

Sustainable Agriculture Skill Panel Forum
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Practical Application of Agriculture Skills Panel (Oahu)

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Discussion Outline:

- I. Introductions: Why are we here?
- II. Setting the Context Discussion:
 - a. What is the current state of communication between educational entities and the agricultural industry on practical applications for agricultural skills?
 - b. What is the current state of labor and labor shortages affecting practical applications of agricultural skills?
 - c. What is needed to expand practical applications for agricultural skills?
- III. Preferred Vision in 10-20 Years
- IV. Develop Priorities
 - a. What are the opportunities or supporting forces that will move us closer to our best case scenario/vision?
 - b. What are the barriers or restraints that hold us back from moving closer to our best case scenario/vision?
- V. Outline Actions for Priorities (time permitting)

I. Introductions: Why are we here?

- To learn more about youth involvement in Ag
- Concerned about future for farmers; need new concepts
- Return nursing to the ground level
- To look for workforce partners
- Gather information to build pathways
- Talk about opportunities for under-employed
- Outlets for green jobs
- Land can heal
- Looking for partners
- Re-entry of inmates
- Stop the cycle of homelessness
- Get data
- Empower inmates to go into community
- Skill sets for prisoners
- Send homeless back into the community
- Tap incarcerated resources
- Understand issues and find partners
- Measure progress

- Help veterans
- Learn about skill gaps

II. Setting the Context Discussion

What is the current state of communication between educational entities and the agricultural industry on practical applications for agricultural skills?

- No one from the DOE is here; that already tells you there's a gap
- Six pathways developed with Advisory Council, but not with a lot of participation with the Ag industry
- Educational institutions are more Western driven, using more Western measures and less emphasis on the Hawaiian culture
- The education system doesn't look at Ag as an employment source
- Farm is looked at as an activity; not as a business
- We need more communication between the two
- We are losing Ag teachers; as older ones retire, they are not being replaced
- With a few exceptions, no communication from education to Ag
- The Ag industry is not one entity; there are a lot of small businesses
- There's no interface with our schools
- The next generation is not interested
- There's no research on taro; need to be researching areas. UH did research on livestock. It starts with research.
- Food safety
- There is not a clear vision of the new Ag industry as it is today by educational institutions
- From CTE side, under-developed pathway
- Need better communication with DOE
- There is no communication between AG and nursing. There needs to be a healthcare curriculum.
- People don't have an integrated vision for why Ag is important
- There's a negative stereotype about Ag like it's not academic enough
- Some Ag leaders have been cut back to part time
- There is no link to business
- On Kauai, there's a bioscience curriculum. There's a long lead time needed to develop a curriculum
- UH doesn't refer students for internships
- Perception of Ag is blue collar; "dirty;" plantation; in the field
- On Maui, you have science teachers teaching Ag
- Educational institutions could at least encourage Ag as a minor, to go with a major like medicine, law, nursing, etc.
- Some think of farming as a lifestyle, not as a business. It is both.
- One farmer made an offer to UH; no interest

- How do you take the educational system seriously when our politicians have decided that a French fry is a vegetable?

What is the current state of labor and labor shortages affecting practical applications of agricultural skills?

- More people are in prison than there are farmers
- Some parolees make more working on the farm than their parole officers
- IHS teaches organic farming, but the graduates couldn't get jobs
- What are the Ag skills? It's not just hands in the dirt.
- How many jobs are there currently? (Not many, according to report cited.)
- There's a disconnect. We need to have other people look at Ag as a business.
- Clients with special needs also need to be supported to do Ag work
- We're importing seasonal workers on every island. That's crazy instead of using workforce here.
- There's a lot of discipline required when you're in Ag
- How do we find out where the jobs are?
- There are transportation and housing issues
- The Dept. of Labor tries to get job postings out. (Hire Net Hawaii?) Challenge is to get more current information from employers.
- There is no good working definition of "practical applications." We need this to improve the process. Practical applications are much more than digging.
- Employees are not prepared when they do show up.
- We need to follow clients when they leave incarceration.
- Youth is another labor source.
- Some in prison already have some training
- There needs to be an economic incentive to go into farming.
- We need to create an industry before there are jobs. Look at Japan.
- Problem isn't skills. We need an industry policy from the state. Ex: Starbucks' beans
- It's not just the big farms; smaller farms can be training grounds
- We need localized description of Ag applications

III. Preferred Vision in 10-20 Years

What is the best case scenario for assuring a workforce engaged in practical applications of agriculture skills 10- 20 years from now?

- There are models in every community
- It's a priority for the State.
- An organic farm training center
- Create value for consumers so they can answer: "Why should I buy local when it costs more?"
- Create local and national demand

- The image of the farmer needs to be shored up so he's not the "poor guy."
- Start at an early age
- Ag is re-introduced into the curriculum. Teach the teachers.
- State has integrated Ag plans
- Build the industry
- Develop materials for teaching, like a film documentary that gets distributed to schools
- Support existing initiatives (like school gardens)
- Integrate initiatives so they are sustainable, not just reliant on grants
- Why wait 10-20 years?
- Re-value the teaching of whole education
- Preserve land for Ag
- Consumers in the future are educated about the value of Ag
- Educational waivers could be offered for participation in Ag
- In 10-20 years, the industry is sustainable and affordable
- We grow food here; we are sustainable in the future
- Every school has a farm and serves food from it
- FFA in every high school
- Workforce housing exists close to farms
- Every household does gardening
- Any new development needs to allocate a percentage of land to growing food
- Clean water
- State and county allow long-term Ag leases and allow farmers to live on it
- Culturally relevant
- Hawaii grows some percentage of all it eats
- Nursing working with Ag from birth to death
- Water rebates
- Rebates for home farming; reward with health insurance rebates
- An educated consumer understands the relationship between food and health
- The right players need to be at the table
- Ag is marketed like Hawaii markets tourism
- Markets are required to buy directly from producers
- Dept. of Ag moves its focus from compliance to being a resource
- There is collaboration between multiple agencies
- Legislative action to make it feasible (i.e. affordable) to make and buy local
- Consumers are educated about nutrition and value and they buy local
- Farmers are educated about standards (for selling their products to Whole Foods, for example) and about business management
- There is housing for workforce

IV. Develop Priorities

What are the opportunities or supporting forces that will move us closer to our best case scenario/vision?

- Inspired leaders with vision
- S.M.A.R.T. timeline
- Different voices coming together
- Political will
- Strategic planning around Ag, including measurement
- Budget and resources (can do more cheaply when there are fewer resources; that's why it's listed as an opportunity)
- There are good existing initiatives and technology
- The rising cost of fuel is an impetus
- Grant opportunities
- Untapped workforce
- Public awareness

What are the barriers or restraints that hold us back from moving closer to our best case scenario/vision?

- Infrastructure support that connects the pieces; pertaining both to the workforce and the industry
- High price of land
- The government hold on land
- The bureaucracy of permitting
- Lack of workforce housing close to farm
- Can't serve food you grow at school because of food safety concerns
- Industry image
- Lack of education and training about the industry and skills
- Pest challenges
- Unwillingness to extend partnerships
- Lack of understanding by DOE
- Definition isn't clear; Ag and farming involves full spectrum, from soil, to quality control to marketing, etc.
- Language barriers in workforce
- Old perception of Ag limits interest in Ag careers
- Farming is hard work
- Reality is a barrier
- Plantation mentality
- Competition for cheaper workforce; lei, for example
- "Cheap food" policy
- Cost of living

- Takes time to retrain, re-tool potential workers; they don't come prepared
- People don't have first-hand experience

Cluster and prioritize like ideas among opportunities and barriers

Note: Clusters were not indicated

- **Job Readiness Training (19)**
- **Planning and implementation (12)**
- **Public Awareness (16)**
- Leadership (8)
- Resources (6)
- Industry Infrastructure (5)
- Land Access (2)
- Cost of Living (1)

V. Outline Actions for Priorities

What possible actions can we take in the next 2-3 years that will address Priority 1 - Job Readiness Training?

- Create and fund job-ready specialists around sites where there are potential workers (e.g., homeless shelters, prisons)
- Provide training at worksite
- Provide training where workers are
- Link with one-stop centers
- Create jobs
- Improve interface with PSD
- Support young farmer training programs
- Initiate discussions with DOE
- Establish good data collection and reporting system
- Have more communication between producers and potential workers
- Strengthen CTE Natural Resources pathway to become career ready

Vision for Practical Application of Agricultural Skill Panel

(Arrived at after the fact with co-chair Marc Alexander)

Agriculture is seen as a desirable and viable career and industry.