



## Market Analysis and News Branch

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In Cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Statistics Service, Pacific Region

# Labor Shortage as a Barrier to Agricultural Expansion 2020

The USDA-NASS reported in a recent commercial agriculture survey that 41% of participating farmers and ranchers in Hawaii attributed insufficient access to labor as the second leading challenge/barrier to their business expansion.<sup>1</sup> When broken down by county origin, the corresponding concerns expressed by both farmers and ranchers were as follows: Hawaii (36%), Honolulu (59%), Kauai (40%), and Maui (44%).

Labor shortages have disproportionately affected agricultural operations in Honolulu County more than those in other counties (see Table 1). Furthermore, larger farms with higher sales are also more likely to encounter inadequate labor access (see Table 2). Some producers who export sweet potatoes and basil to markets in the continental U.S. are known to fall into both categories. Charts 1 and 2 provide additional illustrations on the effects of insufficient labor access on the different counties and different farm sales categories.

**Table 1. Insufficient Labor Access as a Barrier to Commercial Expansion - State and Counties, 2020**

	State	Hawaii	Honolulu	Kauai	Maui
Agricultural Operations (Sales>\$50K*)	1,062	651	188	88	135
Proportion of State Operations (%)	100%	61%	18%	8%	13%
Barrier Cited: Insufficient Labor Access	440	234	111	35	60
Proportion of Barrier Cited (Count) to Agricultural Operations (%)	41%	36%	59%	40%	44%
Differential from State Average (%)	0%	-5%	18%	-1%	3%

\*Estimate based on historical performance value.

Source: *USDA-NASS Hawaii Commercial Agricultural Expansion Survey Highlights*. Available at: [https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/add/files/2021/11/AGEXPAND\\_Nov2021r.pdf](https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/add/files/2021/11/AGEXPAND_Nov2021r.pdf) (Accessed 04.22.2022).

<sup>1</sup> USDA-NASS, November 2021. Commercial Agricultural Production Expansion Survey 2021. Available at: [AGEXPAND\\_Nov2021r.pdf \(hawaii.gov\)](https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/add/files/2021/11/AGEXPAND_Nov2021r.pdf) (Accessed April 22, 2022).

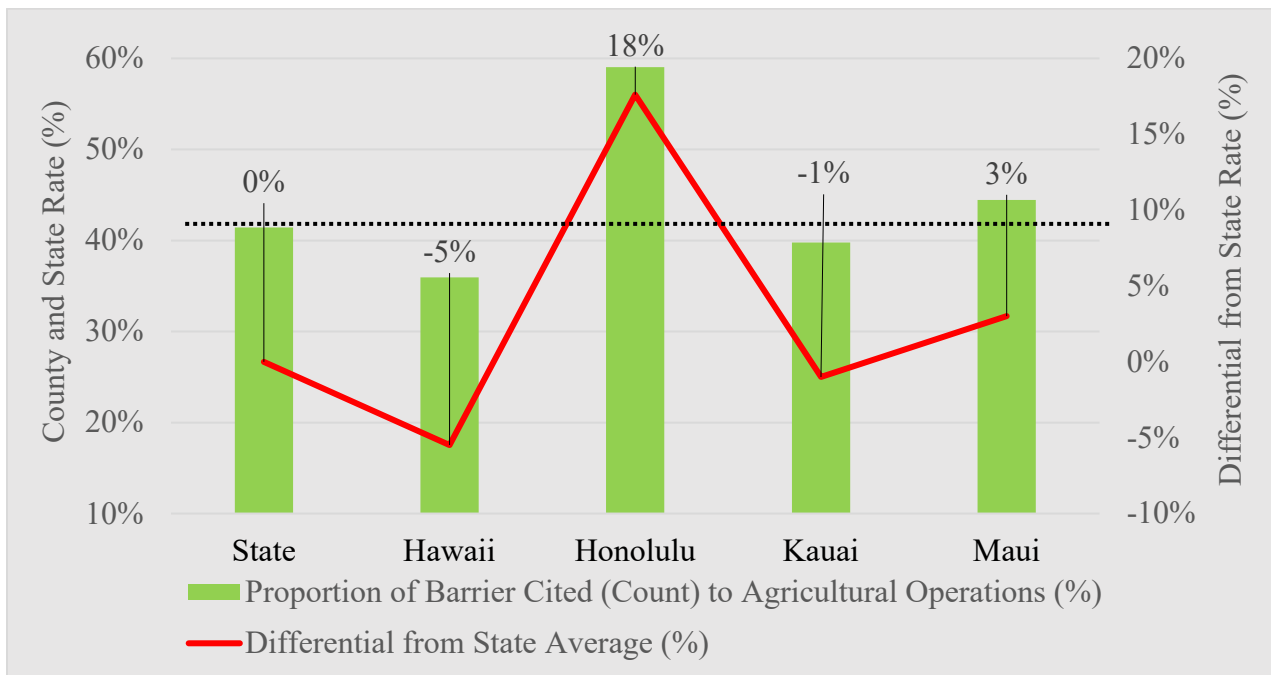
**Table 2. Insufficient Labor Access as a Barrier to Commercial Expansion Faced by Farms in Different Sales Category, 2020**

	State	Less than \$49,999	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$499,999	\$500,000 or More
Agricultural Operations (Sales>\$50K*)	1,062	474	174	260	154
Proportion of State Operations (%)	100%	45%	16%	24%	15%
Barrier Cited: Insufficient Access to Labor	440	144	72	129	95
Proportion of Barrier Cited (Count) to Agricultural Operations (%)	41%	30%	41%	50%	62%
Differential from State Average (%)	0%	-11%	0%	9%	21%

\*Estimate based on historical performance value.

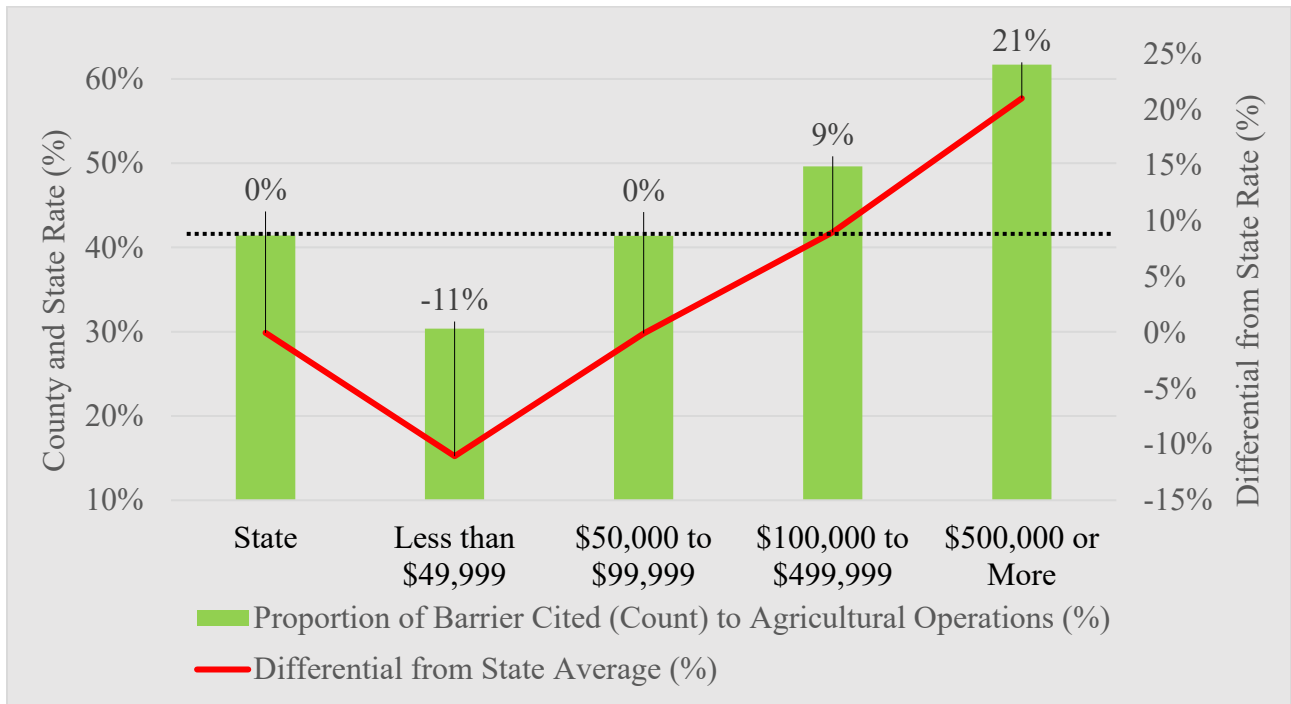
Source: USDA-NASS Hawaii Commercial Agricultural Expansion Survey Highlights. Available at: [https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/add/files/2021/11/AGEXPAND\\_Nov2021r.pdf](https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/add/files/2021/11/AGEXPAND_Nov2021r.pdf) (Accessed 04.25.2022).

**Chart 1: Differential in County and Statewide Rates in Hawaii – Insufficient Labor Access, 2020**



Source: USDA-NASS, November 2021. Commercial Agricultural Production Expansion Survey 2021. Available at: [https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/add/files/2021/11/AGEXPAND\\_Nov2021r.pdf](https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/add/files/2021/11/AGEXPAND_Nov2021r.pdf) (Accessed 04.25.2022).

**Chart 2: Differential from State Average in Hawaii by Farm Sales Category, 2020**



Source: USDA-NASS Hawaii Commercial Agricultural Expansion Survey Highlights. Available at: [https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/add/files/2021/11/AGEXPAND\\_Nov2021r.pdf](https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/add/files/2021/11/AGEXPAND_Nov2021r.pdf) (Accessed 04.25.2022).