



## West Hawaii Sustainable Agriculture Skill Panel Forum March 6, 2012 Planning committee meeting

### Topic Areas

1. Innovations and Sustainability: This topic area will include discussion of innovative training strategies with a focus on sustainable practices in agriculture. The need for teaching more sustainable practices is great as our state is faced with high oil prices and a system that is currently importing 80-90% of its food. Additional areas of discussion include: Organic Farming, Soil Building, and Natural farming.
2. Education and Training: This topic area will focus discussion around K-12 and Adult education for agriculture. It may also include continuing education for farmers and farm workers to keep up with new and innovative practices. Additional areas of discussion may include: Education and training needs that are lacking in the state as well as best practices of programs in West Hawaii that are currently available.
3. Infrastructure: It is hard to discuss supporting and growing agriculture without highlighting the needs in this topic area. Fostering growth in the next generation of farmers as well as existing farmers must include a strong and supportive infrastructure. In addition, what types of labor needs does this topic area encompass and do we have the ability to grow local labor to fill those labor needs? Additional areas of discussion include: Government services, Farmers Organizations (including Farm Co-operatives and Farmers Union), and Farm worker housing.
4. Food Distribution: To help the industry thrive and remain economically viable, this topic area is increasingly important in order for farmers to run sustainable and smart businesses. In doing so, how do farmers identify new markets and what are the barriers for farmers to enter those untapped and existing markets? Additional areas of discussion include: Transportation and Marketing.
5. Recruitment and Retention of Workers: Although plantation farming is now a thing of the past, the perception of farming to be a low-skilled, low-paying job still remains in today's society. How does the industry change this perception and what is needed in order to provide stable, high-paying jobs to the agriculture labor force? Additional areas of discussion include: Immigrant and seasonal workers, Outreach programs and campaigns, Future Farmers of America and 4-H Clubs.