, time, and expense of producing a crop will go to waste without customers who are willing to pay what you need to earn a profit.

Keep in mind that markets, even well established ones, are always shifting and as a farmer you must be prepared to adapt to changes. Changes include a sudden rise or fall in price due to changes in supply or demand, variations in your crop's productivity or quality, etc. Successful farmers, with an eye towards economic viability and the overall health of their farm, must be prepared for unexpected changes. This is accomplished by on-going research, experimentation, and by maintaining effective communication with your current buyers and potential markets. A farm's economic viability is also improved by fostering multiple market outlets for products.

Good record keeping practices are a critical tool for evaluating the profitability of the crops you produce and they also help farmers identify ways to improve and become more efficient. It is important to remember that commercial farming is

a business, and like all business ventures, farming can be very competitive and is fraught with many risks, many of which are beyond your control. It is wise to consider a well understood axiom in the business world: if your business is not continually evolving, improving, and expanding, then the business is actually in decline. A common practice of all successful farmers, even those with many years of experience, is to constantly learn, experiment, and understand their crops and potential markets.

PRODUCE DISTRIBUTORS

Large-scale distributors

These companies purchase large quantities of produce from local farmers as well as import produce from outside Hawai'i for resale. Distributors typically have climate-controlled warehouses, extensive supply and order tracking, and refrigerated transportation capacity. Because they are able to consolidate produce purchased from farmers located in Hawai'i and around the world, large-scale distributors can provide their customers with a consistent supply of most crops year-round. Their customers include grocery stores, restaurants, institutions, and processors. Large mainstream produce distributors are the primary conduits of imported produce into Hawai'i, however, many of their customers, especially restaurants and health food stores, increasingly request locally grown produce. Distributors typically pay farmers lower prices than other markets, because they resell to



Selling to distributors is an efficient way to move large quantities of produce.

customers such as grocery stores and restaurants at wholesale prices. However, distributors can be an efficient way for farmers to move large amounts of produce. There are currently about ten large produce distributors located on Hawai'i Island.

Small-scale produce distributors

A number of small produce distributors, including farmers who distribute for themselves and other growers, are now focusing on purchasing local crops. Such distributors can take advantage of higher-end markets for local produce such as certain restaurants and health food stores. Small-scale distributors operating on Hawai'i Island include Adaptations and Hilo Coast Farms; however, the total number of small-scale distributors is unknown.

GROCERY STORES

This category includes supermarkets, health food stores, big-box stores (e.g., Costco, K-Mart, etc.) and small family stores. While the bulk of their purchases consist of produce imported directly from the mainland through distributors, many grocery stores purchase locally grown produce through distributors or directly from local farmers. Each grocery store has their own produce needs and requirements in terms of supply, crop varieties, delivery schedule, packaging, and pricing. Grocery stores typically pay farmers 20–30% more than distributors pay, and grocery stores can provide growers the opportunity to sell unusual crops or unique vegetable and fruit varieties. Some highlight their local produce suppliers through signs and brochures, which is good promotion for your farm. Produce buyers at most grocery stores prefer to purchase unblemished produce because their customers expect a perfect product. However, many grocery store shoppers are realizing that food grown locally, using organic or natural farming methods, tastes as good as—if not better than—imported or conventionally grown foods. There are currently about twenty large supermarkets on the island and dozens of small markets.

RESTAURANTS

Restaurants purchase locally grown and imported produce both from distributors and directly from farmers. High-end restaurants are currently the main supporters of locally grown food, however, an increasing number of restaurants are important marketing outlets for local food. Restaurants prefer local produce because it is fresher and more flavorful than imported produce, which has been transported through distribution channels for several days or longer. Customers also recognize that their patronage supports local farmers, which benefits local agriculture and the local economy. Restaurants who have identified themselves as selling locally grown food are less price sensitive than others, but they also demand high quality produce on a consistent basis. Restaurants may be willing to purchase off-grade produce for use in prepared dishes, as misshapen produce can be cut up or minor blemishes removed from the edible portions of the product. Restaurants that specialize in locally grown ingredients often highlight their suppliers on their menus, which is valuable free advertising for the grower. There are approximately 250 restaurants on Hawai'i Island, about 10% of which emphasize locally grown ingredients.

PROCESSORS

In today's fast paced world many consumers place a high value on convenience. Imagine walking through a grocery store: the majority of foods found in the store, with the exception of those found in the perimeter areas (such as fruits and vegetables, meats, and seafood), are processed by U.S. mainland or internationally-based food processors. Hawai'i Island is home to a growing food processing industry, including producers of poi, macadamia nuts, coffee, tea, chocolate, fruit juice, and tropical jams. Food processors require fresh, high quality produce for use in their products and usually need large quantities of individual items. Value-added processors and food manufacturers are excellent market opportunities for off-grade and surplus products. Growers must work closely



Restaurants are a growing outlet for locally grown produce. Many restaurants highlight their local suppliers in the menu, which is valuable advertising for your operation.

with processors to meet the varying requirements of the final product. Growers should also consider processing their own crops as a means to expand their markets and increase profits. Kona and Ka'u coffees, Hawai'i macadamia nuts, and Waipi'o poi are excellent examples of value-added, farmer-processed products.

INSTITUTIONS

Large institutions such as hospitals, schools, and prisons purchase through large distributors. Under the current supply system, there are few opportunities for small farmers to supply produce directly to institutions. Exceptions include public charter schools, private schools, and elderly care facilities, which have the leeway to purchase directly



Processors generally purchase large quantities at a low price, such as those who process coffee. Those that can pay higher prices build their business on high-quality end products.



This diagram shows how the markets are connected. Farmers can supply all markets.

from growers. Institutions are particularly price sensitive, meaning that local farmers will have to compete on price, even if their quality and service surpass imported produce. However, institutions do pay higher prices than most distributors or processors.

CONSUMERS

This market encompasses farmers markets, on-farm sales, and community supported agriculture (CSA). It is estimated that of every dollar that the food consumer spends, about 20 cents goes to the farmer, which must cover production costs and profit. The remaining 80 cents goes toward distribution, packaging, processing, and retail expenses and profits to those who provide these services. One approach used by small-scale producers to increase their bottom line is to provide a combination of these “value-added” services to their customer. While direct sales to consumers provides farmers with near-retail prices, farmers take on the responsibility of providing customer service. There

are additional costs of sales, including labor, facilities, packaging, signs, customer care, processing, transportation and vendor fees, where applicable. Additionally, adding these services to your marketing plan adds increased paperwork, accounting, and business oversight to your operation. Some types of facilities, such as on-farm retail shops and processing facilities, may require special county building permits and state health inspection. Marketing can be done over the Internet, using e-mail, social media, existing customers, or through established food communities, such as Farmigo (www.farmigo.com). There was an average of approximately 210,000 people—potential consumers of locally grown food—on Hawai'i Island in 2010 (U.S. census count of island residents and Hawai'i DBEDT visitor data). This is a substantial customer base with the potential to purchase directly from farmers.

Farmers markets

Farmers markets have greatly increased in number over the past few years, bringing the current total number to approximately 30 on Hawai'i Island (HHFN 2012). Most farmers markets sell local produce and value-added products (such as jams, baked goods, chocolate, coffee, etc.). Farmers markets allow growers to meet customers and get direct product feedback, and prices charged at farmers markets are usually more than what the farmer can get selling in bulk to other markets. Customer



Farmers markets are excellent venues for exposing people to your products and learning from customers about their preferences.

Table 1: Highlights of market advantages and disadvantages

Market	Number	Advantages	Disadvantages
Distributors	10 large	Large volume	Low price
Grocery stores	20 large	Medium volume & price, farm promotion	Require perfect produce, medium distribution cost
Restaurants	250+	Medium volume & price, farm promotion	Medium price, high distribution cost
Institutions	60–100	Large volume	Schools, hospitals, and prisons currently difficult to access
Processors	100's	Large volume	Low price
Consumers	210,000	Close to retail price	Requires extra labor, expense to reach consumers directly

feedback can help the farmers improve their product offerings to better meet market demands. These markets provide growers with opportunities to expand their sales as chefs, caterers, and wholesale purchasers often attend farmers markets looking for new and exciting products.

On-Farm

Direct sales to consumers can take place in on-farm small shops and roadside stands. On-farm sales require setting up infrastructure appropriate to your product line and the scale of the operation. A retail shop, often connected to farm tours, may be simple or elaborate, depending on tour volume, which may fluctuate seasonally. Retail shops and roadside stands may require county or state permits to build and operate. Farm tours (or agritourism) are a good way to bring potential customers onto a farm, although tours require special facilities and permitting, and may require additional staffing and coordination with the farm's production schedule.



On-farm sales can be an excellent way to reach the consumer market, but they require the expense of a sales facility and labor.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

This farmer-to-consumer model has become popular throughout the United States. CSA's connect farmers to their customers through subscription food purchases, or "shares." Customers subscribe to a weekly or biweekly produce box, which may also contain herbs, meat and dairy products, eggs, or other farm-made products. The contents of the box may vary somewhat each week, depending on what is in season, but the overall quantity of food provided is roughly constant. Depending on the CSA, some producers make home deliveries while others require farm pick-up or have established pick-up locations around the community. CSA's can provide many benefits to both the farmer and the consumer. The CSA model allows farmers and customers to develop meaningful relationships, providing customers with the opportunity to learn about who is growing their food and how it is grown, while giving farmers feedback about their crops. A big advantage of CSA's is the development of a reliable customer base that is willing to pay in



CSA's generate regular direct-to-consumer sales through subscriptions or "shares." These weekly shares are packed in coolers.

advance and the ability to plan production in advance.

Community Supported Agriculture projects can be designed in several different ways, to best meet the needs of the producer and their customer network. Producers thinking about establishing a CSA should research existing CSA's in their community and the types of products they offer. Because a variety of products is especially important to CSA subscribers, teaming with other growers to ensure variety may be a good strategy. Develop a production schedule, and delivery and payment system that best fits the capabilities of your farm and the needs of your subscribers. Consider the various marketing and advertising options and decide which customer benefits (newsletters, recipes, bonus offers, etc.) will be offered to subscribers. The disadvantages of CSA's include added labor to process/sort, typically smaller volumes, the need to educate consumers on how to prepare unfamiliar products or varieties, etc. More information on establishing a CSA can be found online through the USDA, farm organization websites, and universities.

MARKET DIVERSIFICATION

A recommended strategy for sustaining sales throughout the years is to not only diversify the *crops* you grow, but to diversify the *markets* for these crops. Every market has advantages and disadvantages for the farmer, depending on the crop, season, quantity in demand, labor availability and reliability, customer requirements, legal regulations, price, and your personality and business skills. Opportunities to sell in different markets will come and go, your capacity to supply certain crops will change, and prices vary over time—therefore, it makes sense to sell in several different types of markets so that profitable sales opportunities are consistently available to you.

FINDING A MARKET FOR YOUR CROPS

After you have identified which crops grow well on your land, speak with various outlets to discuss the demand for those crops, including how many



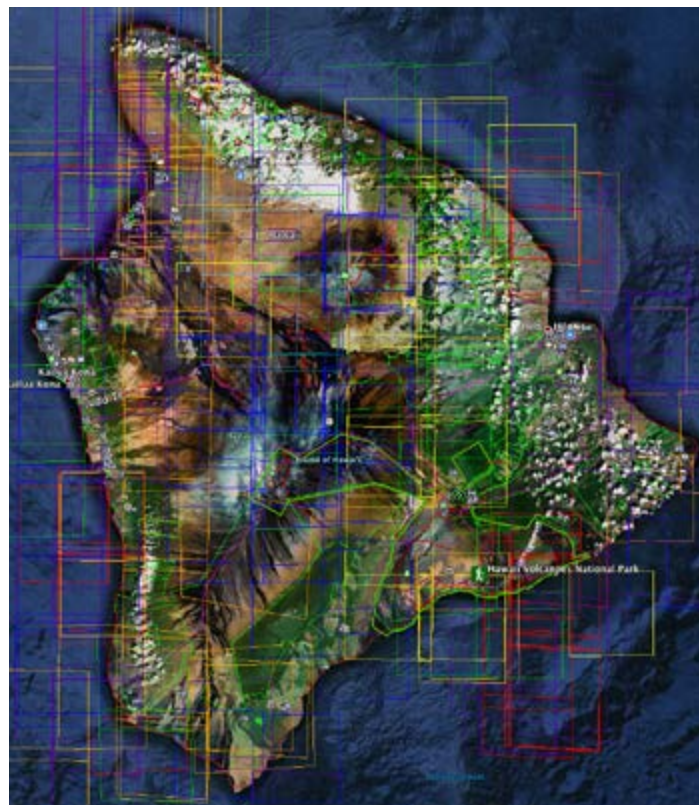
Selling to a diverse range of markets can help stabilize income streams year-round. Fortunately, farmers have access to a wide range of markets!

pounds they would like to purchase per week, if there is a minimum quantity required per delivery, and a pricing system. It will take as much effort to research and secure markets for your crops as it will take to plant your fields, so start looking for markets well before planting. Decide if you would prefer having a few large accounts, such as distributors or major grocery stores, or several smaller accounts including restaurants and mom-and-pop stores. Would you rather establish a locally run CSA or apply for a booth at your local farmers market? Is value-added processing a strategy that makes sense for your operation? The type of market you select should be determined by the quantity you are capable of producing per week, the price needed to adequately cover production expenses, as well as the time required to market and deliver your products.

Having a keen understanding of the cost of production of each crop, will enable you to establish a profitable pricing structure. This of course is best accomplished with experience, but if you are a beginning farmer or are trying new crops, the cost of production spreadsheets available from UH-CTAHR are a good place to start. Once you can

establish your price point, then you can determine which markets are able to pay what you need.

Markets can be identified in several ways. Think about where you purchase your groceries or which restaurants you and your family enjoy. Look through the phone book or use the Internet to browse for local restaurants and grocery stores. Pick up the phone and set up a time to meet with a company's produce buyer or chef. Bring along a sample of your product for potential buyers to taste, and provide them a price sheet and your business card. Visit the major produce distributors on the island and find out what items they would like to purchase from local farmers. Visit local farmers markets to find out what is currently being produced locally and identify the gaps. The next time you are at the grocery store, ask the produce buyer if they would consider substituting a locally grown product for one that is currently imported from outside Hawai'i. Do not be afraid to be a spokesperson for your product. Be proud of what you have grown!



Analyzing potential markets requires making many inquiries to assess current demand and carefully weighing the pros and cons of various crops and markets. Map: Google Earth

ESTIMATING CONSUMPTION OF MAJOR CROPS

One way to determine local demand for common produce items is to look at data collected by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA NASS). The data for Hawai'i State are available online. Data from 2008 are the latest currently available at the time of this writing. For many crops, both imported and Hawai'i-grown quantities are reported, which gives an estimate of the total quantity consumed and what percentage of it is grown in Hawai'i. In Tables 2 and 3 below, estimates of Hawai'i Island consumption are given by multiplying the USDA NASS data by the percentage of the state population resident on Hawai'i Island. Another column in Tables 2 and 3 gives an estimate of the average quantity consumed by each person on Hawai'i Island. The final column shows estimates of the average consumption of selected crops based on USDA ERS data.

The total quantity estimates for crops consumed on Hawai'i Island gives you as a producer a sense of how large the market is when considering growing a new crop or expanding an existing one. For example, total banana imports and production for Hawai'i Island in 2008 is estimated at 5,073,000, of which 47% was produced in Hawai'i. This indicates that there is a large market for bananas that is not being filled by local sources. Another example is citrus (lemons, limes, tangerines and grapefruit), where the percentage of local production is in single percentage points, indicating there may be promising opportunities to supply these crops locally.

These statistics are indicators of what crops are needed in Hawai'i and the scale of their local market. As supply and market demand can change rapidly over time, the data presented below should be substantiated through conversations with potential customers, other farmers, and agricultural professionals.

Table 2: Estimated fruit consumption on Hawai'i Island

2008 (unless noted)	Hawai'i County consumption (total lbs)*	Percentage produced in Hawai'i*	Hawai'i County consumption (lbs/person) ^o	United States (USDA ERS) (lbs/person)*
Apples	2,116,000	n/a	10.5	15.9
Avocados	407,000	34%	2.0	n/a
Bananas	5,073,000	47%	25.2	25
Cantaloupe melons	856,000	n/a	4.3	8.9
Grapefruit	185,000	3%	0.9	3.2
Grapes	1,256,000	n/a	6.2	8.5
Honeydew melons	439,000	n/a	2.2	n/a
Lemons	488,000	2%	2.4	n/a
Limes	279,000	4%	1.4	n/a
Nectarines	345,000	n/a	1.7	n/a
Oranges	1,699,000	n/a	8.5	9.9
Papayas	2,328,000	n/a	11.6	n/a
Pears	655,000	n/a	3.3	3.1
Pineapples	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Tangerines	288,000	5%	1.4	n/a
Watermelons	2,316,000	78%	11.5	15.6
All other fruits (2007)	2,771,000	38%	13.8	n/a
Unspecified fruits (2007)	1,436,000	n/a	7.1	n/a
Total	22,438,000	32%	111.5	126.6

* USDA NASS ^o USDA NASS and U.S. Census *USDA ERS

Table 3: Estimated vegetable consumption on Hawai'i Island

2008 (except where noted)	Hawai'i County consumption (total lbs)*	Percentage produced in Hawai'i*	Hawai'i County consumption (lbs/person) ^o	United States (USDA ERS) (lbs/person)*
Beans, snap	169,000	56%	0.8	2.0
Bitter melon	29,000	65%	0.2	n/a
Broccoli	762,000	6%	3.8	6.0
Burdock (imports only)	9,000	n/a	0.1	n/a
Cabbage, Chinese	879,000	87%	4.4	n/a
Cabbage, head	1,607,000	80%	8.0	8.1
Cabbage, mustard	216,000	82%	1.1	n/a
Carrots (imports only)	1,526,000	n/a	7.6	8.1
Cauliflower (imports only)	184,000	n/a	0.9	1.6
Celery	752,000	7%	3.7	6.2
Corn, sweet	385,000	78%	1.9	9.1
Cucumbers	847,000	78%	4.2	6.4
Daikon (imports only)	822	n/a	0.0	n/a
Dasheen (imports only)	98,000	n/a	0.5	n/a
Eggplant	223,000	55%	1.1	n/a
Ginger root	373,000	66%	1.9	n/a
Lettuce	1,245,000	11%	6.2	16.8
Lotus root (imports only)	10,000	n/a	0.1	n/a
Onions, dry	2,747,000	7%	13.7	20.9
Onions, green	299,000	73%	1.5	n/a
Parsley, American	50,000	27%	0.3	n/a
Peas, Chinese (imports only)	28,000	n/a	0.1	n/a
Peppers, green (2007)	902,000	27%	4.5	9.6
Potatoes (imports only)	3,054,000	n/a	15.2	37.8
Potatoes, sweet	1,331,000	83%	6.6	5.0
Pumpkins	136,000	9%	0.7	n/a
Radish (imports only)	-	n/a	0.0	n/a
Romaine	1,415,000	10%	7.0	n/a
Squash, Italian	440,000	46%	2.2	n/a
Squash, oriental	135,000	35%	0.7	n/a
Taro	45,000	30%	0.2	n/a
Tomatoes (2007)	2,528,000	77%	12.6	18.5
Watercress	103,000	99%	0.5	n/a
All other vegetables (2006)	7,270,000	40%	36.2	n/a
Unspecified vegetables	1,832,000	n/a	9.1	n/a
Total	31,203,000	34%	155.1	n/a

* USDA NASS ^o USDA NASS and U.S. Census *USDA ERS

EXAMPLE DATA

Several of the people interviewed for this guide generously supplied us with their estimated current weekly quantities of produce purchased. These data can help gauge the size of the market for different crops. Please be aware that these data are just a snapshot in time and that they are to be used for guidance in conducting your own research regarding specific crops and markets.

DISTRIBUTOR

Reece Asakura

General Manager, Armstrong Produce

73-5581B Olowalu Street

Kailua-Kona, HI 96740

Tel: 808-331-2601

Email: reece@armstrongproduce.com

Amounts given are totals for locally grown and imported quantities.

Fruits	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Apples	500	
Avocados	800	
Bananas, dessert		
Bananas, cooking		
Breadfruit	10	
Cantaloupe melon	3000	
Dragon fruit	100	
Grapefruit	180	
Grapes	600	
Guava		
Honeydew melon	1950	
Lemons	720	
Lilikoi	30	
Limes	800	
Longan	100	
Lychee	100	
Mango	400	
Nectarines		
Oranges	800	
Papaya	1000	
Pears		
Persimmon		
Pineapple	7200	
Rambutan	100	
Tangerines	100	
Watermelon	1200	

Vegetables	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Artichoke		
Asparagus	2000	
Beans, snap		
Bitter melon		
Broccoli	500	
Burdock	25	
Cabbage, Chinese	200	
Cabbage, head	1000	
Cabbage, mustard	60	
Carrots	900	
Cassava		
Cauliflower	300	
Celery	720	
Corn, sweet		
Cucumbers	600	
Daikon	50	
Dasheen		
Eggplant	100	
Fiddlehead fern	30	
Ginger root	100	
Herbs, basil	40	
Herbs, others	20 ea	Rosemary, thyme
Lettuce	600	
Lotus root		
Onions, dry	1800	
Onions, green	200	
Parsley, American	20	
Peas, Chinese	20	
Peppers (colored - red/yellow/etc.)	170	
Peppers, green	280	
Potatoes	1750	
Potatoes, sweet	1200	
Pumpkins	200	
Radish	60	
Romaine	800	
Shallots	60	
Squash, Italian	400	
Squash, oriental		
Taro	100	
Tomatoes	1800	
Watercress	100	

DISTRIBUTOR

Mike Quanan

Produce Manager, Suisan Company, Ltd.

73-4836 Kanalani Street

Kailua-Kona, HI 96740

Tel: 808-329-3746

Email: MikeQ@suisan.com

Amounts given are totals for locally grown and imported quantities.

Fruits	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Apples	500	
Avocados	200	
Bananas, dessert	1700	
Bananas, cooking	40	
Breadfruit	80	
Cantaloupe melon	1000	
Dragon fruit	100	
Grapefruit	300	
Grapes	500	
Guava	50	
Honeydew melon	1000	
Lemons	1500	
Lilikoi	20	
Limes	1000	
Longan	20	
Lychee	20	
Mango	400	
Nectarines	20	
Oranges	1500	
Papaya	3000	
Pears	40	
Persimmon	10	
Pineapple	2500	
Rambutan	20	
Tangerines	20	
Watermelon	4000	

Vegetables	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Artichoke	30	
Asparagus	300	
Beans, snap	50	
Bitter melon		
Broccoli	700	
Burdock		
Cabbage, Chinese	600	
Cabbage, head	1000	
Cabbage, mustard	30	
Carrots	2000	
Cassava		
Cauliflower	60	
Celery	1000	
Corn, sweet	400	
Cucumbers	400	
Daikon	100	
Dasheen		
Eggplant	100	
Fiddlehead fern	60	
Ginger root	100	
Herbs, basil	40	
Herbs, others	80	Mint 40, Thyme 20, Chives 10, Rosemary 10
Lettuce	2000	
Lotus root	10	
Onions, dry	2000	
Onions, green	200	
Parsley, American	60	
Peas, Chinese	60	
Peppers (colored - red/yellow/etc.)	900	
Peppers, green	600	
Potatoes	2000	
Potatoes, sweet	750	
Pumpkins	200	
Radish	10	
Romaine	700	
Shallots	40	
Squash, Italian	300	
Squash, oriental		
Taro	40	
Tomatoes	3000	
Watercress	30	

GROCERY STORE

Jen Gow

Produce Manager

Island Naturals Market and Deli, Kainaliu

79-7460 Mamalahoa Hwy

Kealahou, HI 96750

Tel: 808-930-7550

Email: jennifer@islandnaturals.com

Amounts are for imported and local, as marked

L=Local; IM=Imported

This store purchases primarily certified organic produce.

Fruits	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Apples	70	IM
Avocados	60	L
Bananas, dessert	50	L
Bananas, cooking		
Breadfruit	10	L
Cantaloupe melon	30	IM
Dragon fruit	25	L-IM
Grapefruit	30	L-IM
Grapes	20	L-IM
Guava	10	L
Honeydew melon	20	IM
Lemons	20	L-IM
Lilikoi	10	L
Limes	20	L-IM
Longan		
Lychee	20	L
Mango	30-100	L
Nectarines	20	IM
Oranges	20	L
Papaya	20	L
Pears	20	IM
Persimmon	15	IM
Pineapple	40	L
Rambutan	20	L
Tangerines	20	L
Watermelon	40	IM

Vegetables	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Artichoke	15	IM
Asparagus	10	IM
Beans, snap	15	L
Bitter melon		
Broccoli	30	L
Burdock	2	L
Cabbage, Chinese	8	L
Cabbage, head	15	L
Cabbage, mustard	5	L
Carrots	50	L-IM
Cassava		
Cauliflower	20	L
Celery	40	L-IM
Corn, sweet	2 dz	L-IM
Cucumbers	20	L
Daikon	2	L
Dasheen		
Eggplant	5	L
Fiddlehead fern		
Ginger root	20	L-IM
Herbs, basil	2	L
Herbs, others	2	L
Lettuce	30	L
Lotus root		
Onions, dry	40	IM
Onions, green	5	L-IM
Parsley, American	2	L
Peas, Chinese	2	L
Peppers (colored – red/yellow/etc.)	5	L-IM
Peppers, green		
Potatoes	50	L-IM
Potatoes, sweet	30	L-IM
Pumpkins	20	L
Radish	2	L
Romaine	5	L
Shallots	2	L
Squash, Italian	15	L-IM
Squash, oriental	5	L
Taro	10	L
Tomatoes	50	L-IM
Watercress		

GROCERY STORE

Jeremy Hale

Island Naturals Market and Deli, Hilo

1221 Kilauea Avenue

Hilo, HI 96720

Tel: 808-333-8623

Email: Jeremy@islandnaturals.com

Amounts are for imported and local, as marked

L=Local; IM=Imported

This store purchases primarily certified organic produce.

Fruits	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Apples	500	IM
Avocados	100	L
Bananas, dessert	15-20	L
Bananas, cooking	5-10	L
Breadfruit	25-45	L
Cantaloupe melon	20-30	IM
Dragon fruit	50-100	L
Grapefruit	50-100	IM
Grapes	20-30	IM
Guava	5-10	L
Honeydew melon	20-30	IM
Lemons	50-100	L-IM
Lilikoi	5-10	L
Limes	20-30	L-IM
Longan	10-20	L
Lychee	80-100	L
Mango	150-200	L
Nectarines	30-50	IM
Oranges	90-100	L
Papaya	100	L
Pears	40-60	IM
Persimmon	10-15	IM
Pineapple	150-180	L
Rambutan	20-30	L
Tangerines	50-60	L-IM
Watermelon	100	IM

Vegetables	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Artichoke	10-20	IM
Asparagus	40-50	IM
Beans, snap	50-100	L
Bitter melon	5-6	L
Broccoli	200-225	L-IM
Burdock	5-10	L-IM
Cabbage, Chinese	20-30	L
Cabbage, head	50-60	L
Cabbage, mustard	20-30	L
Carrots	200-300	IM
Cassava		
Cauliflower	20-25	L-IM
Celery	100-125	L-IM
Corn, sweet	36 dozen	Bought by piece L
Cucumbers	50-75	L-IM
Daikon	10-20	L
Dasheen		
Eggplant	25-20	L-IM
Fiddlehead fern		
Ginger root	70-100	L
Herbs, basil	7-12	L
Herbs, others	3-5	Mint, dill, rosemary are big sellers about 2 lbs each
Lettuce	150-200	L
Lotus root		
Onions, dry	white 25-30 red 40-50 yellow 100-120	IM
Onions, green	4-5	L-IM
Parsley, American		
Peas, Chinese		
Peppers (colored - red/yellow/etc.)	50-70	L-IM
Peppers, green	40-50	L-IM
Potatoes	300	L-IM
Potatoes, sweet	300	IM
Pumpkins	200	L-IM
Radish	20	L
Romaine		
Shallots	10	IM
Squash, Italian	40-60	L-IM
Squash, oriental		
Taro	50-100	L
Tomatoes	80-100	L
Watercress	12-15	L
Others		
plums	20-25	IM
peaches	20-30	IM

SCHOOL

Bruce Kekuewa
 Food Services Manager
 Kamehameha Schools
 Tel: 808-982-0022
 Email: brkekuew@ksbe.edu

Amounts given are totals for locally grown and imported quantities.

Fruits	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Apples	40	
Avocados		
Bananas, dessert		
Bananas, cooking		
Breadfruit		
Cantaloupe melon	80	
Dragon fruit		
Grapefruit		
Grapes	20	
Guava		
Honeydew melon	60	
Lemons	10	
Lilikoi		
Limes		
Longan		
Lychee		
Mango		
Nectarines		
Oranges	80	
Papaya	25	
Pears		
Persimmon		
Pineapple	120	
Rambutan		
Tangerines		
Watermelon		

Vegetables	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Artichoke		
Asparagus		
Beans, snap		
Bitter melon		
Broccoli	10	
Burdock		
Cabbage, Chinese	20	
Cabbage, head	250	
Cabbage, mustard		
Carrots	50	
Cassava		
Cauliflower	8	
Celery	50	
Corn, sweet		
Cucumbers	90	
Daikon		
Dasheen		
Eggplant	10	
Fiddlehead fern		
Ginger root	5	
Herbs, basil	1	
Herbs, others		
Lettuce	180	Iceberg
Lotus root		
Onions, dry	100	
Onions, green	10	
Parsley, American		
Peas, Chinese		
Peppers (colored - red/ yellow/etc.)		
Peppers, green	20	
Potatoes	100	
Potatoes, sweet	100	
Pumpkins		
Radish		
Romaine	300	
Shallots		
Squash, Italian	10	
Squash, oriental		
Taro		
Tomatoes	75	
Watercress		
Others		
Cilantro	12	
Peeled Garlic	20	

RESTAURANT

Edwin Goto

Owner, Village Burger
 64-5307 Puukapu Street
 Kamuela, HI 96743
 Tel: 808-885-7913
 Email: edwingoto@rocketmail.com

Amounts given are totals for locally grown and imported quantities.

Fruits	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Apples		
Avocados	25	
Bananas, dessert		
Bananas, cooking		
Breadfruit		
Cantaloupe melon		
Dragon fruit		
Grapefruit		
Grapes		
Guava		
Honeydew melon		
Lemons		
Lilikoi		
Limes		
Longan		
Lychee		
Mango		
Nectarines		
Oranges		
Papaya		
Pears		
Persimmon		
Pineapple		
Rambutan		
Tangerines		
Watermelon		

Vegetables	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Artichoke		
Asparagus		
Beans, snap		
Bitter melon		
Broccoli		
Burdock		
Cabbage, Chinese		
Cabbage, head	0.5	
Cabbage, mustard		
Carrots	6	
Cassava		
Cauliflower		
Celery		
Corn, sweet		
Cucumbers	3	
Daikon		
Dasheen		
Eggplant		
Fiddlehead fern		
Ginger root		
Herbs, basil	1	
Herbs, others	3	
Lettuce	8	
Lotus root		
Onions, dry	24	
Onions, green	2	
Parsley, American		
Peas, Chinese		
Peppers (colored - red/yellow/etc.)		
Peppers, green		
Potatoes	500	
Potatoes, sweet		
Pumpkins		
Radish		
Romaine		
Shallots		
Squash, Italian		
Squash, oriental		
Taro	25	
Tomatoes	75	
Watercress		

HOTEL RESTAURANT

James Babian

Executive Chef, Four Seasons Resort

Hualālai at Ka'ūpulehu

72-100 Ka'upulehu Drive

Kailua-Kona, HI 96740

Email: jbabian@fourseasons.com

Tel: 808-325-8000

Fruits	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Apples	9–12 cs	Green, red and Fuji
Avocados	20–25 cs	Local whenever possible
Bananas, dessert	7 cs	
Bananas, cooking		Don't buy
Breadfruit	25	We buy 20 # local
Cantaloupe melon	10–14 cs	Sometimes is local from Oahu
Dragon fruit		We buy local whenever possible, 10# day in season
Grapefruit	3–4 cs	Local whenever possible
Grapes	3	
Guava		Local whenever possible
Honeydew melon	10–14 cs	Local whenever possible
Lemons	7–10	We buy small amounts of local for specialty items but mostly imported for general use
Lilikoi	70	Local whenever possible
Limes	3–4	Mostly imported, some local when offered
Longan		Only local most of the year
Lychee		Only local when in season
Mango	20–40	Mostly imported, local in season
Nectarines		Don't use, but would buy if were local
Oranges	7–14	Mainland for juice and local for specialty items
Papaya	20–30	Only local
Pears		Asian from California
Persimmon		Occasionally
Pineapple	40	Local
Rambutan	35	Only buy local when in season
Tangerines		Only buy local when in season
Watermelon	7 cs	Buy local when in season, mainland rest of time
Others		
Star fruit		Mostly local
Poha	40–50	Only local, high demand!

Vegetables	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Artichoke	3–4 cs	Would put on menu
Asparagus	20–30 cs	Local whenever possible
Beans, snap	20–30	Mainland, would buy if local
Bitter melon		
Broccoli	3–5 cs	Using local
Burdock		
Cabbage, Chinese	50	
Cabbage, head	50	Only local
Cabbage, mustard		
Carrots	200–300	Only mainland, except heirloom carrots we buy are local
Cassava		
Cauliflower		Only local, when can
Celery	3–5 cs	Mostly mainland, some local
Corn, sweet	50	Only local
Cucumbers		Only local
Daikon		Only local
Dasheen		
Eggplant		Only local
Fiddlehead fern		Would buy lots (not warabi)
Ginger root	10–20	Only local
Herbs, basil	10	Local whenever possible
Herbs, others		Thyme, spearmint, Thai basil, Shiso
Lettuce		Only local
Lotus root		Would buy if local
Onions, dry		
Onions, green		Only local
Parsley, American		Local when can
Peas, Chinese		Would buy local if can
Peppers (colored – red/yellow/etc.)		We use mostly mainland but would buy solely local if available
Peppers, green		Same
Potatoes		We use mostly Yukon golds and Russet mainland, would buy sole local if could, we are getting some mixed new potatoes locally
Potatoes, sweet	30–40	Only local
Pumpkins	10–30	Kabocha local
Radish	20	Watermelon local
Romaine		Mostly local, large from mainland
Shallots	30	Mainland no local available
Squash, Italian		Limited local
Squash, oriental		Limited local
Taro		Only local
Tomatoes	300–400	Only local
Watercress	5–10	Only local, too large prefer small bundles 3" long

HOTEL RESTAURANT

Charles Charbonneau

Executive Chef, Hilton Waikoloa Village

425 Waikoloa Beach Drive

Waikoloa, HI 96738

Tel: 808-886-1234 x2430

Email: charles.charbonneau@hilton.com

Amounts given are totals for imported quantities only.

Fruits	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Apples	300	
Avocados		Buy local
Bananas, dessert		
Bananas, cooking		
Breadfruit		Do not buy
Cantaloupe melon	500	
Dragon fruit		Buy local
Grapefruit		Do not buy
Grapes	100	
Guava		Do not buy
Honeydew melon	300	
Lemons	200	
Lilikoi		Do not buy
Limes	200	
Longan		Buy local
Lychee		Buy local
Mango	150	
Nectarines		Do not buy
Oranges	300	
Papaya		Buy local
Pears		
Persimmon		Do not buy
Pineapple		Buy local (maui)
Rambutan		Buy local
Tangerines		Do not buy
Watermelon	2000	

Vegetables	Estimated # lb/week	Comments
Artichoke		Do not buy
Asparagus	100	
Beans, snap		Do not buy
Bitter melon		Do not buy
Broccoli	250	
Burdock		Buy local
Cabbage, Chinese		Buy local
Cabbage, head		Buy local
Cabbage, mustard		Buy local
Carrots	500	
Cassava		Do not buy
Cauliflower	250	
Celery	250	
Corn, sweet		Buy local
Cucumbers		Buy local
Daikon		Buy local
Dasheen		Do not buy
Eggplant	50	
Fiddlehead fern		Buy local
Ginger root		Buy local
Herbs, basil	8	
Herbs, others	8	
Lettuce		Buy local
Lotus root		Do not buy
Onions, dry	600	
Onions, green	120	
Parsley, American	20	
Peas, Chinese		
Peppers (colored - red/yellow/etc.)	100 red	
Peppers, green		Buy local
Potatoes	500	
Potatoes, sweet		Buy local
Pumpkins		Buy local
Radish		
Romaine	400	
Shallots	10	
Squash, Italian	250	
Squash, oriental		
Taro		Buy local
Tomatoes	500	
Watercress		Buy local

HOTEL RESTAURANT

Sandy Tuason

Executive Chef, The Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows

68-1400 Mauna Lani Drive

Kohala Coast, HI 96743

Tel: 808-885-1446

Email: stuason@maunalani.com

Amounts given are totals for locally grown and imported quantities.

Fruits	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Apples	40 red 40 green	
Avocados	60	
Bananas, dessert	280	
Bananas, cooking		
Breadfruit	40	
Cantaloupe melon	210	
Dragon fruit	40	
Grapefruit	80	
Grapes	36	
Guava	40	
Honeydew melon	260	
Lemons	160	
Lilikoi	20	
Limes	120	
Longan	40	
Lychee	80	
Mango	60	
Nectarines	20	
Oranges	40	
Papaya	400	
Pears	40	
Persimmon		
Pineapple	800	
Rambutan	40	
Tangerines	25	
Watermelon	350	

Vegetables	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Artichoke	40	
Asparagus	120	
Beans, snap	5	
Bitter melon		
Broccoli	60	
Burdock		
Cabbage, Chinese	150	
Cabbage, head	100	
Cabbage, mustard	20	
Carrots	100	
Cassava		
Cauliflower	20	
Celery	70	
Corn, sweet	40	
Cucumbers	120	English
Daikon	15	
Dasheen		
Eggplant	10	Japanese
Fiddlehead fern	25	
Ginger root	30	
Herbs, basil	5	
Herbs, others	3	Rosemary/thyme/chives
Lettuce	30/70	Green leaf/iceberg
Lotus root		
Onions, dry	200/80/50	Jumbo/sweet/red
Onions, green	50	
Parsley, American	5	Italian parsley
Peas, Chinese		
Peppers (colored - red/yellow/etc.)	60	
Peppers, green	50	
Potatoes	450	
Potatoes, sweet	40	
Pumpkins	100	kabocha
Radish	5	
Romaine	140	
Shallots	15	
Squash, Italian	60	
Squash, oriental		
Taro	10	
Tomatoes	260	
Watercress		

CATERER

Ōlelo pa‘a Faith Ogawa

President, Glow Hawaii

P.O. Box 385669

Waikoloa, HI 96738

Tel: 808-883-0103; Mobile: 808-938-3989

Email: glow@glowhawaii.com

Web: <http://www.glowhawaii.com/>

Amounts given are totals for locally grown and imported quantities.

Fruits	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Apples	2	
Avocados	5	
Bananas, dessert	5	
Bananas, cooking	5	
Breadfruit	5	
Cantaloupe melon	5	
Dragon fruit	2	
Grapefruit	3	
Grapes	3	
Guava	5	
Honeydew melon	3	
Lemons	5-10	
Lilikoi	5	
Limes	5	
Longan	2	
Lychee	3	
Mango	5	
Nectarines	3	
Oranges	5	
Papaya	3	
Pears	3	
Persimmon	3	
Pineapple	5	
Rambutan	2	
Tangerines	3	
Watermelon	8	
Others		
Cherimoya	5	
All exotic fruits	3-5	

Vegetables	Estimated # lbs/week	Comments
Artichoke	2	
Asparagus	2	
Beans, snap	1	
Bitter melon	2	
Broccoli	2	
Burdock	2	
Cabbage, Chinese	2	
Cabbage, head	2	
Cabbage, mustard	2	
Carrots	3	
Cassava	3	
Cauliflower	2	
Celery	4	
Corn, sweet	4	
Cucumbers	3	
Daikon	2	
Dasheen	2	
Eggplant	2	
Fiddlehead fern	2	
Ginger root	2	
Herbs, basil	1	
Herbs, others		
Lettuce	4	
Lotus root	2	
Onions, dry		
Onions, green	1	
Parsley, American	1	
Peas, Chinese	1	
Peppers (colored - red/ yellow/etc.)	3	
Peppers, green	1	
Potatoes	5	
Potatoes, sweet	5	
Pumpkins	7	
Radish	1	
Romaine	3	
Shallots	1	
Squash, Italian	2	
Squash, oriental	5	
Taro	5-10	
Tomatoes	5	
Watercress	2	

Special requests

olives—to eat and to make olive oil
 olena (turmeric)
 spices
 lentils and beans
 soy beans
 varieties of limu (seaweed)
 varieties of gourmet potatoes
 nuts: almonds, walnuts, pine nuts
 bele (Pacific spinach)
 any high energy foods
 wine grapes
 cinnamon leaves and powder
 chili peppers
 ‘ohelo berries

CROPS IN HIGH DEMAND FROM LOCAL BUYERS

We asked each interviewee about crops that they would most like to buy from locally grown sources that are currently unavailable or are inconsistently available. The most common responses are listed below. This list can change rapidly as farmers fill demand for highly sought crops—always do your own homework before planting a new crop.

Apple
Artichoke
Asparagus
Bell pepper
Berries (blueberry, raspberry, etc.)
Carrot
Celery
Stone fruits (plum, peach, nectarine, etc.)
Garlic
Melons (honeydew, canteloupe, etc.)
Onion (dry)
Potato (staple and gourmet types)
Shallot
Squash (soft types)

Crops that are currently available only seasonally that are in high demand for year-round supply include:

Avocado
Banana
Beet
Broccoli
Mango
Fig

List from farmer symposium

At an October 2011 farmer symposium honoring the farmers who supply the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai at Ka‘upulehu, Chef James Babian distributed the following wish list for locally grown crops. Although the list is specific for Chef Babian’s needs, it mirrors requests for locally grown produce made by many.

American cress
Artichokes
Asparagus
Bamboo shoots
Berries (poha, blueberries [Maui has], others)
Broccoli
Brussels sprouts
Carrot (stock)
Celery (stock)
Fiddlehead fern (not warabi)
Fruits
 Tropical fruits, all kinds
 Individual fruits with leaves attached (amenities)
 Temperate fruits: stone fruits
Garlic
Legumes (peas, soy beans [fresh], others)
Mushrooms (all kinds, more variety)
Onion (stock)
Pattypan squash
Peas (snow peas, sugar snap, etc.)
Potato (Russet, Yukon)
Radish, black
Ramps
Rhubarb
Shallot
Spinach
Water chestnut
Zucchini



RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR FINDING AND RETAINING MARKETS



KEY CONCEPTS

Through many years of experience, successful produce buyers and farmers develop strategies for finding and retaining produce sources and markets. The goal is to establish long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between producer and buyer. Like any solid relationship, this is based on a foundation of reliability, understanding, and open communication. More than just a business partnership, these relationships should develop into friendships that can withstand the trials and tribulations that are sure to arise periodically. The following practices are recommended by the experts interviewed for this guide.

PRIOR TO PLANTING

Identify customers' needs before planting

Contact various produce buyers before you plant to identify their needs. It only makes sense to grow a crop that will be in demand once you harvest. Ideally, your crop should be sold before you plant it. As you plan your crop rotations, be sure to get a good idea of quantities that are needed in different seasons. You might consider developing a “bread and butter” crop that grows well and is in high demand on a consistent basis and then look for related crops that are in demand. For example, there is consistently high demand for lemons and limes, and related markets include other fruits.

Find out which crops thrive in your area

High quality, consistent production is essential for most buyers. To ensure the highest likelihood of quality and consistency, identify crops that are well suited to your environment. If your site is marginal for a certain crop, then most likely other farmers will be able to deliver higher quality in larger quantities and will be favored by buyers. On the other hand, if your site is ideal for a certain crop, you will be well positioned to compete in the marketplace. For example, the warm days and cool nights of Waimea contrast greatly with the hot days and

warm nights of the Kona coast, and different crops will thrive in each of these climates during different seasons. Good places to get crop recommendations for your area include agricultural extension and other farmers and gardeners in your area.

Determine the scale at which you would like to farm

Think about how much money you would like to make from your farm. Do you want to farm part-time or full-time? If you are inexperienced with a certain crop, or are just establishing your farm, it is best to start at a small scale and build your experience in consistent, high quality production before expanding. Ensuring consistent supply of a certain volume impacts the planting schedule and crop rotations, and thus labor and acreage required. It is also important to keep in mind that selling a certain minimum volume is part of the economic equation, and economies of scale are a factor in successfully reducing input costs and meeting required demand.

Ask questions of many people during the planning process

When planning for a new crop it is best to talk with farmers, extension agents, buyers, consumers, and others in order to learn as much from their experience as possible. It is also a good practice to



Grow crops that are ideally suited to your growing conditions to optimize quality and productivity and to give yourself the best chance of market competitiveness. Growing several varieties will expand seasonal availability and helps moderate risks from environmental factors that affect certain varieties but not others.



Consulting with many growers and customers will give you the benefit of their experience, and will save you from making many costly mistakes.

conduct online research and read relevant publications to obtain information that might not be available in Hawai'i. Preparing yourself this way can help avoid costly mistakes that can result from guesswork. Also, it can assist in developing your markets even before you begin planting.

Broaden your crop portfolio to expand market opportunities and reduce overall risk

Growing a crop and bringing it to market always carries some environmental or economic risk. Sometimes buyers' needs shift and when they do you might lose an account. Diversified production increases the likelihood that at least some of your crops will be profitable, as prices fluctuate, competitors appear, and demand changes. On the production side, you might have trouble with some of your crops during a particular season due to pests or weather, while other crops grow well. Identify many crops that grow well on your land. In order to establish a consistent cash flow through out the year, it is a good practice to combine crops that have a short rotation with crops that have a longer or intermittent interval between harvests. By diversifying your crops, you will expand your markets to a wider range of buyers or provide more diversity to a regular account. Also, it is a good practice to grow a few varieties of each crop to learn which perform well in your growing conditions and to expand seasonal availability. Crop diversification is a good growing practice and facilitates

your farm's ecological resilience; diversified farms are healthy farms!

Having multiple marketing strategies will also help your business weather these changes. Keep good records so that you can evaluate how the crop is working for you over time. Also, good record keeping enables you to assess the cost of production and identifies ways to improve. Agsquared.com is an example of an effective online tool for managing production records.

Carefully manage the quantity you plant

When you plant more than you can sell, you expend resources without any return—field space, fertilizer, water, materials, and labor. However, it is better to over-plant a small amount than to fail to supply expected deliveries. If you produce more than you can sell, you run the risk of having to under-value your product in order to sell it, or you might be forced to discard it to retain a healthy market



Careful planning will allow you to fill all orders while minimizing waste. These baby romaine starts, for example, need to be planted in the correct quantities on a weekly basis.

price for yourself and other growers. If you have surplus product, consider searching out new markets, give it away to friends and family, or deliver it to your local food bank, where fresh fruits and vegetables are always welcome. One of the many benefits of farming is that as a producer you are creating abundance for yourself, your 'ohana and your community. The traditional economy of trading can play a role in realizing the potential of this

abundance. Sharing is part of the aloha spirit and kindness is always returned!

AFTER PLANTING

Be an enthusiastic salesperson for your products

Find a variety of ways to reach potential customers. This includes phone calls to potential buyers, knocking on the doors of restaurants, soliciting recommendations from existing customers, donating produce to high-profile community events, and so on. Ask your local grocers if they are interested in sampling your products. Consider developing a website and using social media to regularly connect with potential and existing customers. If you are not inclined toward sales, it is a good idea to delegate this job to a family member or friend who is. However, always remember that you are the best spokesperson for your produce—be proud and positive!



Enthusiasm for your products will create enthusiasm in your customers.

Provide potential buyers with samples

For new as well as established customers, providing samples is the best tool you have for selling new products. This applies to new crops and even new varieties of crops that you already sell. Be sure to ask your customers what days and times are best for delivering samples, carefully avoiding their busiest times to maximize the chance of having a conversation about your new product. Always



Providing samples is an excellent way to convince potential customers of the quality of your products.

include your contact information and a price list when delivering samples.

Build strong relationships

Communicating directly with your customer about your growing, harvesting, and postharvest processing methods, builds strong and lasting business relationships. It is a proven business tenet that it is easier to market your products, both familiar and new, to established customers. Maintaining a good reputation as a reliable producer can be one of your most effective selling points for both new and old customers. In many cases, large customers such as retailers and restaurants will share your story with their customers as part of their marketing, which helps them and you strengthen the customer base.

Deliver quality products consistently

Buyers notice and appreciate quality and consistency in every delivery, in fact, they will expect it. Some buyers, such as supermarkets, require quality produce to satisfy customer expectations. If you believe that quality will temporarily be diminished, it is best to inform buyers as soon as you know so that they can choose to find an alternate source. Never try to hide lower quality products under higher quality ones—the buyer will always notice! Your reputation will be damaged if you deliver low quality products, even if it only happens one time. If you promise to deliver a product you must follow through, as your customer is relying on you. Let

GENERAL BUSINESS PRACTICES

Be realistic about your farm's production capabilities

Do not make promises to your buyer that you cannot deliver. Inform buyers about your farm's production capabilities on a seasonal basis so that they can adjust their purchasing accordingly. If you know you will be short during the winter months, join with other farmers growing the same crop to meet market demand. For small farmers, cooperative marketing can make sense.

Continually update customers about product availability

Be realistic and truthful about your ability to deliver your products. This applies to quantity, quality, and time of delivery. It is better to under-promise and over-deliver than to over-promise. If you know you will be short on a product for a particular order, let the buyer know ahead of time so they can source the items elsewhere to fill their needs. Talk to buyers regularly (usually once a week or more) to ask for feedback and new requests. Return calls, text messages, and email in a timely manner; within one business day maximum.

Farmers are entrepreneurs

When you become a commercial farmer, you are also becoming a businessperson. Present yourself in a professional manner when making sales and delivering products. First impressions are often lasting ones. Be aware that most customers are very busy at certain times of day. It is usually best to call ahead of time and make an appointment. For example, don't walk into a busy restaurant and ask to speak to the chef about supplying them with produce. Your customers expect you to follow standard business practices such as having a General Excise tax license, delivering products with a professional packing list or invoice, and having reliable means to contact you by phone and email. Customers will expect you to keep your word, and a failure to do so will lead to uncertainty and a lack of trust. Become familiar with common business



When you provide unique, quality products, your buyers may promote you as a way to connect with their customers.

your customers know in a timely manner if something unforeseeable comes up. However, even with good communication, do not make a habit of failing to deliver on promises. If buyers cannot trust your quality and consistency you will lose accounts and will have a difficult time restoring them.

Check packing and quality requirements

Many buyers (especially wholesalers and retailers) require that fruits, vegetables, and other farm products be packed in boxes of specified weights. Ask your buyer about their preferences, and make sure you have the equipment and materials to meet them. When grading your produce, check the U.S. Department of Agriculture's website and Hawai'i DOA Quality Assurance for grading requirements for the products you sell.



Packaging should conform to established practices and customers' needs.

practices. For example, many businesses are unable to pay you upon delivery of your product, and will pay you by check 1–4 weeks after delivery. Live by the age-old business adage that the customer is always right!

Know your costs of production

Knowing your cost of production allows you to accurately and realistically price your products. Responsible buyers want their suppliers to thrive and grow along with them. Make sure you calculate how much you need to make on a product to cover your costs; do not undervalue your product. Calculate how much it costs to run your business. This will help you determine how much to grow, the price you need to get for your products, and the number of accounts you will need. Don't forget to include the costs of insurance, equipment maintenance, car expenses, gasoline, fertilizers and pesticides, land and water, seeds, packaging, electricity, time, and most importantly, your labor.



Despite the demands of crop production, do not neglect the need to calculate your costs of production and keep accurate records.

Do not undervalue your product

When you lower your price to move product, you throw off the market for other growers. If you have more than your regular customers can purchase, identify alternative markets for the surplus, rather than lowering prices below the cost of production. Consider expanding sales into restaurants, grocers, or distributors depending on the quantity; this is a good opportunity to expand your markets!



Make sure all sales and delivery visits are convenient for the customer. Specifically, sales calls and visits should take place at slow times for the customer, and deliveries should be made when the customer wants them.

Resellers also have to make money

Resellers such as distributors and retail stores also have to make money on sales of your products. Ensuring that you are consistently delivering high quality products on time and at a fair price is necessary to make sure your customers will profit from your products. Understand the pressures your buyers are under and take measures to make your product line and service work for them. When you help customers make money, they will help you make money.

Be prepared for adverse times

Farming and business can both be unpredictable ventures due to environmental and economic variations that are beyond a farmer's control. Produc-



Your project should always meet the expectations you create for your customers.

tion can slow or even fail, markets can disappear. Knowing this, be prepared for adversity by diversifying your crops and markets, setting up financial contingency plans, and by purchasing crop insurance (if available).

Be prepared when making sales

Practice your sales pitch ahead of time for your family and friends and in front of the mirror, so that when you do get your foot in the door and have a chance to sell, you will be prepared. Consider what makes your products different from the competition. Always look at your product features and benefits from the perspective of the buyer. Provide customers with neatly presented written information and a professional business card. Information should include your product list, expected availability dates and quantities, and operational highlights (such as organic certification); it will show that you are organized and prepared to be a consistent producer.

Follow standard food safety guidelines and consider certification

Many buyers require farmers to follow food safety practices. Federal food safety certification can be expensive to establish and maintain, however, it does open up potentially large markets such as institutions and large stores like Costco. Certification can also give a marketing advantage over farms that are not certified, particularly in larger markets. Many customers (such as chefs) will want to visit your farm and by being proactive and implementing best management practices you will instill confidence in your buyers. UH-Manoa CTAHR and Hawai'i Department of Agriculture can assist farmers in developing safe practices and food safety certification.

Look for ways to add value to the crops you produce

As a producer of an agricultural product, you have an opportunity to capture a large share of the consumer's food budget. Look for ways to increase your profit by including value-added activities



Adding value to your product by processing can increase revenue generation significantly.

in your farm plan. These can include processing, packaging, delivery, and direct marketing—in other words, providing convenience to your customer. A good example is the taro farmer who processes the taro they grow into poi, a value-added product that is much more valuable than bulk taro corms. By selling poi directly to consumers, rather than to a reseller, a farmer can charge near-retail prices. All value-added activities must be carefully thought out and evaluated over time to determine their effectiveness and profitability.

Consider filling high-end markets to increase profits

Selling crops as a nondescript commodity product is the lowest priced market. For example, generic vegetables sold in large supermarkets are sold at low prices. Higher prices are paid for products that



Following food safety guidelines is required for entry into commercial markets.

have special features or that are sold in unique locations. Organic certification, for example, gives products access to higher-priced markets such as health food stores and higher end restaurants. Creating a unique brand identity allows you to build a reputation for quality and accountability that generic produce lacks, thereby fostering sales to higher-end markets. Regional affiliations such as “Kona Grown” or “Hawai‘i Grown” can also make a product stand out in the marketplace and command higher prices.

INTERVIEWS

‘Aōhe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho‘okāhi.

All knowledge is not taught in the same school.

[One can learn from many sources.]

—‘*Ōlelo No‘eau* (Pukui)

People with years of experience producing, selling, and buying local produce have invaluable expertise that goes well beyond textbook knowledge. For the purposes of this farmer guidebook we interviewed 38 people who are experts in Hawai‘i Island produce markets by virtue of their proven track record in business. Each 1–2 hour interview involved a series of questions specific to the interviewee’s market (see questions below).

This interview process drew out some of the best professional advice obtainable in today’s local produce markets. The questions asked during the interviews are listed below to give farmers an idea of questions they might want to ask when approaching prospective buyers.

Grocery store and chef interview questions

- How would you characterize your local purchasing policy or program?
- What percentage of your food items are from the mainland versus local farmers?
- What percentage of your local food items do you purchase from distributors versus directly from farmers?

- What do you buy from the other Hawaiian islands?
- Which distributors do you use? How do you go about working with them to purchase locally? What local products do you purchase through them?
- What are your primary US/international imports?
- Which local farms do you purchase from? What do you purchase? And how did you develop those relationships?
- What have been your experiences buying local food from distributors? And farmers? Benefits? Challenges? Suggestions for improvement?
- Are there products you can’t find locally but would like to see farmers grow?
- Do you work closely with any particular farms?
- Do you have formal or informal contracts directly with farmers?
- How do food safety certifications come into play?
- Are there any purchasing trends? Runs on certain products seasonally/holidays/etc.?
- Do you purchase any manufactured or processed products from local farms or vendors? (coffee, honey, jams, etc.) Are there any additional products you’d like to see made locally?
- Do you have any advice for farmers on growing or marketing locally?
- What quantities do you purchase?

Distributor interview questions

In addition to the questions above, distributors were asked

- Who are your primary clients that focus on purchasing local food? What do they purchase? Quantities?
- How do you go about bringing on new farms? Or products? How does a farmer approach you?
- What are the biggest challenges of working with local farms? Suggestions on improving those relationships?
- Are there any purchasing trends? Runs on certain products seasonally/holidays/etc.?
- How do farms transport their products to you?

Producer interview questions

- What types of produce or products do you specialize in?
- Where do you sell your products?
- How did you develop your marketing relationships?
- Do you work closely with any particular buyers? What is the nature of that relationship?
- How do you transport your products to the various markets?
- Do you produce a value added product?
- What are some of the most important considerations for adding value? Has it facilitated capturing more value?
- What have been some of the biggest marketing challenges you have faced as a farmer?
- Do you have any advice to new and existing farmers on product marketing?

LOCAL PRODUCE IS A PRIORITY FOR CHEFS

Reece Asakura, General Manager

Armstrong Produce, Kailua-Kona, North Kona

Reece Asakura grew up in a farming community in Waimea, and has been working in produce distribution for many years beginning with his family business Kona Rancho Produce and now with Armstrong Produce in Kona. Asakura estimates that as of 2011, about 20% of the produce he sells through his Kona warehouse is from Hawai'i growers. He believes that the trend is for an increase in sales from local sources. The advantages of local produce are many: fresher, better tasting, longer shelf life, and increased support for the local economy. All of these advantages are priorities for the farm-to-table movement, led by higher-end hotel and restaurant chefs.

Asakura currently buys produce from about 25 Hawai'i Island growers, and is always willing to talk with new farmers who want to supply the local market. "The more questions they ask, the better job we both can do," says Reece. If a new source of produce appears promising, he will visit the farm to

inspect their operation and go through a checklist of agricultural practices that all his suppliers must follow. Many of the items on the checklist ensure good sanitation in growing, harvesting, and processing. "It is easier to start good practices from the beginning, than to change practices later," Asakura advises farmers. Good record keeping about farm operations is also required so that every crop can be traced back to how and when chemicals were applied, when and where it was harvested, etc.



Reece Asakura of Armstrong Produce stands next to a pallet of locally grown vegetables in the Kaloko warehouse.

The goal of Asakura's farm inspection is to ensure that people feel safe eating local products, which he feels is essential for all concerned. Because the goal is to increase local supply of produce, Reece encourages all promising farmers to improve their agricultural practices to meet his standards. As long as a farmer is making progress towards this, he will work with them.

Acknowledging the needs of farmers, Asakura says, "It is not easy work being a farmer, and the work has to be profitable. We know that farmers must make ends meet." The biggest problem Asakura sees with new farmers is that they choose to grow what is already selling well in the market, and then they flood the market. A flooded market is hard for all producers, and depresses prices below what it takes to make a profit. A recent example of this is taro, which is currently hard to find on Hawai'i Island after the market was flooded.

Chefs regularly ask for a number of crops from local sources that are not available including Irish potatoes, carrots, celery, string beans, onions, berries (blueberry, raspberry, etc.). Available only seasonally are beets, banana, mango, avocado, and fig, leaving parts of the year when these are imported. Even though many products are the same price or cheaper than imports (lettuce, cabbage, etc.), many are more expensive from local sources. This means that even chefs who want to buy local produce may not be able to, especially in a weak economy.

LOCAL CHEFS DESIRE REGIONAL, SEASONAL, AND ARTISANAL PRODUCTS

James Babian

Executive Chef, Four Seasons Resort, Hualālai at Ka'ūpūlehu, Kailua-Kona

When Chef Babian came to Hawai'i Island 14 years ago, he informed hotel management that his style is centered on supporting the local agricultural community through sourcing food “from the region, buying things that are in season, and using products from small artisan farmers, such as Kona coffee, goat cheese, and honey.” The concept of supporting local producers Babian feels is an ancient concept that chefs are rediscovering around the world, bringing the restaurant industry “back to the ground roots” and developing strong farm to table programs.

Chef Babian oversees four restaurants at Four Seasons Hualalai, including Pahu i'a and Beach Tree, and sources produce, meats, and fish from over 150 local farms and ranches. The cuisine at Pahu i'a is centered around Pacific Island fare and places a strong emphasis on locally grown food, with over 80% of the ingredients grown in Hawai'i. Beach Tree's focus on Italian and Mediterranean cuisine with California and tropical influences means that many of the ingredients are imported from overseas, such as olive oils and cheeses. Despite Beach Tree's needs for imported ingredients, they contin-

ue to purchase over 60% of their ingredients from local farmers.

While a large percentage of Babian's ingredients are grown by local farmers, he is still forced to stock items such as carrots, celery, and onions from mainland producers. Chef Babian would like to see local producers experiment with these crops as well as asparagus, artichoke, fava bean, snow pea, and berries. “Hawai'i is one of the most beautiful



Chef Babian shows the local produce stored in the chill room at Four Seasons Resort Hualalai.

places on the planet,” remarks Chef Babian, “and with 11 of the 13 climate zones, there's not much that doesn't grow here.”

The chefs at Hualalai continue to challenge themselves to use more locally grown produce and meats in their menus. Recently, local beef and wild boar have become popular menu items, along with farmed fish such as moi and kampachi, when available, from Maui and Hawai'i Island. Chef Babian frequently visits farmers markets to discover new and exciting products, such as pipinola shoots or giant shiso leaves, and has helped establish relationships between growers and distributors to facilitate a product's use in his restaurants. As local food appears more consistently on menus throughout Hawai'i, Chef Babian sees himself playing an important role by finding great local products and helping chefs incorporate it into their menus.

Chef Babian emphasizes the importance of good relationships between restaurants, distributors,

and farmers. Developing trust among all members of the food distribution chain is necessary to ensure sufficient product can be supplied as needed. Equally important is the responsibility of the distributor or restaurant to inform a farmer if they decide to discontinue or scale back purchasing of an item, so the farmer does not waste resources in planting a crop that is no longer in demand. He sees great value in having initial face-to-face conversations with farmers, visiting their farms, and sampling their products. Chef Babian continues to encourage farmers to think about pricing and how to cover their costs, while stressing the importance of providing a consistent high quality product.

DEVELOP A CONSISTENT PLANTING, HARVESTING, AND DELIVERY SCHEDULE

Brandon Bartolome

Owner, Hilo Products

Hilo Products, a local Hawai'i Island food distributor located in Hilo, has been in business since 1938, when Brandon Bartolome's great grandfather started the business. Bartolome's great grandfather stressed the importance of locally grown food and the need to support area farmers, and that tradition has been passed down through the family and continues to drive Hilo Products' purchasing policies today.

Bartolome purchases from approximately 100 local farmers, who grow a wide variety of fruits and veg-



Brandon Bartolome of Hilo Products, a distributor that purchases from about 100 local farmers.

etables on farms across the state. Hilo Products has established strong relationships with their growers, which has enabled them to secure large contracts with major grocery stores such as KTA and Safeway. Hawai'i's climate allows for the local production of almost all produce items, however seasonal variation forces Bartolome to import items such as melons—watermelon, honeydew, and cantaloupe—during Hawai'i's slow growing seasons. Bartolome continues to encourage farmers to experiment with commonly imported crops such as artichoke, asparagus, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, bell pepper, potatoes, and carrots.

Bartolome's great grandfather stressed three points: reasonable price, service, and quality, and Bartolome works to maintain these values with both his farmers and clients. Over the last 15 years Bartolome has been able to increase sales 50% by switching from standard order purchasing (regularly scheduled orders) to need-based ordering, based on his buyers' demand, and has worked with growers to meet his goal of moving products from the farm to customers in three days. The majority of his growers deliver their products to the company in Hilo; however he has established pick-up service for producer cooperatives in Waimea.

Bartolome realizes that local farmers are competing with mainland farms on pricing, but acknowledges the superior quality of locally grown produce, particularly leafy greens, which they source 100% from local growers. The take home message from large grocers is their need for consistency in supply and quality. Larger stores shy away from “fly by night farmers,” who invest time and energy into growing a summer crop and then walk away after a successful 4-month season. Bartolome encourages farmers to start small and master one product, and then slowly increase production and crop diversity. Be consistent in planting and harvesting, to avoid providing the buyer with “Dozens of cases of a crop such as beans for two weeks and then none of that crop the two weeks after that.” And lastly, he encourages farmers to price their items realisti-

cally, “There is little sense in farming if you are only going to break even, you have to make something.”

SMALL PURCHASERS SUCH AS CATERING BUSINESSES REQUIRE FLEXIBILITY IN QUANTITIES

Dan and Clare Bobo

Owners, Island Thyme Gourmet, Kailua-Kona

Chef Dan Bobo and his wife Clare moved to Hawai‘i Island in 2002 and began working for hotels along the island’s Kohala coast before opening Island Thyme Gourmet, a personal chef service in 2008. Today Island Thyme specializes in preparing locally-grown meals for in-home dining and special occasions, as well as handcrafted sausage made from Hawaiian Red Veal. In 2009 the Bobo’s purchased Blue Sky Cuisine and began catering on private jets, which has since expanded to include catering services for Alaska Airlines.

Chef Dan is committed to purchasing locally grown food for use in his personal chef service, and he enjoys introducing his clients to new, Hawai‘i grown products. “Japanese white turnips, for example...” Clare says with a sigh, “I love them and everyone should be exposed to them.” The Bobo’s source the majority of the meat, fish, and produce from Hawai‘i Island’s ranchers, fishermen, and farmers because the food tastes better and is of a higher quality than food shipped in from mainland or international markets. They appreciate the fact that they can purchase “excellent tomatoes year round,” says Chef Dan, “tomatoes that taste like tomatoes!”

The Bobo’s recent partnership with Alaska Airlines has allowed them to expand their business, and provide locally grown food to tourists while visiting the island, and on their way home in flight. Island Thyme Gourmet is proud to feature locally grown options including a fresh fruit salsa, yakisoba with kalua pork, and freshly-caught Hawaiian Island fish with a macadamia nut crust. Because of the USDA regulations regarding produce on aircraft bound for the U.S. mainland, the Bobo’s must purchase through distributors that are USDA certi-



Clare Bobo of Island Thyme Gourmet, a catering company that buys as much local produce as they can.

fied. However, through their personal chef service they buy everything they can direct from Hawai‘i Island farmers.

Chef Dan would like to see more herbs grown and sold locally, including tarragon, thyme, garlic, shallots, leeks, and different varieties of onions. The Bobo’s advice to growers is to be flexible, particularly when working with small buyers such as catering services. Be willing to break up a case of produce and sell a smaller quantity, but know that they will come back and purchase again. In return they will tell the client, “Paul and Betsy grew your lettuce”, or “Marlene grew your beans”. “I love putting the farmer’s name on it,” says Clare, “because I want them to connect to their food on that level.” Many of the Bobo’s clients in their personal chef service choose Island Thyme Gourmet because they specialize in locally-grown, seasonal food. “Many of them are foodies and deeply appreciate the farm-to-table aspect of a meal.” The Bobo’s strive to give their clients an experience they will not have at most restaurants, connecting them to the individuals that grew their meal and exposing them to new foods.

UNDERSTAND BUYERS' VOLUME REQUIREMENTS AND ADJUST PLANTING SCHEDULES ACCORDINGLY

Chef Charles Charbonneau

Executive Chef, Hilton Waikoloa Village

In 2008 Chef Charles Charbonneau joined the culinary team at Hilton Waikoloa Village, bringing his inspiration and expertise from a career that has taken him around the world. Chef Charbonneau was inspired to enter the restaurant industry by his parents; his mother was a Japanese immigrant from Tokyo and excellent cook, and his father worked in food service aboard several war ships. When he was younger, Chef Charbonneau's mother built him a stool so he could reach the light switches, and he took it with him everywhere, including to the stove where he would watch his parents cook. By the time he was 7 years old, he was preparing cranberry relish with his father for Thanksgiving dinner and cooking his brother breakfast in exchange for the use of his 3-speed bicycle. "That's how I wound up cooking," said Charbonneau, "I took to it like a duck to water."

When Chef Charbonneau joined the Waikoloa team they were directed to reduce the carbon footprint of their foods purchases. "For me it worked great," said Charbonneau, "you can't buy everything locally because of the volumes we go through but it opened the door for more local farmers, ranchers, and fishermen." Charbonneau buys local beef, pork, and fish directly from producers, but has struggled to fill their volume demands from local sources. As far as produce, Chef Charles purchases local products directly from farmers and also through distributors who carry local items, but he is limited to purchasing from vendors who carry liability insurance. Farmers without insurance should consider selling to a distributor who carries the liability insurance. Often distributors require on-site visits to observe the health and safety conditions on the farm. While farmers might make less by going through a middleman, some buyers will pay a premium for a high quality product.

Chef Charbonneau relies heavily on local fruits including strawberries and pineapple, but he has a hard time finding reliable sources of local bananas and avocado year-round. He would also like to see more local fruits and berries, including raspberry and melons, and locally grown sweet potatoes and carrots. But



Chef Charbonneau of Hilton Waikoloa Village.

the biggest challenge, says Charbonneau, is for farmers to understand the volume needed at large hotels. Over the July 4th weekend, for example, they went through 120 cases of pineapple in four days. Farmers that are selling to the Hilton need to adjust their planting schedules to account for increased demand during heavy tourism seasons. "Farmers have to know when we're busy," says Charbonneau.

Charbonneau welcomes local producers to visit the Hilton with samples of their product, a pricing structure, and a business plan detailing how the farm intends to supply the volume needed by the hotel.

CREATE STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

Tane Datta

Co-owner, Adaptations, Kealahakua, South Kona

Tane Datta and his wife Maureen began homesteading as a move toward self-sufficiency in 1980 and expanded their gardens into a small farm enterprise over the next few years. Adaptation's mission statement focuses on the need to engage in ecologically sound community and land development based on organic farming, alternative energy, and complimentary medicine. Datta has strengths



Tane and Maurine Datta show off one of the many raised vegetable beds at Adaptations.

in horticulture and has natural entrepreneurial instincts, while Maureen has strengths in building a business and has excellent people skills. Through the years one of the keys to success has been avoiding overextending their resources, including no significant debt. Instead, they built their business by reinvesting profits back into their company.

Adaptations began wholesale distribution in 1987 and now distributes 100% locally grown produce from their farm and about 100 other Hawai'i farms. Many of these farms are small scale (less than \$100/wk), with roughly 15 being major commercial producers. Customers include most of the local produce retailers and many hotels and restaurants. Adaptations also runs a CSA called "Fresh Feast," with approximately 30 subscribers at present. Customers can subscribe via Adaptations website, which

provides web store options for new and existing CSA members.

Their specialty is producing a diversity of high quality sustainably grown, certified organic crops for a wide range of markets including: top ranking chefs, locally owned restaurants, health food stores, large herbal companies, alternative medicine practitioners, CSA subscribers and direct retail customers. The product mix includes specialty greens, retail packaged coffee, ground cinnamon and cinnamon cooking planks, and medicinal plants. Through the years, the Dattas have worked with dozens of farmers. Tane qualified to train organic inspectors through IOIA and worked as an organic trainer in California before moving to Hawai'i to train local growers. "Now when I visit a farm, I can see very quickly if they are organized, what their excitement level is, how their harvesting and postharvest processing works—in sum, these things tell me if the farm can be successful," says Datta.

"Caring only about money and not caring about people who will be customers" is the biggest mistake Datta sees farmers make. He recommends first talking to potential customers and building relationships, then developing their crops and services to satisfy the needs of the customers. Products based on human relationships can bring the highest value in the marketplace, and without the human relationships, products are just a generic commodity that are valued lowest in the marketplace. "To get the highest prices, producers must care about the food and people, as no one wants to pay top dollar for food that nobody cares about." Other big mistakes Datta has often seen include people starting a large farm operation without developing good horticultural skills and people who have the agricultural skills, but do not know the cost of production or other basic business skills.

In keeping with their mission statement, Datta is active in community service: developing sustainable community development plans and working with the university, local government, and non-profit organizations. Datta provides insight into statewide agricultural production directions and

market developments that strive to answer the basic questions: “What crops should be grown?” “What is the market value of a crop?” and “Where should a crop be marketed?”

FARMERS MARKETS ENABLE SELLING AT CLOSE TO RETAIL PRICES WHILE EXPANDING BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS IN THE COMMUNITY

Nancy Ginter-Miller

Marketing and business consultant, Produce to Product, Inc. and manager, Keauhou Farmers Market

The Kona County Farm Bureau created the Keauhou Farmers Market in 2006 to provide a venue for farmers to be able to sell their produce direct to consumers. All vendors are required to be farmers selling primarily their own products, although they may also resell goods from other local farmers, but not from imported sources or wholesalers. Vendors are also encouraged to sell their own value-added products such as jams and jellies, flavored macadamia nuts, 100% Kona coffee, chocolate, etc., as long as the main ingredients are grown and produced locally.

The purpose of the market is to help farmers increase their profit margin by enabling them to charge prices that are close to retail, instead of wholesaling their entire crop. Selling directly to consumers also allows farmers to cultivate one-to-one relationships and educate the community about their farm and products, while learning about consumer preferences. “The market provides a venue for farmers to meet a wider variety of customers,” leading to additional sales to chefs, retailers, and others in the service industry, notes Ginter-Miller, the market manager. The market hosts special events such as farmer-chef presentations, pairing a market vendor with a local chef to highlight a particular crop such as lilikoi, breadfruit, and dragon fruit or hosting the Master Gardeners selling seed and offering advice. These presentations demonstrate vendor’s expertise in growing crops and

helps consumers, both residents and visitors use various products in new and interesting ways. In short, the market strengthens both economic and social ties within the community, helping to build a sustainable local food system.



Nancy Ginter-Miller manages the popular all-local food farmers market at Keauhou Shopping Center.

There is an application for joining the Keauhou Farmers Market that includes farm description, products intended to be sold, number of farm employees, etc. Vendors are approved for specific products, and the market generally prefers vendors with a wide variety of products throughout the year, so Ginter-Miller recommends that prospective vendors apply for all the products they expect to be selling. The most desirable vendors have a year-round supply of a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables as well as some value-added products. Vendors must also follow basic business requirements such as having a Hawai'i General Excise tax license, keeping inventory, writing customer receipts if requested, and following all Health Department regulations.

For long-term success at the market, Ginter-Miller recommends that vendors have a professional presentation, including displays and signs. Friendly communication with customers is very important for building a loyal following. “If the farmer is not inclined to communicate and share with customers, they should consider having someone else do this, such as a relative or helper,” advises Ginter-Miller. Consistency of products is also important

for customers in terms of availability, appearance, and price. The most successful vendors track their sales so that they can anticipate demand from week to week and season to season. Ginter-Miller summarizes her advice to vendors, “Selling at the farmers market is not farming, it is retail sales and farmers have to be good at it to succeed here.”

MARKET TO HOTELS AND RESORTS: TOURISTS ENJOY TASTING AND LEARNING ABOUT LOCAL PRODUCTS

Randy Goff

Manager, Waianuhea Bed and Breakfast

Waianuhea Bed and Breakfast, located in Ahualoa, on Hawai‘i Island’s Hāmākua Coast serves guests fresh seasonal ingredients sourced from nearby farmers markets and stores carrying locally-grown products, as well as the chef’s home garden. Waianuhea does not have a set breakfast or dinner menu; instead the chefs’ work with



Randy Goff manages the Waianuhea Bed and Breakfast in Ahualoa

what is in season to craft a meal that highlights foods unique to Hawai‘i. The three- and four-course dinner menus offer selections including locally grown mixed greens, vegetables, and deserts made with local fruits. Other popular menu items include Hawai‘i Island goat cheese, strawberries, dragon fruit, and fresh eggs.

Waianuhea Manager Randy Goff feels strongly about supporting local farmers and their families, and encourages local purchasing whenever possible, including locally made pestos, mustards, jams, and baguettes. Items are sourced from around the state including Maui pineapples, mustards from

O‘ahu, and lilikoi jam and Hawaiian chili pepper jelly. Staff members work at local farms and routinely sell fresh produce to Waianuhea for use in their breakfast and dinner menus. The chef also grows lavender to make a lavender ice cream.

Guests to Waianuhea appreciate the attention given to locally grown and produced products, and enjoy the farm-to-table dining experience. “They love hearing about local products,” says Goff, “and how much produce is grown here, especially things they cannot find on the mainland, like papayas; I believe many guests come back to eat the local fruits.” Goff encourages farmers and food manufacturers to approach hotels, resorts, and bed and breakfasts like hers, to market their products. Tourists can be strong supporters of local produce, particularly when chefs and hotel staff take the time to educate them on the exceptional taste and value of locally-grown food. “It is as important to educate the consumers,” Goff says, “because the Big Island has products that are far superior to anything that is shipped in.”

According to Goff, one of the biggest challenges to serving locally grown food is inconsistent availability of orchard crops, such as mango, dragonfruit, and avocado. There are times, she says, when it is difficult to find local mangos or avocados in stores on the East side of the island, yet she is certain that they are available in markets in Kona. Goff feels the distribution system is the weakest link in the farm-to-table market. Goff would also like to see more locally produced fruit juices in the stores, particularly orange juice, and locally grown garlic, shallots, and onions.

USE CREATIVE BRANDING TO HELP BUYERS AND CUSTOMERS REMEMBER YOUR PRODUCT

Edwin Goto

Owner, Village Burger

In 2008 Edwin Goto left his job as the executive chef at The Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows to open a specialty burger restaurant in Waimea on

Hawai'i Island. The restaurant specializes in locally grown meat and produce, the majority of which arrives at Village Burger's door from farmers and ranchers within a 100-mile radius. The menu boasts several burger options, including Hawai'i red veal, Kahua Ranch Wagyu, and two vegetarian selections, the Waipi'o Valley taro burger and the Hāmākua mushroom burger. Produce is sourced from local farms including Hamakua Mushrooms, Wow Farms, Nakano Farms, Rincon Farms, Kekela Farms, and Hamakua Springs Country Farms. Their buns are baked locally by Holy Bakery and goat cheese from Hawai'i Island Goat Dairy is placed atop pasture-raised beef from Daleico Ranch and Kahua Ranch. Meals are washed down with Rincon Farm strawberry milkshakes and Mala'ai Simply Herbs iced tea, delivered from Mala'ai: The Culinary Garden of Waimea Middle School, only a few hundred steps away. Goto is proud of the relationships he has built with local farmers and ranchers throughout the years, and highlights his supplier's products on billboards in his restaurant.



Chef Edwin Goto of Village Burger in Waimea, where local producers are highlighted on the menu.

Goto believes that the best produce comes from Hawai'i Island growers, and even so, he "prefers contributing to the community and purchasing from local farmers." Goto looks for local products first, "they don't necessarily need to be organic, but it has to be a good quality product." Farmers need to make a strong commitment to marketing and help customers remember their farm and its products. Goto encourages farmers to take advantage of their local farmers market; it is a great way to meet chefs and get products into local restaurants. Local restaurants draw food critics, says Goto, who

in turn work with chefs and get the word out about farmers' products. Another way to establish and build relationships with chefs is to invite them to your farm; having a kitchen where chefs can come and experiment directly with a farmer's products enhances the experience. Farmers should be creative with their marketing approach. Establish a website where the community can learn about your product and read about the farm's values. Branding is another way to help your product stand out in the marketplace. For example, you can attach a face, slogan, or geographic area to help customers remember your product. Goto recalls a Cleveland-based vegetable farmer, Lee Jones, whose trademark is his overalls and bow tie.

If a farmer is interested in speaking with Chef Goto about their products, Goto suggests coming into the restaurant with a sample. Often Goto needs to experiment with a new item, prepare it a few different ways and see how it "cooks up," before committing to a new product. The secret to a successful farm is in creative marketing and establishing good communication and strong relationships with your buyers. "Farming takes years," says Goto, "it is just like a restaurant, you can't be an overnight sensation; it takes time."

FOR BEST QUALITY AND PRICE, GROW WHAT THRIVES IN YOUR AREA

Jen Gow

Produce manager,
Island Naturals Market and Deli, Kainaliu

Jen Gow is passionate about nutrition, health, and wellness and found her perfect job as a produce manager at a popular health food store in Kainaliu, South Kona. Gow is also an avid consumer of fresh fruits and vegetables and loves small communities, and therefore it has been natural for her to find ways to support local farmers through her work.

Growers frequently ask Gow what she would like to buy from them, to which she replies, "Grow what grows best for you so that you can provide the highest quality product and greatest yield at the



Jen Gow is produce manager at Island Naturals Market and Deli in Kainaliu.

best prices.” Consistency in production and quality are primary considerations in purchasing, followed by price. Shoppers generally—and tourists in particular—expect produce to be blemish-free, fresh, and vibrant. Island Naturals has a food bar where slightly blemished or irregular produce can be prepared and sold, however, products must still be fresh and available consistently.

Gow welcomes phone calls from prospective suppliers to introduce themselves and to set up a meeting. Samples are helpful to demonstrate quality and taste. When delivering samples, it is essential to include contact information such as name, address, phone, email, and a list of products and quantities available. “Never drop off an unplanned, anonymous box of produce, that is a real turn-off,” advises Gow. If turned down, farmers are welcome to call weekly to see if things have changed. If a new supplier has a product that seems promising, Gow will consider buying it on a trial basis.

Island Naturals in Kainaliu purchases 60–70% of their produce from local growers. Currently, Gow is looking for soft squashes, bell peppers, garlic and onion, apples, stone fruits, melons, broccoli, asparagus, artichokes, and cucumbers. Certified organic is always first choice. Packaging with personal labeling impresses customers and makes a big difference in sales. Labeling can include information on variety, cultural practices (e.g., organic), farm name and location, etc. An organic certification sticker increases confidence in the product and

can help fetch a premium price. Some producers also provide a small informational display about their farm and products, which helps connect the consumer to the farmer.

Many farmers also have value-added products, such as jams, dried fruits, and kim chee. Gow likes to buy such products from reliable farmers to diversify store offerings with new local products. These sales are a bonus for the farmer and help everyone support the local food system.

BUILD PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH CUSTOMERS

Emmerich Grosch

Food engineer, Hawai'i Product Resources, Kealahou, South Kona

The soft-spoken Emmerich Grosch has nearly five decades under his belt as chef, entrepreneur, hotel food operations manager, and processor. He brings this wealth of experience to his current manufacturing/wholesale business processing macadamia nuts, coffee, and cacao from farm to market. His company produces a wide range of artisan products including flavored macnuts (honey roasted, wasabi, etc.), roasted coffees, and raw chocolate. The emphasis is on quality products, and all sales come with a 100% no-questions-asked quality guarantee.

Grosch prides himself on building personal relationships with his customers, taking the time to explain in detail how his products are grown, harvested, and processed. He finds that most people do not know how much work and care go into processing his products, and



Multi-talented Emmerich Grosch processes local products and teaches farmers how to process their own crops.

that teaching people about the products leads to stronger customer relationships and repeat business. In short, Grosch finds that it works to treat people as he would like to be treated as a customer. Bucking the trend toward impersonal business relationships through email and web sites, he makes himself available by telephone and visits to his facility. For larger orders, he often includes a small gift, and finds that customers love the surprises. His clientele tend to be those who appreciate the personal contact, and most of his business is by word-of-mouth or repeat customers.

In addition to his own products, Grosch processes coffee and macadamia nuts for about 200 farmers, who sell their products under their own label. Knowing that many farmers want to become independent processors and market their products under their own label, Grosch sells small-scale processing equipment for macadamia nuts, coffee and cacao. Over the past 15 years, he has provisioned over 1000 farmers with processing equipment at an appropriate scale to their operation. Most of these farmers start slowly with one machine (such as a coffee pulper), and expand their processing operation as they gain experience. Grosch's goal in processing equipment sales is to empower farmers to become independent and sell high-quality finished products under their own label.

FARMS MUST BE FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE

Richard Ha

President, Hamakua Springs Country Farms

Kimo Pa

Farm Manager, Hamakua Springs Country Farms

Located in Pepe'okeo, on the east facing slopes of Mauna Kea, the family-run Hamakua Springs Country Farms specializes in banana, tomato, lettuce, cucumber, and watercress. Richard Ha began farming bananas in the 1970's, and while bananas remain a significant component of the business, Hamakua Springs has become increasingly known for their hydroponic tomatoes, including beef, cock-

tail, heirloom, and Hamakua Sweets, as well as tomatoes-on-the-vine. In addition to the Hamakua Springs farm, Richard owns and operates Hilo Coast Farms, a distribution company that delivers and markets for farms along the Hāmākua coast.

The size of your farm in many ways dictates your marketing strategy, according to Ha. Small farmers need to determine the most effective use of their time, and many chose to sell at local farmers markets where they can introduce their product to consumers and are able to make a sufficient return on their investment. When a farm's production outweighs the amount that can be moved through a farmers market, many producers turn to wholesalers to move their product, until a farm becomes large enough to do their own distribution. Farmers have to spend a lot of time taking care of their crop, says Pa, "so to go out and have to deliver your products to several locations can be too time consuming."

Ha's advice to farmers is to identify a crop that grows well in your location, and do the best job that you can growing it and producing a high quality product. Simultaneously check the market to make sure that there is room to sell that particular crop. "One guy plants green beans," says Pa, "and then 30 other guys plant green beans and the next thing you know the market is flooded and maybe 10% of the guys can sell their beans and the rest have to give them away at a loss, and then everybody loses." Kimo and Richard instruct farmers to plant according to their market's demand and avoid overplanting.

Pa sees many changes on the horizon with increasing demands for food safety certification and ris-



Richard Ha is a driving force behind local food production on Hawai'i Island.

ing oil prices and shipping costs. These factors will have varying effects on farms, depending on their size and marketing strategies. As stores increasingly demand food safety certified products, according to Pa, smaller farms with the inability to pay for certification will have a harder time competing in the marketplace. They encourage small farms to work together to overcome these challenges through collective marketing, where farmers can reach an economy of scale to access new markets, and cooperative certification of shared processing facilities.

Many distributors and stores currently rely on mainland grown potato, carrot, and onion, where they can be grown cheaply on a large scale. However as shipping costs rise and the demand for these items to be grown locally increases, Hawai'i growers may gain the competitive edge, or at least achieve equal footing, for these commodity crops. Ha suggests that farmers growing potatoes, carrots, and onions should start by targeting smaller stores and restaurants that require a limited volume of these products, because as local demand increases, these markets will be some of the first to source these items from Hawai'i's growers.

SELL AT YOUR LOCAL FARMERS MARKET: GAIN EXPOSURE AND BUILD COMMUNITY

Tricia and Mike Hodson

Owners and Farmers, Wow Farms, Waimea

Family owned and operated on Hawaiian Homestead Land in Waimea, Wow Farms specializes in organic vine-ripened tomatoes, including noho'aina orange blossom, pukalani yellows, mahiki heirlooms, Waimea reds, paulama romas, and 'ala 'ohi'a cucumbers.

Tricia and Mike Hodson believe that the key to success is their ambition to farm, "their burning desire to be successful." The Hodsons believe that often farmers overextend themselves when they are starting out, instead of developing their farm in stages. When farmers start too big it can take them

a while to realize success, says Mike, instead, if you start small and realize success right away, it fuels the ambition to grow and develop your business further. "You have to build your capacity and knowledge, and grow in your ability to farm," says Hodson.

A primary challenge facing farmers, believes Mike, is the cost of production, particularly labor and fertilizer costs. "Unfortunately, Hawai'i's produce prices have not risen to cover the increasingly high costs of production," Mike observes. Consequently, conventional farming is not an attractive occupation for many young people. To make farming more attractive we need to cut down on costs through alternative production techniques and successful marketing strategies. "My style of farming had to change," Mike says, "I changed the environment by putting up greenhouses which cut down on the labor costs of weeding ... people need to be willing to adjust and try new ways to reduce costs."

The Hodsons have diversified their marketing strategies, selling at the local Homestead Farmers Market in Waimea, farmers markets on O'ahu, and directly to restaurants. It is important, says Tricia, to sell the farm: "we sell ourselves, what we do and why we do it ... the product is a reflection of us." Some purchasers require their suppliers to carry liability insurance, and because many farmers do not have the insurance they sell to distributors who carry the liability on their behalf. Wow Farms made the decision to purchase their own liability insurance which broadened their market potential. This decision gives the Hodsons more control over their product; because they can sell directly to res-



The Wow Farms 'ohana in one of their certified organic greenhouses.

restaurants and hotels, they can ensure that their customers are receiving a high quality product. Tricia suggests starting at your local farmers market, gain exposure in your community, and ask for feedback on your products.

Communication with buyers is a central focus for Wow Farms. The Hodsons have established a website where buyers can learn about their farm's values, browse photos of their farm and products, and obtain information on local markets where their products can be found. Tricia maintains regular contact with purchasers, often speaking on the phone with each buyer multiple times per week. If the farm has an abundance of product Tricia immediately networks with her purchasers and reaches out to additional markets if necessary.

PERSEVERE THROUGH CHALLENGES AND HARD TIMES

Roy Honda

Farmer, Roy Y. Honda Farm,
Captain Cook, South Kona

Roy Honda started farming in 1997, specializing in oriental varieties of tomato and cucumber. He is best known for a tomato variety he grows that is a favorite in Japan. Originally he grew this variety to satisfy consumer demand in the Hawai'i market, and now it has become his signature crop. Other crops include bitter melon, lettuce, squash, papaya, beans, and myoga (edible ginger flower).

Honda sells his produce to wholesalers, grocery stores, health food stores, restaurants, and at a local farmers market. At the farmers market he can sell at re-



Roy Honda has operated a successful farm by diversifying his crops and markets

tail, whereas selling to wholesaler venues provides a smaller return. "There is a limit to how much an account buys, so by selling to many accounts I can sell more and get a higher total return," says Honda in justifying his marketing plan. Even though the profit margin is much smaller for wholesalers as compared with direct retail sales at the farmers market or to restaurants, selling to wholesalers is necessary for times when production is high. In order to keep wholesalers happy, Honda communicates and sells consistently to them throughout the year. This marketing relationship provides flexibility to move produce to other markets. On average Honda sells 50% of his crop directly to consumers and the rest at wholesale.

As with diversifying his markets, Honda has a similar philosophy about diversifying his crops. "If you have a set number of items, then there is a threshold of how much you can sell of any one item. For example, there are only so many tomatoes you can sell. With multiple products, each has a threshold and the total value can be much higher." Through the years, Honda has expanded the number of crops he grows, which has particularly paid off at the farmers market.

Farming has not always been profitable for Honda, with ups and downs through the years. Twice he sustained large losses that nearly brought down his business. Once a big competitor dropped his tomato price far below production cost, driving many greenhouse tomato farmers out of business, and forcing Honda to borrow money for materials and production costs. On another occasion, he used a commercial fungicide that was contaminated with herbicide, causing him to lose his crops. At that time he had an alternative source of income—macadamia nuts—that covered his basic overhead costs as he persevered through the challenging set back and carried him through months of lost income from tomatoes.

YOU WILL WIN AND LOSE ACCOUNTS, BUT DO NOT GIVE UP

Roan and Ken Hufford
Owners, Honopua Farm

In February 1992 the Huffords helped establish the Waimea Homestead Farmers market, providing an outlet for farmers to sell their products on Hawaiian Homestead land. The Huffords initially produced kale, Swiss chard, and beets and earned \$25–50 per weekend from market sales. In time, customers asked for additional vegetables such as arugula, lettuce, and radicchio, and Roan and Ken began to diversify their crops and marketing strategies. Today the Huffords grow over 20 different products on their 4-acre farm and sell to a variety of markets.

Through personal contacts at Waimea-based businesses and restaurants, the Huffords slowly grew their customer base, from a few boxes of lettuce a week to Parker Ranch Broiler, to “veg club,” a local subscription vegetable box they supplied to employees at Keck Observatory, to the local health food store Island Naturals, and then to Merri-man’s Restaurant. Today their largest commercial account is with Kona Brewery, a connection they made through the farmers market, where the restaurant’s produce buyer approached them. The incorporation of commercial accounts into their business strategy has forced them to change their farm’s operating system, as planting and harvesting schedules have had to adjust to frequent delivery schedules, in addition to the Saturday farmers market.

Ken encourages farmers to identify their markets in terms of crops in demand, quality of production, and any value-added components. If a farmer wants to produce high quality, organic lettuce, it is important to consider all the costs required to produce in that manner, and price your product accordingly. This will determine the markets a farmer should target, because each market has a pricing structure based on their clientele. “If you want to produce a high quality product,” Ken says, “you



Roan and Ken Hufford operate an organic farm that has flourished over the past 20 years.

will eliminate some restaurants who don’t want to pay the price.” At the same time that a farmer is establishing their markets, they need to determine a planting schedule that will provide a consistent level of production to meet demand, taking into consideration natural seasonal variations in productivity. Unfortunately, Ken notes, “lowest production coincides with the highest tourist season, and it drives the farmers crazy!”

The Huffords encourage farmers to be persistent and address problems as they come up. “In business,” they say, “you’ll win some accounts and lose some accounts and problems will come up, but don’t give up.” They have four pieces of advice to new farmers. First, educate yourself through books, the Internet, and conversations with other farmers. Second, be careful about overspending on develop-

ing your farm—determine realistic income potential before committing resources. Third, farming requires a lot of time and labor; anticipate your labor needs and determine how you will meet them. Last, prove to yourself and your customers that you can consistently provide a high-quality product.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE FOSTERS A STRONG BOND BETWEEN CUSTOMERS WITH FARMERS

Jeff and Miliana Johnson
Owners, Ohia Fields Farm

The Johnsons established Ohia Fields Farm, a family-run CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) in 2009. Located along the Hamakua Coast in O‘okala, the 22-acre Ohia Fields Farm specializes in year-round home delivery of CSA boxes filled with vegetables, herbs, grass-fed meats, and eggs to families from Hilo to Kona. The Johnsons offer four CSA share types, allowing customers to choose a share type that best fits their individual or family’s tastes, from Mini Basic boxes containing 4–7 vegetables to Deluxe boxes with 7–10 vegetables, herbs, eggs, and meat; specific items in the box vary throughout the year depending on the season.

The Johnsons’ interest in farming began in 2005 when they purchased their first sheep and chickens. Originally they explored selling lamb to local restaurants, but soon realized that the quantity of lamb needed to consistently supply even one restaurant was beyond the scope of their farm. At the scale they were operating, they needed to look into smaller markets. When the Johnsons expanded their farm to include vegetable production, they ran across the same dilemma. “If we want to supply vegetables to a restaurant,” Jeff noted, “we will have to pick two or three crops in order to have a consistent amount. That wasn’t the type of farming that either of us wanted to do; we wanted to grow everything! And one way that you can grow everything, but not on a huge scale, is CSA.”

The Johnsons’ CSA allows them to build meaningful relationships with their customers, providing customers with the opportunity to learn who is growing their food and how it is grown, while giving the Johnsons feedback about their crops. “Because of this relationship people have told me that they care more about their food and waste less of the plant,” says Miliana. “They try to use everything we provide, including the Swiss chard stems for example, because they know how hard we work.” Because of the direct relationship the Johnsons have built with their customers, the feedback they receive can be easily incorporated into their farm’s practices. The Johnsons’ customers appreciate weekly home deliveries and the diversity of vegetables provided throughout the year. Marketing their product as a “culinary adventure,” notes Miliana, “our customers know when they sign up that they will not just receive run-of-the-mill vegetables.”

While there are many benefits to CSAs, they also pose some challenges. The Johnsons’ biggest challenge lies in planning their vegetable box schedule and planting accordingly. “We want to have 7–10 different crops available every week,” says Miliana, “so it is challenging to create a matrix of the vegetables we want to provide each week, maintaining a database showing days to yield, and developing a planting plan.” Finding the balance between providing staple crops (e.g., beets, potatoes) and more unique items is also challenging, notes Jeff, “if you



Jeff and Miliana Johnson raise livestock and a multitude of vegetable crops.

give me carrots and beans every week I'll get sick of it." Another large, regular task is the office work and bookkeeping required to manage over 40 customers, ordering seeds, and coordinating planting and delivery schedules. Because their CSA includes lamb, chickens, and eggs, they have the added pressure of managing animals in addition to vegetable production.

To foster the producer-consumer relationship, the Johnsons offer farm visits and field days, and provide their customers with weekly newsletters that contain information on the coming week's vegetable selections, recipes, and farm updates. Ohia Fields Farm's website serves as a marketing tool, providing customers a wealth of information about their CSA, including newsletter archives, prices, and information on their business. In addition to advertising through their website, the Johnsons post fliers in nearby communities and sell surplus produce at local farmers markets as means of soliciting new customers. The Johnsons currently have 45 CSA customers and plan to limit production to 100 shares.

PRODUCE HIGH-QUALITY PRODUCTS THAT YOU WOULD BE PROUD TO SERVE AT HOME

Bruce Kekuewa

Food Services Manager, Kamehameha Schools, Hawai'i

Kamehameha School's (KS) food purchasing programs are similar to other large institutions, in that they rely heavily on distributors to provide the majority of their produce. Large distributors have the resources needed to network with large farms and other wholesalers in order to provide the quantity and consistency that schools need to feed their faculty, staff, and students. Despite their reliance on large vendors, KS is beginning to incorporate locally grown food into their food service program, realizing the importance of supporting local farmers and the superior nutritional quality of produce grown locally. Bruce Kekuewa, Food Service Man-



Bruce Kekuewa in the kitchen at the Kamehameha Schools Kea'au campus.

ager at the KS Hawai'i campus in Kea'au, is beginning to reach out to local farmers and ranchers to develop more sustainable buying programs, particularly with lessees who farm on KS lands.

Kamehameha Schools Hawai'i has a strong local beef program, purchasing almost 100% of their beef from local ranchers. On the produce side, Bruce is working with the KS Land Asset Division to stress the importance of diversifying farming operations away from coffee to include fruits and vegetables such as oranges, squash, sweet potato, eggplant, lettuce, and popular salad bar items including tomatoes and cucumber.

Kekuewa acknowledges the challenges of working with local producers, but sees tremendous value in developing relationships with Hawai'i Island growers and ranchers. One challenge is the ability of local farms to consistently produce the large quantity of food that is needed weekly at the school. Smaller farms specializing in gourmet products oftentimes price themselves out of the KS market, charging double what Kekuewa is able to pay for imported counterparts. Kekuewa sympathizes with farmers that are strapped for cash, but he stresses the need for farmers to understand the reimbursement structure at larger institutions like KS, which pay farmers 30 days after invoicing.

Because it is important for Kekuewa to see the steps the food has taken before it reaches his door,

Kekuewa frequently visits the farms that produce food for his cafeteria. Farmers selling to KS must follow the food safety guidelines of the Hawai'i Department of Health and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP).

Kekuewa sees a challenge in pleasing local palates, as fast food has gained popularity and is taking the place of some of Hawai'i's traditional foods such as taro and sweet potato; however Kekuewa is up for the challenge. He enjoys working with dedicated producers, "because if they love what they're doing their products will be the best." He encourages farmers not to short change their product; determine the costs of production and make sure you set a price that provides a profit. The bottom line for Kekuewa is, "if it's something you want to serve your family, it's something I will serve mine."

IDENTIFY A MARKET FOR YOUR PRODUCT BEFORE YOU INVEST IN LARGE-SCALE PRODUCTION

Derek Kurisu

Executive Vice President, KTA Superstores

Howard Kodama

Produce Buyer, KTA Hilo

Purchasing local foods from Hawai'i's farmers, ranchers, and fishermen is an important goal for KTA Superstores, which are located on Hawai'i Island. The Mountain Apple Brand® (MAB) was developed by Derek Kurisu over fifteen years ago following the collapse of the sugar plantations. Kurisu, a graduate of the College of Tropical Agricultural and Human Resources at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, saw the need to support the local agricultural economy, and developed MAB as a marketing arm for both food producers and manufacturers on Hawai'i Island. Today KTA sells over 240 locally grown, raised, and value-added items from 55 vendors under the MAB label. KTA is currently undertaking a marketing and advertising campaign to showcase local growers, and some stores now display large, colorful banners throughout the produce section with the photos and names

of local farmers. Key to the success of KTA and the MAB label is the community philosophy, says Kurisu, "It's all about family, trust, living together, understanding each other—customers that shop here become brothers, sisters, aunties, and uncles."

Kurisu encourages local farmers to identify specific markets before they jump into production of a particular crop. It is important to research the costs associated with production and the average selling price to determine if the margin will allow for reasonable profit. Developing strong communication patterns is one of the biggest challenges in working with local producers. Kurisu believes that honest communication between KTA and the farmer is essential. If the farmer experiences a shortage



Derek Kurisu of KTA Superstores supports local producers by selling their products under the Mountain Apple Brand® label and showcasing producers in their stores.

or abundance of a particular crop, it is important to inform the produce buyer immediately so that they can source product from alternative suppliers, or assist the grower in selling their extra produce, thereby maximizing farmer and store profits.

Farmers that are interested in selling to KTA should contact the produce, meat and fish buyer at their local store. If KTA already carries the product, the buyer might suggest packaging the item in a different way to avoid competing directly with an existing farm supplier, or they might recommend that the farmer experiment with a different crop,

one that is currently being imported from outside Hawai'i. Kodama recommends that farmers approach their local produce buyer with their ugliest product. "Typically a farmer will bring in the nicest sample of their product," says Kodama, "and then everything that is delivered after that is of a lower quality, thereby guaranteeing disappointment" Produce buyers will look at the produce packed on the bottom of the box when delivered, to make sure that the product is high quality throughout.

Kurusu and Kodama encourage farmers to explore their local KTA and identify fruits and vegetables that are currently being imported. They would like to see more off-season fruits, especially mango, sweet potato, asparagus, artichoke, and organic vegetables. KTA also purchases pumpkins, melons, and other fruits from O'ahu, where supply is higher than it is on Hawai'i Island particularly during holidays or summer months, however they would like to see more of these products grown locally.

DIVERSIFICATION IS KEY TO SUCCESS

Ken Love

Love Farms, Captain Cook, South Kona

Ken Love has 35 years experience as an agricultural producer, processor, chef, and educator. His specialty is tropical fruits. Although Ken and his wife Margy sold their farm a number of years ago, Ken harvests fruits from several farms and sell dozens of tropical fruits, both fresh and in processed products. He has a number of test fields at the UH experiment station and manages other farms. Love's policy is to diversify his markets, rather than relying on just one or two. His markets include a local produce distributor, supermarket, hotels, chefs, and direct to consumers at the farmers market and through Internet sales. By diversifying market outlets from low-end wholesale to high-end chefs, Love can usually count on selling all of his harvests, whether they are 10, 100, or 1000 lbs.

In addition to fresh fruits, Love Farms produces about 150 jams, jellies, spices, and dried and frozen-pureed fruits. These products add value and

further diversify markets. Also, by preserving fruit, one can maintain sales throughout the year, even during seasons when many fruits are out of production. Diversification also can be helpful in spreading labor demands over the whole year, reducing the need for hiring costly external labor.



Ken Love of Love Farms has built a business on specialty fruit sold to specialty markets.

Based on many years of working with Dr. Kent Fleming, an extension economist at University of Hawai'i, Love has learned how to price his products based on cost-of-production calculations. Through the years, Love has learned to resist the temptation of lowering prices below cost just to make sales. He often scolds other farmers for selling below cost, as the practice is unsustainable for any farm enterprise and tends to erode profits for all farmers. A major issue for Hawai'i farmers is the cost of production, which can be several times greater than the cost of similar imported products, especially processed products such as jams and jellies. To compete, Love makes his products stand out from the imports through labeling as "hand-crafted," which he believes speaks to many consumers today. Love suggests that all farmers who sell to local markets become spokespersons for the locally grown movement.

In his roll as president of the Hawai'i Tropical Fruit Growers and an educator, Love advocates for product diversification for both producers and buyers. This begins with knowing one's own capabilities and strengths in production, processing, and mar-

keting. The next step is to calculate the cost of production and set up a pricing structure for different markets including wholesale and retail.

Also in his role as an educator, Love believes that no one farmer can produce a consistent supply at all times. For any crop, it is important to build strong local markets independent of any individual producer. By diversifying the supply, each individual farmer benefits from having contributed to building strong local markets and distributors.

DEVELOP A WEBSITE THAT SHOWCASES YOUR PRODUCTS AND WHERE THEY ARE AVAILABLE

Tom Menezes

Senior Vice President of Operations,
Hawaii Pineapple Company

Over twenty years ago Hawaii Pineapple Company began selecting and breeding pineapples, to ultimately arrive at their signature Hawaiian Crown™ Sweet Gold™ pineapple, which are grown on their family-owned farm in east Hawai'i, and on local partner farms in neighboring communities. The company also produces Hawaiian Crown™ apple bananas, cacao, and taro.

Hawaii Pineapple Company sells directly to large retail outlets, establishing a guaranteed price



Tom Menezes of Hawai'i Pineapple Company runs a large farming operation centered around their signature pineapple. They also produce other crops such as banana, taro, and cacao (shown here).

based on a year round, exclusive supply. Distributors transport their products to large retail chains. Menezes encourages local farmers to diversify their crops, to guarantee year-round production of marketable crops. To expand their markets, Hawaii Pineapple Company creates value-added items from off-grades, producing dried bananas and other products to capture additional value. Menezes says, "Most importantly, it's all about quality, quality, quality. Only when we can deliver quality will we put our sticker on it."

Menezes encourages new farmers to identify local market needs, determine what grows best on your land, and make sure it is something that you love doing. He cautions growers against diving into production before identifying markets. If you invest in a production system and produce a large quantity, you may have to sell at a low price in order to move the item, and recover little of your investment.

Local buyers need a consistent supply, Menezes notes, a reminder he hears repeatedly from his commercial accounts. While his production levels vary seasonally, he adjusts his planting schedule to help maintain as consistent a supply as possible throughout slow production months. Menezes acknowledges the difficulties of farming in Hawai'i, specifically the challenges of competing with mainland products that are grown at economies of scale that most Hawai'i farmers cannot achieve.

Hawaii Pineapple Company communicates with consumers and potential markets through a well-developed website, where they provide a background of the company and their values, information on their products, and sales locations. Hawaii Pineapple Company markets their pineapples and apple bananas at retail outlets and high-end restaurants throughout the state. By providing a list of their sales locations on their website, potential customers can quickly learn which stores and farmers markets carry the company's products, thereby extending their customer base.

LOCAL FOOD MARKETS BEGIN WITH CONSUMERS

Ōlelo pa‘a Faith Ogawa

Private Chef and Owner, Glow Hawaii

Ōlelo pa‘a was raised on a sugar plantation in Waipahu, O‘ahu, surrounded by family and community members who were active gardeners and farmers who enjoyed local foods. As a child she remembers eating fresh food daily from her family’s farm, and sharing and exchanging produce with family and friends. In her 20’s she began traveling around the world and was introduced to new cultures and cuisines, which opened her eyes to the diversity and beauty that the land can provide through food. Ōlelo pa‘a’s career in cooking and ultimately as a personal chef blossomed following her graduation from the culinary program at Leeward and Kapiolani Community College, when she began working at hotels on O‘ahu and Hawai‘i Island, and catering for private parties. Her success as a chef is due in large part to her college education and she encourages the younger generation to explore their passions for cooking through college culinary programs. Her love and respect for the land is evident in her unique style of Hawai‘i Regional Cuisine, where she combines fresh, seasonal produce with an abundance of Aloha spirit.

As a personal chef, Ōlelo pa‘a works for a number of clients, primarily on the north and windward sides of Hawai‘i Island. She bases her menus on seasonal fruits and vegetables, which she sources from stores that support local producers and farmers markets in Hilo and Waimea. Through the years Ōlelo pa‘a has developed close relationships with many farmers market vendors and appreciates their consistent supply of local, healthy food on a weekly basis. Her favorite products include many of the leafy greens, such as the lettuces from Hirabara and Honopua Farm, vine-ripened tomatoes and French beans from Nakano Farm, and other locally grown items such as kale, Swiss chard, the various Asian cabbages, spinach, arugula, and a variety of fresh herbs, spices, and exotic fruits.

Ōlelo pa‘a enjoys providing new culinary experiences for her clients and often prepares traditional Pacific Island foods, such as breadfruit, or ‘ulu, taro, and sweet potato, which are difficult to find on restaurant menus throughout the islands. With the appreciation of simple, light food, she uses citrus dressings, chili pepper water, and other light sauces, so that the raw ingredients are showcased and their flavors come through. Ōlelo pa‘a has watched the diversity of local food at farmers markets and grocery stores around the island steadily increase over the last ten years, however she would like to see Hawai‘i’s stores carry more local citrus for her salad dressings, and she has a hard time finding local celery, onions, potatoes, and carrots for use in stocks, salads, and other favorite dishes. These four items are basic ingredients that are used on a daily basis, however the majority are flown in from mainland markets.



Ōlelo pa‘a Faith Ogawa uses a wide variety of local produce in her creative cuisine.

“Food excites me, it really does,” says Ōlelo pa‘a, “I love food and I love what is happening to this island.” She works to educate her clients on the value of purchasing and enjoying local foods, because informed consumers are more likely to use their dollars to support local farmers and make healthy food choices. It is important for residents of Hawai‘i to remember their Hawaiian ancestors and their agricultural traditions, Ōlelo pa‘a believes, and to acknowledge the deep relationship that has developed in Hawai‘i between people and

the land. She challenges consumers to reduce their reliance on imported food by substituting as many items in their diet as they can with locally grown products.

SUPERMARKETS DEMAND PERFECT PRODUCE

Tom Palusak

Produce Manager, Choice Mart,
Captain Cook, South Kona

When Tom Palusak started working as produce manager in 2007, he felt it was important that local produce was well represented in Choice Mart's offerings. Many of the store's customers are local farmers from the area, and it was only natural and appropriate to give customers the opportunity to buy local. Four years later, about 50% of Choice Mart's produce comes from Hawai'i farmers.

Palusak buys his produce both through four large produce distributors and directly from about 50 local farmers. Produce on supermarket shelves must look perfect—blemish free, correct stage of maturity, and good color, size, and shape. While other markets can tolerate some imperfections, such as restaurants, who can remove small blemishes during food preparation, supermarket customers complain about any imperfections. Also, most people expect much higher quality from supermarkets compared with farmers markets. Distributors already know this, however, this is something many new farmers do not understand.

Palusak will consider buying from any farmer who contacts him directly and comes to the store by appointment. Some new farmers expect that a market will buy anything they bring in, regardless of quality, and they can become angry when Palusak turns them away with poor quality produce. A serious mistake is to bring in imperfect produce, especially hiding imperfect produce under perfect in the boxes. Another common mistake is to fail to deliver a promised quantity or fail to meet a promised time of delivery. Palusak keeps track of good and bad farmers in a logbook, which he



Tom Palusak manages a supermarket produce section that is currently 50% locally grown.

refers to whenever farmers approach him about buying their produce. Through the four years since Palusak began working at Choice Mart, about 50 farmers no longer supply him due to many reasons, including poor performance and leaving farming.

Even for Palusak's very best suppliers, he cannot always purchase everything they deliver because he wants to have several suppliers for every item. Having several suppliers increases the opportunities for consistent stocking of any given item. Palusak recommends that farmers diversify their markets, just as he diversifies his sources. The best way to consistently receive Palusak's business is to be trustworthy in delivery times and to always deliver high quality, fresh, unblemished produce.

ESTABLISH GOOD RECORD KEEPING SKILLS: SOME BUYERS REQUIRE DETAILED PLANTING AND HARVEST LOGS

Mike Quanan

Produce Manager, Suisan Company

Established in 1907, Suisan is one of Hawai'i Island's oldest food distributors, with its main office and distribution center, along with the fresh fish division located in Hilo, and the fresh produce division based in Kona. Suisan serves as a hub for fresh and frozen foods, which are delivered island-wide in refrigerated delivery vehicles. Purchasing from dozens of local farmers, ranchers, and fish-

ermen, Suisan strives to deliver high quality products to Hawai'i Island chefs, grocery stores, and institutional buyers.

“The demand for local food,” according to Produce Manager Mike Quanan, “is being driven by chefs at local resorts, whose budget is much higher than most mom-and-pop stores and restaurants around town.” When it comes to produce, says Quanan, the majority of hotel chefs prefer locally grown options. Unfortunately the busiest season at the hotel, during the winter months, coincides with periods of low productivity on Hawai'i Island farms. “The demand for tomatoes, during those six to eight weeks,” recalls Quanan, “will triple or quadruple, and farmers just cannot keep up.” Farmers could increase their production to meet local demand during the high tourism season, Quanan suggests, by growing produce in artificially warmed conditions, such as greenhouses or under netting. In Quanan's experience, a farmer's production can drop by as much as 50% during Hawai'i's winter months.



Mike Quanan of Suisan, a large produce distributor, encourages farmers to actively market their products by providing recipe cards or brochures.

Quanan appreciates working with local farmers because their prices are fairly stable and unaffected by changing oil prices, which cause mainland produce prices to fluctuate widely. Hawai'i Island farmers also deliver fresher fruits and vegetables, which Suisan is proud to distribute to customers across the island. According to Quanan the biggest

challenge for their company is establishing good communication between themselves and the farmers. “We understand that they are busy and have a hard time sitting in an office and talking to produce buyers,” says Quanan, but farmers have to make an effort to communicate with buyers about product availability and delivery. “Even if you don't have the product for a certain time period,” says Quanan, “let us know.” At the same time as communicating with producers, Suisan maintains communication with their buyers, addressing changes in demand and quality. Communication with hotels is particularly important, notes Quanan, as their needs vary across the tourist season and their menus change four times a year. Maintaining regular communication with buyers allows Suisan to inform the farmers of changes in demand, so that they can adjust their planting schedules if possible.

Farmers interested in selling to Suisan should contact Quanan to set up an appointment. Quanan appreciates getting to know local growers through talking story and farm trips, where he will inspect the farm for safe production practices and sanitary processing facilities. Quanan also orchestrates farm visits between chefs and his growers, so that chefs can learn more about their products and establish personal connections with the farmers. Food safety is important to Suisan, which follows strict guidelines similar to those found in HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points), a preventative approach to food safety required by the USDA. In the event that they should need to recall a product, Suisan must be able to trace an item back to the farmer, the lot number, planting date, and ultimately to the origin of the seed.

Quanan would like to see more cruciferous root vegetables grown in Hawai'i, such as radish, turnips, and daikon, as these have to be fumigated upon arrival from mainland distributors. Potatoes, onions, and broccoli are also popular items being imported into Hawai'i. Potatoes and onions, along with imported melons, are heavy and have elevated shipping costs, therefore growing these items locally would be favorable. Quanan encourages

farmers to actively market their product. Some buyers, according to Quanan, “will see a product and not know what to do with it.” Quanan suggests providing recipe cards or brochures for new or unknown products that Suisan can in turn provide to their buyers. Suisan picks up produce from several farmers around the island, including local processing centers such as the Kamuela Vacuum Cooling Plant located in Waimea. The majority of locally-grown produce is picked up by Suisan and delivered to a buyer between two to three days after harvest.

IDENTIFY YOUR FARM'S WEAKNESSES AND ADDRESS THEM IMMEDIATELY

Chris Robb

Owner and Farmer, Robb Farms, Waimea

Chris Robb moved to Hawai'i in 1982 from Honolulu, where he received his Bachelor of Science in Horticulture from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. When he arrived on Hawai'i Island he had little intention of farming vegetables. Robb gained experience in the industry working with roses and orchids, before becoming a horticulturalist for MacFarms of Hawai'i and a part-time USDA agricultural inspector. Robb slowly began planting his 5 acre farm in Kona with coffee, eventually adding an acre of lettuce. Because the Kona weather was too warm to produce a reliable summer crop and his lettuce market was expanding, he eventually relocated to Waimea, which has better growing conditions for the crops he wanted to grow. As far back as 1986, Robb noticed the trend towards buying local and certified organic and decided to pursue organic production methods. Today Robb Farms is one of Hawai'i's leading organic farms, specializing in beets, broccoli, greens, fennel, leeks, melon, pak choi, and pumpkin.

Diversification and communication are key to successful production and marketing. “Do not put all your eggs into one basket,” says Robb, “Instead, diversify your accounts and crops.” Robb Farms sells both direct to stores and to large grocers through

distributors. In Robb's experience, some buyers prefer to deal directly with farmers, and visit the farm multiple times in order to develop a strong relationship with the grower. Other purchasers, such as large retail chains, typically work with a large wholesaler and obtain the bulk of their produce through the wholesaler's network of local farmers.

It takes time, Robb recalls, to develop relationships and market direct, and farmers need to decide which strategy best suits their business style. If a buyer visits your farm, be prepared for their visit—communicate clearly but humbly, be proud of your product, and provide samples. You have to sell yourself and your product. Once you have a commitment from a buyer it is important to keep up contact, respond quickly to their calls, and deliver products as soon as possible. “If you are go-



Chris Robb operates a successful organic vegetable business in Waimea.

ing to be short on a product,” says Robb, “let them know ahead of time so they can make up the difference elsewhere; that is part of being an honest, forthright business person.”

Robb believes that successful farming comes down to persistence and perseverance. Because of Hawai‘i’s 52-week growing season, contracts with buyers are yearly, with seasonal fluctuations due to growing conditions and buyers’ demands. “When you get hammered by weather or pests, you have to be back up in two weeks,” says Robb, “you have a schedule and you have to live by it.” It is important, Robb notes, to learn where your weaknesses are and address them—always try to find a better way to do something. Also be prepared, says Robb, to spend a lot of time marketing, attending to the business, and educating yourself on production, business management, and pest and weed control. Robb’s advice to new farmers is to match the crop to the location and do research to identify potential markets for crops. Avoid going into too much debt in the beginning, suggests Robb, instead, start small and reinvest profits into the business.

DEVELOP STRONG MARKETING SKILLS: BECOME A SPOKESPERSON FOR YOUR PRODUCTS

Russell Ruderman
Owner, Island Naturals

Russell Ruderman is committed to purchasing and marketing local food from Hawai‘i’s farmers. The focus on local food blossomed over the last six years, according to Ruderman, when a steady stream of farmers and food manufacturers began approaching the store and asking him to carry their products. Despite the increase in local food production, Ruderman is surprised at the number of gaps remaining in Hawai‘i’s local food production.

Over 200 farmers supply locally grown fruits and vegetables to Island Naturals’ four stores, located in Hilo, Pāhoa, Kailua-Kona, and Kealahou. Island Naturals buys direct from farms and through

distributors that carry organic and locally grown food. To encourage customers to purchase locally grown foods, Island Naturals gives preferential treatment to local items, providing these products with unique signage and better placement in the store. For new products, Ruderman encourages producers and manufacturers to arrange to set up a sample table in the store, and introduce their product to customers. “It is powerful when the customer meets the producer,” says Ruderman, “it exposes the person to the taste but more importantly establishes that personal connection; in Hawai‘i’s small community these relationships make a difference.” If a farmer is not comfortable marketing or showcasing their product, Ruderman believes that it is worth their time and money to find someone who is capable of marketing on their behalf.

One of the biggest challenges farmers face, says Ruderman, is consistency; the more consistently the farmer delivers, the more successful the store can be in marketing their product. Another important requirement for farmers is basic business and people skills. Farmers should be comfortable talking about their product and how it was grown, offer a reasonable price based on the cost of production, and provide the store with an invoice upon delivery. As with most stores, Island Naturals requires farmers to provide business documents, such as a general excise tax license, and accept payment by check thirty days after invoicing. Successful long-term business relationships require both the farmer and the purchaser to be familiar with each other’s expectations and capabilities.



Russell Ruderman’s Island Naturals stores stock as much local produce as they can access.

If a farmer is interested in selling their products to Island Naturals, Ruderman encourages them to approach the store with a sample and speak with the produce manager. He also stresses the need for farmers to conduct preliminary research, to come in and speak with the produce manager and identify gaps in purchasing and availability, and grow a product that is in demand. “We cannot buy kale from 20 people,” Ruderman says, “think about what is *not* being grown and experiment with that.” For example, Island Naturals’ most popular vegetable is broccoli, of which 10 cases are flown in per week for each of the island’s stores. Other heavily imported vegetables include potatoes, carrots, and onions; and the store can never carry enough local eggs or organic papaya to meet the demand. Island Naturals would also like to see increased supplies of locally produced fruit juices and locally sourced chicken, turkey, pig, lamb, and fish.

FOOD PROCESSORS RELY ON STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUPPLIERS BASED ON TRUST, QUALITY, AND CONSISTENCY

Richard Schnitzler

President, Hamakua Macadamia Nut Company

Hamakua Macadamia Nut Company (Hamakua Mac Nut) is located north of Kawaihae Harbor on Hawai‘i Island, and specializes in 100% locally grown and processed macadamia nuts. President Richard Schnitzler has over 30 years of experience in the macadamia nut industry, and is proud to have built a company that is sustained by the local production of macadamia nuts and capable of supporting local growers, workers, and their families.

Purchasing from over 200 local growers, Hamakua Mac Nut has developed strong relationships with their farmers and worked to simplify the distribution process. Hamakua Mac Nut has established receiving stations in Kona, Ka‘ū, Hilo, and Honoka‘a, where farmers can drop off product two days a week. The challenge for Schnitzler has been educating growers on orchard maintenance; “if you do



Richard Schnitzler of Hamakua Macadamia Nut Company developed a range of value-added products.

not take good care of your orchards and leave the nuts on the ground too long, do not expect good quality nuts or fat paychecks.” The company works with its growers, offering educational sessions on orchard maintenance and pest reduction strategies. There are some basic rules that macadamia nut farmers should follow to produce a high quality product, says Schnitzler, “conduct research to determine how many trees you should plant per acre (differs depending on the variety) and plant correctly at the outset because with trees (versus annual crops) it is impossible to go back and change your planting patterns.” And lastly, macadamia nuts should not stay on the ground longer than three or four weeks.

Schnitzler believes that the future of Hawai‘i’s agriculture lies in adding value to locally grown products and successful marketing techniques. “It is no longer enough in Hawai‘i to just grow a product and sell it; you need to learn how to market it as advantageously as possible, and ultimately be proud of your product,” says Schnitzler. The company has worked diligently to develop new marketing strategies and expand their reach, which has successfully landed the company contracts with Dole, Hilo Hatties, and duty free stores. Schnitzler encourages growers and food manufacturers to identify their niche, a unique product or aspect of their product, that makes the product stand out in the marketplace, and highlight unique qualities

through advertising and marketing. Hamakua Mac Nut, for example, has been able to produce high quality products that are 100% local, which enables them to stand apart from companies using imported macadamia nuts.

“Experience is the greatest teacher,” says Schnitzler, who emphasizes the importance of education on marketing techniques and business skills, and encourages growers not to isolate themselves but to talk to other producers and potential customers and actively market their products. Over the years Schnitzler has learned the value of developing local markets first, before pursuing mainland markets, which can be more problematic because of the costs associated with transportation and the lack of a strong relationship and commitment to purchasing. Developing a strong relationship based on loyalty and trust between local farmers and food manufacturers is critically important, says Schnitzler, because businesses using locally-grown products depend on their relationship with the farmer and their ability to deliver high quality products to survive.

BUSY RESTAURANTS REQUIRE PRODUCE SUPPLIERS WITH PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS PRACTICES

Matt Thoman, Kitchen Manager

Krista Donaldson, Sustainability Supervisor

Kona Brewing Company, Kailua-Kona, North Kona

Kona Brewing Company was founded in 1993 by father and son team Cameron Healy and Spoon Khalsa with the philosophy of “living aloha.” Their company has grown to become the 13th largest craft brewery in the U.S. and their Kailua-Kona restaurant alone reaches \$3.5 million dollars in gross revenue per year. With a policy of providing quality food and supporting the local community, about 65% of their produce comes from local sources. “To reach our sustainability goals, we can’t just rest on our successes. We are constantly looking for new produce sources and ways to innovate,” says Matt Thoman, kitchen manager.

By constantly looking for farmers to replace the imported produce they purchase, the percentage of local produce they consume is increasing. For example, the restaurant recently identified a farmer to supply macadamia nuts from within 15 miles of the restaurant, replacing a generic commercial source distributed through an O’ahu warehouse (even though the nuts were grown on Hawai’i Island). In addition to being nearby, this source has proven to be cheaper and more reliable than the previous source.



Krista Donaldson (left) and Matt Thoman of the innovative Kona Brewing Company which has a business model based on “living aloha.”

Thoman is currently looking for suppliers for citrus and avocado from local sources—the key for them is to find a consistent, reliable source for several months of the year, if not year-round. Once the restaurant develops a working relationship with a farmer, it commits to purchasing set quantities on a regular schedule. For example, Kona Brewing Company purchases \$1200–1500 of greens per week from an organic farmer in Waimea, which supports four farm jobs. The farmer knows he has a reliable customer, and continually improves his practices and varieties to meet the individual needs of the restaurant. In return, the restaurant feels responsible to support the farmer by being a regular customer and not shifting to the cheapest source on a weekly basis. This also serves Kona Brewing Company’s goal to look at the bigger picture of supporting the local community.

Because customers expect it, consistency is the primary requirement that they have for produce suppliers, which extends to availability, size, variety, color, ripeness, delivery time, etc. Another important requirement is good communication about the products and availability. Thoman speaks with his suppliers once or twice a week, sometimes just to check in and say hello, sometimes to go over issues related to supply, such as crop and weather status. To support the kitchen staff in knowing about the sources of their produce, Thoman asks chefs to visit producers from time to time. This gives a new dimension to the relationship with farmers, and further encourages a sense of community.

Finally, Thoman requires his producers to be willing to follow professional business practices. “When you deliver to a restaurant, you have to maintain professional practices just like any distributor,” says Thoman. These include providing business data for tax filing, accepting standard invoicing terms of payment, and being flexible in adapting to working within corporate accounting practices.

WHEN VISITING POTENTIAL BUYERS, BRING A SAMPLE OF YOUR PRODUCT AND A PRICE SHEET

Chef Collin Thornton

Executive Chef, Fairmont Orchid, Hawaii

Chef Collin Thornton joined the Fairmont Orchid, Hawaii in 2008 as the Executive Chef, overseeing eight dining experiences at the hotel. His career has developed over 14 years, and has taken him from Edmonton, to the Cayman Islands, and now Hawaii. Chef Thornton sees a strong push for buying local in each of the Fairmont locations where he has worked, and feels fortunate to have arrived at the Fairmont Orchid, Hawaii where fresh, locally-grown produce is available year round.

The Fairmont Orchid, Hawai'i relies on produce from over a dozen local farms, of which approximately six have contracts directly with Chef Thornton. Overall, the dining program obtains 30–50%



Chef Thornton stands in front of the culinary garden at the Fairmont Orchid.

of their produce from local growers, depending on the season, but Chef Thornton is continuously searching for high quality products that can be grown consistently to incorporate into his menus.

Hotel dining programs, such as the Fairmont Orchid, are quality oriented and strive to use the highest quality produce on their menus. “Items shipped in from the mainland deteriorate much faster than locally grown produce,” notes Chef Thornton, who believes that the prices paid for local food are competitive with mainland produce. The biggest untapped opportunity for local farmers, according to Chef Thornton, is in the staple crops such as carrots, potatoes, and onions, items they routinely import from the mainland in bulk. Additionally he relies heavily on mainland growers for broccoli, peppers, and zucchini.

The biggest challenge for local farmers, Chef Thornton believes, is in providing a consistent supply to large hotels. “It takes time to develop consistency,” says Chef, “and growers need to be honest about how much of a product they have and its quality; once you develop a relationship, if the quality tapers off and the farmer doesn’t say anything about it ... that’s very disappointing.” The quality provided by his growers is phenomenal, notes Thornton, listing off several of his local suppliers and their products. It is common for Thornton to visit his local producers on their farms, to observe local

production systems, meet family-run operations, or host cooking classes.

“Communication is the key to any of my farmer relationships,” says Thornton, “I generally communicate with phone calls but I also email the farmers who are technologically savvy.” “The successful farmers I continue to work with have good communication with me. They are also flexible. For example, during the downturn in the economy they continued to work with us, even when our ordering slowed down. They understand the market and are able to work with price points, so we can maintain the business from both sides. The only time I have ever walked away from a grower is when they could not deliver consistently.”

Chef Thornton encourages local farmers to call and make an appointment if they would like to discuss a potential crop. Farmers should plan to bring in a sample of their products along with a price sheet. “Don’t be shy with your pricing,” notes Thornton, “show me the product and if you believe in it and it tastes good, don’t be ashamed to talk about pricing.”

GIVE CUSTOMERS REALISTIC ESTIMATES OF HOW MUCH PRODUCT YOU CAN PROVIDE IN A GIVEN TIME PERIOD

Sandy Tuason, Executive Chef

Henry Delacruz, Receiving Manager/Food Buyer

John Wills, Produce Manager

The Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows

Chef Tuason and his purchasing team prioritize produce and meats grown and raised on Hawai‘i Island and across the state, in order to provide their guests with a high quality dining experience. They estimate that between 80–85% of their produce items are grown locally. The majority of purchasing takes place through wholesalers, however Chef Tuason also purchases direct from 20–25 Hawai‘i Island farmers. Their favorite local menu options include fern shoots from Waipi‘o Valley, Maui onions, Kampache, organic rainbow carrots, micro greens, lavender honey, and local fruits.



John Wills, Henry Delacruz, and Chef Sandy Tuason of the Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows, which purchases a high percentage of their produce from local sources.

Consistency in availability and quality are the number one concerns for Chef Tuason and his team. Their business depends upon serving guests the freshest ingredients, therefore when working with farmers they demand a consistently grown, high-quality product. “Consistency is important,” says Chef Tuason, “because we need to know what we can plate.” Chef Tuason and his team enjoy working with local farmers who live and farm nearby because the most fragile produce items, such as lettuce, can be harvested and delivered within one to two days through the local growers themselves or distributors. Chef Tuason has watched supply and demand for certified organic produce increase steadily over the course of his culinary career. Food safety is another priority for Chef Tuason and his produce buyers, who tours farm and inspect suppliers for safe practices.

Most hotels, restaurants, and stores rely heavily on distributors for the majority of their produce needs, typically buying less than half of their produce directly from local farmers. Buying direct from local growers allows chefs to get to know the farmer and to suggest additional crops they would like to purchase, while often providing the farmer with a higher price for their products compared with prices paid by distributors. However, working with distributors is more efficient for customers because distributors are able to fill orders for

several types of produce in a single phone call. Additionally, if a local grower experiences shortages in production due to weather or pests, distributors are able to source produce from mainland markets to supplement the local supply. Depending on Hawai'i's seasons and farm production, distributors can purchase 25–75% of their vegetables from mainland growers and distributors. Speaking of the mainland products he purchases through distributors, Tuason says, "I try to support the locally economy, but I need to have backup."

Chef Tuason, Delacruz, and Wills would like to see several products grown locally in Hawai'i, including: 'Sweet 100' tomato, yacon, potato, chicken, and more. If farmers are interested in selling to The Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows, Chef Tuason suggests contacting their food buyer to make an appointment to discuss their products. Chef Tuason and his team are proud of the relationships they have established with their growers. Speaking of a local farmer, Chef Tuason says, "they show up once a week, consistently, with a great product." As long as a farmer is honest about what they can provide, offers products at a fair price, and consistently deliver a high quality product, Chef Tuason and his purchasing team are happy to work with them.

TAKE YOUR TIME TO DEVELOP NEW PRODUCTS

Desmond Twigg-Smith

Organic coffee farmer and processor,
Holualoa Kona Coffee Company

Desmond Twigg-Smith grows certified organic coffee and processes from ripe beans through to roasted coffee for sale at his on-farm retail outlet. "We have control of all stages of production, which means we can maintain quality. It is very fulfilling to take our coffee all the way to a final product," explains Twigg-Smith when reflecting on the wet and dry milling and roasting facilities he has developed over the years. For him, producing products that he can take pride in is much more than earning a

living, it's a lifestyle that gives satisfaction beyond what money can provide.

For Twigg-Smith, organic methods are important for environmental health and for the well being of everyone who works on his farm. Organic certification is a marketing strategy that is well worth the effort, not necessarily because customers will pay more, but because if given a choice, many people will buy organic over conventionally produced coffee because they want to support organic agriculture. In connection with the on-farm retail facility, visitors are welcome to enjoy a self-guided walking tour of the coffee orchard, mill, and roasting facility. Farm visitors have the opportunity to experience an authentic organic coffee farm and processing facility, which creates a customer bond that lasts for years. A primary marketing tool Twigg-Smith uses is rack cards located at hotels, the airport, and many other locations. Currently rack card advertising alone brings in sufficient numbers of retail customers to sell all the coffee produced on the farm, meaning that wholesale sales to retailers are unnecessary.



Desmond Twigg-Smith of Holualoa Kona Coffee Company built his business on organic production, processing, and direct farm sales.

Milling and roasting coffee for other farmers is a large part of Twigg-Smith's farm business, currently with over 200 dry mill customers and 400 roast customers. The key to building this customer base is to provide excellent and timely service. The processing business is based on keeping everybody's

coffee separate, and handling each farmer's coffee according to their special instructions. Certified organic coffee is also processed, which means extra cleaning steps between batches of conventional and organic coffee and keeping meticulous production logs. Knowing how important having control of processing of his own coffee is, Twigg-Smith works with customers to give them results that they want. Some farmers have been coming back for 20 years.

When working with a specialty crop such as Kona coffee, Twigg-Smith's advice to new farmers is to start small. "It takes time to develop products and customer relationships, often there is a long learning curve," relates Twigg-Smith from his own experience. He also advises interacting with customers as much as possible during the development of new products and markets.

LARGE INSTITUTIONS MAY BE VERY PRICE SENSITIVE

Steve Valledor

Food Service Manager, Life Care Center of Hilo

Life Care Center of Hilo (LCC-Hilo) is a local branch of Life Care Centers of America, specializing in senior health care through nursing home and long-term care facilities. Steve Valledor, the Food Service Manager of LCC-Hilo, purchases primarily from local distributors in the Hilo area. The majority of the residents at LCC-Hilo enjoy local dishes, such as laulau, kalua pork, and nishimi, a Japanese dish made with cubed taro, potato, and carrots. Every Thursday is "Hawaiian Day" in the dining hall at LCC-Hilo, and Valledor offers residents chicken and pork laulau made with locally grown taro leaf.

Valledor prefers to use locally grown products when available through distributors, but is limited by his purchasing budget. He buys directly from one local lettuce farmer, who has been delivering to LCC-Hilo for roughly 20 years, and consistently



Steve Valledor of Life Care Center of Hilo welcomes the opportunity to work with local farmers.

provides 80 pounds of lettuce per week. He sources the remaining lettuce from a local distributor, to fill out his weekly demand; Valledor prepares what they call a "gourmet salad" with the locally grown lettuce. Some residents request dishes made with eggplant and bitter melon, vegetables that are not routinely part of his local purchasing schedule. Oftentimes Valledor will purchase these items from a local grocer, such as KTA, which frequently relies on local farmers for these items. Soup stock ingredients, such as onions, carrots, and potatoes, are sourced from mainland distributors, due to the quantity required and pricing concerns. The majority of their beef comes from Hawai'i Island ranchers through the local slaughterhouse, but poultry is sourced from the mainland due to the lack of a local supplier.

Valledor would like to shift his purchasing program to more locally grown products because of the costs associated with shipping. He welcomes the opportunity to work with more local growers, as long as they can provide a product consistently at a reasonable price. If a farmer is interested in selling to a Life Care Center in Hawai'i, Valledor recommends calling the food service manager to discuss products and pricing. He suggests bringing in product samples, and requires suppliers to have a business license and tax identification number.

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA

College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR)
The founding college of the University of Hawai'i, established 1907

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EXTENSION

- Overview
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CTAHR Cooperative Extension Service, Programs & Topics

Home and Garden

Master Gardener's program Urban Garden Centers • Knowledge Master • Ask an Expert • Farmer's Bookshelf • Hawai'i Backyard Conservation handbook • Hawai'i Termites Project • Human Issues in Horticulture • Urban Green Roof Coffee Berry Borer

Commercial Agriculture

Beef Initiative • Agricultural Diagnostic Service Center • Knowledge Master • Seed Program • Sustainable Agriculture • Farmers Bookshelf • Organic Agriculture • Noni • National Organic Plan • AgTourism • AgriBusiness Education and Incubation • Coffee Berry Borer

Natural Resources

Forestry and Agroforestry • Hawai'i Renew Quality • Rainwater Catchment • Hawai'i R

Hawai'i Soils

Soil Management Collaborative Research Management for Maui County • Hawai'i S

Dr. Kent Fleming, Extension Economist, Dept. of Ag. & Resource Econ
Dwight Sato, Extension Agent, Cooperative Extension, Hawaii County
College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resources, University of Hawai'i

taros\$ (1).xls

Typical land production unit:
Production acres / farm
Structure (banks, waterways, etc.)
Area allocated to enterprise
Total units/acre patch
4 = total/farm

SUMPTIONS:

Production period
Fallow & land preparation
Planting to harvest
Time of harvest period
Time of product / plant / cycle
Time of packing unit
Time of marketable product: reported

6.37 patch
7.22 acre
14.98 1/4 foot
10,000 27 units
27 units
14.0 mo
1.0 mo
1.0 months
2.0 pounds
80 pounds
65 bags

Per GR
Unskilled
Skilled
FICA

PACKAGES (as % of potential yield =)
FINANCIAL

PRODUCT: PRICE /unit:
35 /bag
1 /pound
0 /lb. av

INPUT COSTS:
98%
2%

RESOURCES FOR HAWAII ISLAND MARKETS

THIS HAWAII PRODUCE WENT TO MARKET

The Basics of Produce, Floral, Seafood, Livestock, and Processed-Product Businesses in Hawaii

James R. Hollyer • Jennifer L. Sullivan • Linda J. Cox
Editors

Sustainable Agriculture: A Guide for Hawai'i's Farmers



DL-2 08/90

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Commodities Branch
Quality Assurance Division
1851 Auiki Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96819-3100

APPLICATION FOR LICENSE - DEALERS IN FARM PRODUCE

Please read attached sheet before completing application.

SECTION A. TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL APPLICANTS

1. NAME OF BUSINESS. (Please print)

2. PLACE OF BUSINESS. (No. and Street, City, State, ZIP)

3. CLASS OF BUSINESS. (See attached sheet for definition of all applicable classes.)

COMMISSION MERCHANT DEALER
 BROKER PROCESSOR
 AGENT RETAILER

4a. BUS PHONE: _____ 4b. BUS PHONE: _____

4c. EMAIL: _____

5. MAILING ADDRESS. (If same as block 2, _____)

6. HAWAII GROWN FARM PRODUCTS OBTAINED OR PURCHASED DIRECTLY FROM PRODUCER: (Check all applicable)

EGGS FLOWERS
 POULTRY PLANTS
 OR VEGETABLES LIVESTOCK OR LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS
 OTHER FARM PRODUCT(S) AND BECAME _____

8. DATE BUSINESS STARTED: _____

7. COMPLETE BLOCKS 10 TO 13 AS REQUIRED.) COPY

FOR OFFICE USE:
New _____ Update
Receipt No _____
Receipt Date _____
Amount Paid _____
Penalty Amount _____
Date Lic Issued _____

Print Name _____

FARM BUSINESS RESOURCES

EXTENSION SERVICES

Cooperative Extension Offices and Research

Stations College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR)

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/Site/Map.aspx>

Komohana Research Extension Center

University of Hawaii at Hilo

875 Komohana Street, Hilo, HI 96720

Tel: 808-981-5199

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/Hawaii/Contact.aspx>

Kona Extension Office–CTAHR

79-7381 Mamalahoa Highway, Kealahou, HI 96750

Tel: 808-322-4892

Email: kona@ctahr.hawaii.edu

Kamuela Extension Office–CTAHR

67-5189 Kamamalu Road, Kamuela, HI 96743

Tel: 808-887-6183

Email: kamuela@ctahr.hawaii.edu

Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Program

Cooperative Extension Service–CTAHR

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/sustainag/>

Links for new farmers: <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/sustainag/newFarmer/links.asp>

Hānai‘Ai Newsletter: <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/sustainag/news>

Agribusiness Education Training and Incubation Program

University of Hawaii at Manoa–CTAHR

3050 Maile Way, Gilmore 115A, Honolulu, HI 96822

Tel: 808-956-3530

Email: agincubator@ctahr.hawaii.edu

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/agincubator/incubation.asp>

Agricultural Diagnostics Service Center UHM-CTAHR

1910 East-West Road, Sherman Lab 134

Honolulu, HI 96822

Tel: 808-956-6706

<http://www2.ctahr.hawaii.edu/adsc/>

Seed Program UHM-CTAHR

1910 East-West Rd. Sherman Lab 108

Honolulu, HI 96822

Tel: 808-956-7890

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/seed/>

Farm Safety coaching UHM-CTAHR

Dr. Jim Hollyer

3050 Maile Way, Gilmore 112, Honolulu, HI 96822

Tel: 808-956-9539

Email: jhollyer@hawaii.edu

Food Safety UHM-CTAHR

Tropical Plant and Soil Science Department

3190 Maile Way, St. John 102, Honolulu, HI 96822

Tel: 808-956-6564

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/aurora/foodsafety.asp>

Food Science & Human Nutrition UHM-CTAHR

1955 East West Road, AgSci 216

Honolulu, HI 96822

Tel: 808-956-7095

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/hnfas/>

Natural Resources and Environmental Management UHM-CTAHR

1910 East-West Rd., Sherman Lab 101

Honolulu, HI 96822

Tel: 808-956-7530

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/sustainag/>

Pacific Business Center Program

College of Business Administration

2404 Maile Way, A413, Honolulu, HI 96822

Tel: 808-956-6286

Email: pbcphawaii.com

<http://pbcphawaii.com/>

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

USDA, Farm Services Agency

Loans, Disaster Assistance, Rural Development

154 Waiānuenuē Ave. Rm. 219, Hilo, HI 96720

Tel: 808-933-8381

Kealakekua Service Center
81-948 Waena 'Oihana, Kealakekua, HI 96750
Tel: 808-322-2484
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/HI>

USDA Rural Development, Hawaii State Office

Federal Building, 154 Waianuenue Avenue
Suite 311, Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-933-8380
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/HI-Contacts.html>

Farm Credit Services of Hawaii

Federal Land Bank Assoc. of Hawai'i
988 Kinoole Street, Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-961-3708
<http://www.hawaiiifarmcredit.com/>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Hilo Service Center
154 Waianuenue Avenue, Room 322
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-933-8381

Waimea Service Center
67-1185 Mamalahoa Highway, Suites 148/149
Kamuela, HI 96743
Tel: 808-885-6602

Kealakekua Service Center
81-948 Waena Oihana Loop
Kealakekua, HI 96750
Tel: 808-322-2484

http://soils.usda.gov/contact/state_offices/directories/hi.html

USDA Organic Certification Cost Share Program

Hawaii Department of Agriculture, Market Development Branch
1428 South King Street, Honolulu, HI 96814
Tel: 808-973-9595
<http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/add/md/OrganicProducers>

STATE AND COUNTY PROGRAMS

Food and Drug Branch (Food Safety)

Hawaii State Department of Health, State of Hawaii
591 Ala Moana Boulevard, Honolulu, HI 96813
Tel: 808-586-4725, Hilo tel: 808-933-0917

http://hawaii.gov/health/environmental/food_drug/food/foodsafety.html

Agriculture Program

Hawaii County Research and Development
Web: <http://www.hawaiicountyrandd.net/agriculture>
Tel: 808-961-8369

Agricultural Marketing Resource Center

1111 NSRIC, Iowa State University,
Ames, Iowa 50011
Tel: 866-277-5567
http://www.agmrc.org/directories__state_resources/agmrc_directories/hawaii_state_resources.cfm

Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA)

1428 South King Street, Honolulu, HI 96814
Tel: 808-973-9560

Website: <http://hawaii.gov/hdoa>

Agricultural Resources

Website: <http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/ag-resources>

Measurement Standards Branch

1851 Auiki St., Honolulu, HI 96819-3100

Tel: 808-832-0700

<http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/qad/ms/ms>

Commodities Branch

1851 Auiki St., Honolulu, HI 96819-3100

Tel: 808-832-0700

<http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/qad/comm/comm>

Market Development Branch

1428 South King Street, Honolulu, HI 96814

Tel: 808-973-9591

http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/add/md/add_md

HDOA products database

<http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/add/products-database>

Agricultural Loan Division

1428 South King Street, Honolulu, HI 96814

Tel: 808-973-9460

<http://hawaii.gov/hoda/agl>

Agricultural Loan Division, Hawai'i Island

Hawaii Department of Agriculture

75 Aupuni Street, #104, Hilo, HI 96720

Tel: 808-933-9975

<http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/agl>

Kona Civic Center

82-6130 Mamalahoa Highway

Captain Cook, HI 96704
Kona Tel: 808-323-7591

State of Hawai'i Department of Taxation

Tax Facts for Agricultural Producers
<http://hawaii.gov/tax/taxfacts/tf01-02.htm>

Business Action Center

One stop shop for business information and assistance
1130 North Nimitz Hwy, Second Level, Suite A-220
Honolulu, HI 96817
Tel: 808-586-2545
Tel: 808-974-4000 ext. 6-2545 (toll free)
<http://hawaii.gov/dcca/areas/bac/>

State of Hawai'i Dept. of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

Business Registration Division
PO Box 40, Honolulu, HI 96810
Tel: 808-586-2727
<http://hawaii.gov/dcca/areas/breg/>

Hawai'i Business Express

On-line business registration service
<http://hbe.ehawaii.gov/BizEx/home.eb>

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

College of Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resource Management

University of Hawaii at Hilo
200 W. Kawili Street, Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-974-7393
<http://hilo.hawaii.edu/academics/cafnrm/>

Construction Technology Department, Agriculture Program

200 W. Kawili Street, Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-933-0833
<http://hawaii.hawaii.edu/ate/ag.index.htm>

PRIVATE AND NON-PROFIT INITIATIVES

Hawaii Small Business Development Center

—offering free business consulting. For services visit
<http://www.hisbdc.org> and select a center

Hawaii Island: Hilo 808-933-0776, Kailua Kona 808-327-3680

Oahu: Waikiki: 808-945-1430, Pearl City 808-483-7120

Kauai: Lihue 808-241-3148

Maui: Kihei 808-875-5990

Score Hawaii, Inc.

300 Ala Moana Blvd. Rm. 2-235
Honolulu, HI 96850
Tel: 808-547-2700
Email: hawaiiiscore@hawaiiiscore.org

Hawaii Farmers Union United

Tel: 808-965-9371
<http://www.hawaiiifarmersunionunited.org/>

Kona County Farm Bureau

P. O. Box 2341, Kealahou, HI 96750
Tel: 808-324-6011
Email: Info@konafarmbureau.org
<http://www.konafarmbureau.org/contact.html>

Big Island Farm Bureau

P.O. Box 1630, Kamuela, HI 96743
Tel: 808-885-8015
<http://www.bigislandfarmbureau.org/>

Hawai'i Homegrown Food Network

Farmers market directory, farm & restaurant reports
P.O. Box 5, Holualoa, HI 96725
Tel: 808-756-9437
<http://hawaiihomegrown.net>

The Laulima Center, The Kohala Center

Agricultural Business and Cooperative Development Services
65-1291A Kawaihae Road, Kamuela, HI 96743
Tel: 808-887-6411
<http://www.kohalacenter.org/laulima/home.html>

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Hawaii Tropical Fruit Growers

P.O. Box 1162, Captain Cook, HI 96704
Tel: 808-969-7926
<http://www.hawaiitropicalfruitgrowers.org/>

Hawaii Organic Farmers Association (HOFA)

P.O. Box 6863, Hilo HI 96720

Tel: 808-969-7789

<http://www.hawaiiorganic.org/>

Kona-Kohala Chefs Association

Devin Lowder PCEC, President

P.O. Box 1268, Kailua Kona, HI 96745

Tel: 808-896-5055

makaliichef@yahoo.com

<http://www.konakohalachefs.org/>

Kona Coffee Association

P.O. Box 5436, Kailua Kona, HI 96745

<http://www.konacoffeefarmers.org/>

Hawaii Coffee Association

<http://www.hawaiicoffeessoc.org/index.php>

Big Island Beekeepers Association

<http://www.bibahawaiibeers.org/>

Hawaii Tea Society

PO Box 10644, Hilo HI 96720

Email: info@hawaiiiteasociety.org

<http://www.hawaiiiteasociety.org/>

Hawaii Cacao growers

H.C. "Skip" Bittenbender, Ph.D.

Extension Specialist for Coffee, Kava and Cacao

Tropical Plant and Soil Sciences-CTAHR

University of Hawaii at Manoa

3190 Maile Way, Honolulu, HI 96822

Tel: 808-956-6043

<http://www.hawaiicacao.com/>

Hawaii Island Chamber of Commerce

117 Keawe St, Suite 205 Hilo, HI 96720

Tel: 808-935-7178

<http://www.hicc.biz/>

Kona Kohala Chamber of Commerce

75-5737 Kuakini Hwy. Suite #208

Kailua-Kona, HI 96740

Tel: 808-329-1758

Hawaii Food Manufacturers Association

2800 Woodlawn Drive, Suite 100

Honolulu, HI 96822-1843

Tel: 808-422-4362

Email: hfma@foodsofhawaii.com

WEB SITES

USDA Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food: <http://www.usda.gov/KYFCompass>

U.S. Department of Agriculture's Quality Assurance for grading requirements: <http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/qad>

Hawai'i Department of Agriculture Risk Management: <http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/add/risk-management>

Crop insurance, AgRisk Hawaii: <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/agrisk/>

Local Harvest, online produce sales: <http://www.localharvest.org/>

Hawai'i County Food Self-Sufficiency Baseline Study 2012 http://geodata.sdal.hilo.hawaii.edu/GEODATA/COH_Ag_Project.html

Buy Fresh, Buy Local: <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/sustainag/BFBL.asp>

UH-CTAHR free publications <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/freepubs>

Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism <http://hawaii.gov/dbedt/business>

MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES ON HAWAI'I ISLAND

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS

Adaptations

79-7500 Mamalahoa Hwy

Kealahou, HI 96750

Tel: 808-324-6600

Armstrong Produce

73-5581B Olowalu St

Kailua Kona, HI 96740

Tel: 808-331-2601

<http://www.armstrongproduce.com/site/>

Cal-Kona Produce

79-7350 Mamalahoa Hwy # D
Kealahou, HI 96750
Tel: 808-322-6033

Crown Pacific

355 Luakaha St
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-935-1550

Hawaiian Fresh Products

270 E Kawili St
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-961-5580

Hawaiian Rainbow Produce

16 Shipman St #313
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-982-9694

Hilo Products

41 Makaala St
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-935-1379

Honaunau Market

73-5569 Olowalu St
Kailua Kona, HI 96740
Tel: 808-329-1365

Suisan Company

85 Lihikai St
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-935-9349

Kona Suisan
73-4836 Kanalani Street
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
Tel: 808-329-3558
<http://suisan.com/>

LARGE GROCERY STORES

Choice Mart

82-6066 Mamalahoa Hwy
Captain Cook, HI 96704
Tel: 808-323-3994

Costco

Kailua Kona, HI 96740
Tel: 808-331-4810

Foodland Super Market

16-586 Old Volcano Rd #102
Keaau, HI 96749
Tel: 808-966-9316

Island Naturals Market and Deli (several locations)

74-5487 Kaiwi Street, Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
Email: russell@islandnaturals.com
Hilo tel: 808-935-5533
<http://www.islandnaturals.com>

Keaau Natural Foods Inc

Keaau Shopping Ctr
Keaau, HI 96749
Tel: 808-966-8877

Keaau Village Market

16-550 Old Volcano Rd
Keaau, HI 96749
Tel: 808-966-4853

Kona Natural Foods

Kamuela, HI 96743
Tel: 808-885-6775

KTA Super Stores (several locations)

50 E Puainako St
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-959-9111
<http://www.ktasuperstores.com>

Safeway (several locations)

111 E Puainako St
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-959-2000

Sack 'N Save

Puainako Town Ctr
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-959-5831

Sure Save Supermarket

16-128 Orchid Land Dr.
Keaau, HI 96749
808-966-9009

RESTAURANTS, INSTITUTIONS, PROCESSORS, ETC.

There are many of these businesses located on Hawai'i Island. Please refer to the phone book, Internet yellow pages, and professional association web sites to locate these businesses.

INTERVIEWEE CONTACT INFO

Over thirty people with extensive experience with produce markets on Hawai'i Island (and elsewhere) were interviewed for the Recommended Practices chapter. Below is their contact information. *Please be respectful of their time.*

Reece Asakura

General Manager, Armstrong Produce
73-5581B Olowalu Street
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
Direct line: 808-331-2601
Email: reecea@armstrongproduce.com

James Babian

Executive Chef, Four Seasons Resort
Hualālai at Ka'ūpulehu
72-100 Ka'upulehu Drive
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
Email: jbastian@fourseasons.com
Tel: 808-325-8000

Brandon Bartolome

Owner, Hilo Products Inc.
41 Makaala Street Hilo, HI 96720-5179
Tel: 808-935-1379
Email: brandonyb1975@gmail.com

Chef Daniel and Clare Bobo

Island Thyme Gourmet
Personal Chef Services
Mobile: 808-936-6511
Email: cbobo@hawaii.rr.com

Charles Charbonneau

Executive Chef, Hilton Waikoloa Village
425 Waikoloa Beach Drive

Waikoloa, HI 96738
Tel: 808-886-1234 x2430
Email: charles.charbonneau@hilton.com

Tane and Maureen Datta

Owners, Adaptations, Inc.
P.O. Box 1070
Captain Cook, HI 96704
Tel: 808-324-6600
Email: adaptations@igc.org

Henry Delacruz

Receiving manager/Food buyer
The Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows
68-1400 Mauna Lani Drive
Kohala Coast, HI 96743
Tel: 808-881-7052
Email: hdelacruz@maunalani.com

Randy Goff

Manager, Waianuhea
45-3503 Kahana Drive
P.O. Box 185
Honokaa, HI 96727
Tel: 808-775-1118
Email: info@waianuhea.com

Edwin Goto

Owner, Village Burger
64-5307 Puukapu Street
Kamuela, HI 96743
Tel: 808-640-7772
Email: edwingoto@rocketmail.com

Jen Gow

Produce Manager
Island Naturals Market and Deli
79-7460 Mamalahoa Hwy
Kealahou, HI 96750
808-930-7550
Email: jennifer@islandnaturals.com

Emmerich Grosch

Emmerich Grosch Associates Inc.
81 Halekii Street
Kailua Kona, HI 96740
Tel: 808-322-7799

Richard Ha

President, Hamakua Springs Country Farms

421 Lama Street
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-981-0805
Email: info@hamakuasprings.com

Roy Honda

Roy Y. Honda Farm
83-5383 Mamalahoa Hwy.
Captain Cook, HI 96704
Tel: 808-328-9188
Email: royhonda@hawaiiintel.net

Tricia and Mike Hodson

Wow Farms
P.O. Box 2197
Kamuela, HI 96743
Tel: 808-887-0969
Email: info@wowfarms.com

Ken and Roen Hufford

Honopua Farm
P.O. Box 355
Kamuela, HI 96743
Tel: 808-937-9384
Email: honopua@msn.com

Jeff and Miliana Johnson

Ohia Fields Farm
PO Box 1548
Honokaa HI 96727
ohiafieldsfarm@gmail.com
Tel: 808-430-3847

Bruce Kekuewa

Food Services Manager
Kamehameha Schools
Tel: 808-982-0022
Email: brkekuew@ksbe.edu

Derek Kurisu

Executive Vice President, KTA Superstores
50 E. Puainako Street
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-959-4575, X3328
Email: derek_kurisu@ktasuperstores.com

Ken Love

Love Family Farms
PO Box 1242
Captain Cook, HI 96704

Tel: 808-323-2417
Email: ken@mycoffee.net

Tom Menezes

Hawaiian Pineapple Company
Tel: 808-960-5218
Email: tom.menezes@hawaiiintel.net

Nancy Ginter-Miller

Produce to Product, Inc.
P.O. Box 1087
Kailua-Kona, HI 96745
Tel: 808-322-6619
Email: nkona@hawaii.rr.com

Ōlelo pa'a Faith Ogawa

President, Glow Hawaii
P.O. Box 385669
Waikoloa, HI 96738
Tel: 808-883-0103
Mobile: 808-938-3989
Email: glow@glowhawaii.com

Tom Palusak

Produce Manager, Choice Mart
82-6066 Mamalahoa Hwy
Captain Cook, HI 96704
Tel: 808-323-3994, Fax: 808-323-3997

Chris Robb

Owner, Robb Farms
P.O. Box 7102
Kamuela, HI 96743
Tel: 808-887-0950
Email: crobb50@yahoo.com

Russell Ruderman

Island Naturals Market and Deli
74-5487 Kaiwi Street,
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
Email: russell@islandnaturals.com
Hilo Store: 808-935-5533

Richard Schnitzler

President, Hamakua Macadamia Nut Company
P.O. Box 44715
Kawaihae, HI 96743
Tel: 808-882-1116
Email: richard@hawnnut.com

Matt Thoman, Kitchen Manager
Krista Donaldson, Sustainability Supervisor

Kona Brewing Company
75-5629 Kuakini Highway
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
Tel: 808-334-2739

Collin Thornton

Executive Chef, The Fairmont Orchid
1 North Kaniku Drive
Kohala Coast, HI 96743
Tel: 808-887-7402
Email: collin.thornton@fairmont.com

Sandy Tuason

Executive Chef,
The Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows
68-1400 Mauna Lani Drive
Kohala Coast, HI 96743
Tel: 808-885-1446
Email: stuason@maunalani.com

Desmond Twigg-Smith

Holualoa Kona Coffee Co.
77-6261 Mamalahoa Hwy, Holualoa HI 96725
Tel: 808-322-9937; Fax: 808-322-7304
Email: dtwiggsmith@gmail.com

Mike Quanan

Produce Manager, Suisan Company, Ltd.
73-4836 Kanalani Street
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
Tel: 808-935-8511 or 808-329-3746
Email: MikeQ@suisan.com

Steven Valledor

Produce Buyer, Life Care Center of Hilo
944 West Kawaihina Street
Hilo, HI 96720
Tel: 808-959-9151

HAWAII ISLAND FARMERS MARKETS

This list was excerpted with permission from the Hawai'i Homegrown Food Network Farmers Market Directory web site. As this information chang-

es continually, it is best to visit the web site to check for the latest information.

North Kohala

Hawi Farmers Market

Saturday, 8 am–2 pm, and Tuesday, 2–6 pm
Rick Chalker: 808-889-0889, kohala889@yahoo.com,
<http://www.hawifarmersmarket.com>

South Kohala

Waimea Mid-Week Farmers Market

Wednesday, 11 am–5 pm
(previously Anna Ranch Farmers Market) On Pukalani Road at Pukalani Stables located in the heart of Waimea. Contact: Cindy, waimeamidweekmarket@gmail.com

Kekela Farm Market

Tuesday and Friday, 2–5 pm
64-604 Mana Road, Kamuela. Turn onto Mana Road at 55 mile marker, Mamalahoa Highway; left at stop sign, 0.4 miles to red barn (first left after Koa Lane). Contact: 808-887-0023

Waikalua King's Shop Farmers Market

Wednesday, 8:30–1:00
Contact: Tammy Touchet, Palani Makai Partners, LLC–palanimakai@gmail.com.

Waikoloa Village Farmers Market

Saturday, starts 7:15 am
Waikoloa Community Church parking lot across from Waikoloa Elementary School. Contact Jane Burnham.

Waimea Homestead Farmers Market

Saturday, 7 am–noon
Held on the lawn fronting Kuhio Hale, the West Hawaii District Office of the Department of Hawaiian Homelands (the 55 mile marker of Mamalahoa Hwy.) Info: Roen Hufford, (937-2729) honopua@msn.com or Cynthia Spencer (333-2165)

Waimea Town Market at Parker School, Waimea

Saturday, 8 am–1 pm
Located at Parker School–Kamuela. Contact: Paul, 808-887-0023, email: waimeamkt@yahoo.com

Waimea Country Market

Once a month (usually the 3rd Sunday of the month),
7 am–2 pm.
Mile marker 51, just past the Waimea golf course,
heading toward Honokaʻa–makai side of hwy (there
are big signs).

Hāmākua

Honokaʻa Farmers Market

Saturday, 7:30 am
Fronting Honokaʻa Trading Company. Contact: Grace
Walker 808-775-0808.

North Hilo

Laupahoehoe Farmers Market

Sunday, 9 am–1 pm
Next to the Minit Mart on the highway. Contact: Ar-
lene Hussey, 808-640-4081.

South Hilo

Hilo Farmers Market

Wednesday and Saturday, 7 am–3 pm
Downtown Hilo corner of Mamo and Kamehameha
Ave., across from the Moʻoheau Bandstand and
bus station. Contact: Keith De La Cruz (933-1000)
or info@hilofarmersmarket.com, <http://www.hilofarmersmarket.com>

Keaukaha Panaʻewa Farmers Market

Saturday 7:30 am–4 pm
Railroad Ave across from Home Depot. Contact:
Howard Pea 808-959-7802 or kpfa@hawaii.rr.com.

Kinoʻole Farmers Market

Saturday, 7 am–noon
Hilo at the Kinoʻole Shopping Plaza (old Sure Save
market location) at 1990 Kinoole. Delan (Rusty) Perry
808-938-4545 or dperry@papayas.net

Mamo Street Market

Open 7 days a week 8 am–5 pm
Mamo parking lot corner of Mamo Street and Kilauea
Avenue, Hilo.

Rainbow Falls Market Place

Monday and Thursday, 8 am–4 pm

Across from Rainbow Falls in Hilo. Contact: Vynel
Sugino 808-933-9173.

Kalapana (SPACE) Farmers Market

Saturday, 8 am–noon
Space Performing Arts Center 12-247 West Pohaku-
pele Loop, Pahoa. Contact: Jenna 808-965-8756–
info@hawaii.space.com; <http://www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/M31958>

Keaʻau Village Farmers Market

Tuesday to Friday, 9 am–5 pm; Saturday, 8 am–3 pm;
closed Sunday & Monday
16-0550 Old Volcano Rd., Keaʻau. Contact: Arlen Ma-
cAnan 808-966-4853.

Makuʻu Farmers Market

Sunday, 8 am–2 pm
Highway 130 past Ainaloa Subdivision between MM
7–8, Pahoa. Contact: Paula Kekahuna 808-896-5537 or
makuufarmersassociation@yahoo.com

Pāhoa Farmers Market

Sunday, 6 am–3 pm
Luquinʻs/Akebono Theater parking lot. Contact: An-
thony 808-965-9292.

Volcano Farmers Market

Sunday, 6:30–10 am
Cooper Center, Wright Road, Volcano Village.
Contact: Linda Ugalde 808-967-7209 or kilaueatutu@hawaii.rr.com

Kaʻū

Nāʻālehu Farmers Market

Wednesday and Saturday, 8 am–noon
Ace Hardware lawn, Nāʻālehu. Contact: Eleanor Powell
808-939-7536 or Marge.marge@hawaii.rr.com, <http://www.naalehu.org/projects.shtml>

South Kona

South Kona Fruit Stand

Monday–Saturday, 9 am–6 pm;
Sunday, 10 am–5 pm
84-4770 Mamalahoa Hwy–between mile marker 103
& 104, Honaunau. Contact: 328-8547.

South Kona Green Market (SKGM)

Sunday, 9 am–1 pm

Kealakekua Ranch Center, behind ChoiceMart and Ace Hardware, Captain Cook, about mile marker 109.5. Contact: Timothy Bruno 808-328-8797 manager@skgm.org, <http://www.SKGM.org>

North Kona

Coastview Aquaponics Roadside Stand

Saturday, 8 am–noon; Tues & Thurs, 4 pm–6 pm.
73-1202 Ahikawa Street, Mamalahoa Hwy, one street north of Ka‘iminani, turn makai. Contact: coastviewaquaponics@gmail.com

Holualoa Farmers Market

Saturday, 9 am–Noon
Mauka Station (opposite Kona Hotel), Holualoa. Contact: Todd 808-430-0235

Ho‘oulu Community Farmers Market

Wednesday, 10:30–3:30 pm
Keauhou Beach Resort Royal Gardens, Ali‘i Drive, Kailua-Kona. Contact: Greg and Gail Smith 808-939-7510 or hooulufarmers@gmail.com, <http://www.hooulufarmersmkt.com>

Kailua Village Farmers Market

Wednesday thru Sunday, 7 am–4 pm
Across from Hale Halawai, corner of Alii Drive and Hualalai Rd., Kailua-Kona. <http://www.konafarmersmarket.com/>

Keauhou Farmers Market

Saturday, 8 am–Noon
Keauhou Shopping Center, Keauhou. Contact: Nancy Miller 808-769-0672 or info@keauhoufarmermarket.com. <http://www.keauhoufarmersmarket.com>

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Notes

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Hawai'i Island Farmer's Guide to Accessing Markets embraces a simple premise. There are currently over 200,000 people on Hawai'i Island, which is a huge market currently dominated by produce imported from off-island sources. From a farmer's perspective, the information found within this guide will help answer the questions of, "What crops should I grow?" and "Who should I market to?" Also, this guide reveals critical protocols and strategies for accessing and retaining markets.

The information found within this guide comes straight from experienced local farmers and produce buyers—some of the best professional advice available for thriving in today's local produce markets.

Hawai'i Island has a centuries-old history rooted in agriculture. It was not that long ago that the island very capably fed its entire population, with enough surplus to share with others. This agricultural abundance was the basis of a thriving rural economy and has always been a strong cultural foundation for our island home. This marketing guide is part of a larger effort by many who are seeking to reestablish a locally based food system by supporting local farmers who feed our community and take care of our cherished agricultural lands.

This guide is for new and experienced farmers and gardeners and everyone interested in a sustainable local food economy in Hawai'i.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Maintain clear, frequent, and friendly communication with customers
- Grow what customers want when they want it
- Be reliable—deliver consistent quality and quantity, on time
- Grow only crops that you can grow well
- Calculate your cost of production and use it as the basis for setting prices
- Diversify crops, varieties, and markets
- Follow standard food safety practices
- Learn from experienced buyers, producers, and agricultural/business advisors
- Be the best spokesperson for your produce
- Practice record keeping skills diligently
- Keep your customers' best interests in mind



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