



State of Hawaii

December 3, 2019

**ADC Farmer Highlight**

**Helemano Farms** is a family owned and operated business that grows and sells Christmas trees on the island of Oahu. The farm's humble beginning started in 2002 as a retirement project of Hawaii agriculture executive Mike O'Brien. When Mike was a child in California, he and his family would go to a farm to pick their Christmas trees. Years later, Mike thought it would be a great idea if Hawaii had a Christmas tree farm where local families can come and pick their own tree.



With the help of his son, Aaron, Mike began planting Norfolk pine trees in Whitmore Village. The two ultimately planted more than 15,000 Norfolk trees. Mike passed away before seeing families at the farm picking their Christmas trees as he envisioned, but his legacy lives on and his family runs a Christmas tree harvest from the day after Thanksgiving to December 23 every year in his memory.

In 2016, the ADC provided Helemano Farm with a long-term license, which allowed them to reinvest in the farm. Today, Helemano Farm's Christmas trees come in different varieties and sizes. Because they are grown here in Hawaii, they are safer for the local environment. Imported Christmas trees have brought harmful invasive species to Hawaii from the mainland and artificial Christmas trees made of PVC can degrade over time and can carry dangerous exposure to lead. There are many benefits to buying local. Locally grown trees reduce the demand for imported trees, stay green longer, and do not harbor invasive pest like the imported trees from the mainland.



Carolina Sapphire Trees



Leyland Cypress & Murray Cypress Trees

## Whitmore Agricultural Lands Update



The ADC has cleared over a hundred acres of former pineapple lands for agriculture production. These fallow agricultural lands were overgrown with large invasive albizia trees, which dominated the landscape. In addition, the ADC cleared hazardous trees and overgrown brush near Helemano Elementary School and various residences and ag operations in Whitmore and Wahiawa. Some of these overgrown areas have been plagued with criminal activity and is littered with numerous encampments, abandoned vehicles, and trash. The ADC is working with the Honolulu Police Department to crackdown on criminal activities occurring on the fallow lands, gulches, and ravines. The ADC's long-range plan for this specific area include developing protected agriculture operations (greenhouses) and productive orchards to utilize the area's rich soil, high elevation, and humidity levels. Some of the potential crops include breadfruit, lychee, and citrus.



Removal of Encampment & Trash



HPD Recovering Stolen Vehicle



Large Albizia Trees to the Left and in Background



Recently Cleared Albizia Forest

## No Immediate Changes to Hawaii's Industrial Hemp Pilot Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently established the U.S. Domestic Hemp Production Program through an Interim Final Rule in accordance with the 2018 Farm Bill. The Interim Final Rule does not have an immediate effect on industrial hemp that was or is being cultivated under the 2014 Farm Bill programs, including Hawaii's Industrial Hemp Research Pilot Program.

The new rule outlines provisions for the USDA to approve plans submitted by states and tribes for the domestic production of hemp. It also establishes a federal plan for producers in states or territories of tribes that do not have their own USDA-approved plan.

"Through the pilot program, there has been significant interest by existing and potential farmers in growing hemp in Hawaii," said Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser, chairperson of the Hawaii Board of Agriculture. "The department is examining the new federal regulations and will continue to develop a program to ensure future commercial production of hemp in Hawaii."

With the release of the USDA Interim Final Rule, HDOA anticipates legislative action aligned with USDA's direction to provide the statutory authority and resources necessary for Hawaii's hemp growers to transition from the current pilot program to commercial production.

In the interim, HDOA continues to prepare a plan for submission to USDA, and to run Hawaii's Industrial Hemp Research Pilot Program in accordance with the 2014 Farm Bill and current state law.

There are currently 36 industrial hemp growers licensed in the state under the pilot program.

For more information on the Interim Final Rule and instructions on how the public may submit comments to USDA, go to: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/hemp>. The public comment period is open until December 30, 2019.

For information on Hawaii's Industrial Hemp Research Pilot Program, go to: <https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/hemp/>

## Wahiawa Value-Added Product Development Center Presentation

The Leeward Community College and Ushijima Architects presented an overview of the Wahiawa Value-Added Product Development Center to the Wahiawa Neighborhood Board on Monday, November 18, 2019. The concept for the project and building features were explained along with the planned academic curriculum support.

A link to the presentation deck can be found at the [ADC Newsletter Page](#).

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