

**Sustainable Agriculture Skill Panel Forum**  
**March 6, 2012**  
**Infrastructure**

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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 agricultural infrastructure?
    - b. What is the current state of labor and labor shortages affecting infrastructure?
  - III. Preferred Vision in 10-20 Years: Best Case Scenario
  - 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)
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**I. Introductions: Why are we here?**

- Ag crime; brainstorm creative solutions and a dependable foundation
- Create more successful agriculture
- Recruit more people to Ag industry
- Want to find and keep good people
- Access water for small farms
- Farm housing
- Help alleviate transportation issues for employees
- To learn
- Looking for ideas and solutions
- Sustainable farm industry
- Sustainable kitchen for farmers
- Increase workforce; training
- Learn more about laws, resources and referrals available
- Recently moved from the mainland and want to learn
- Need more resources
- Trying to find help for small farm
- To take notes and learn (5 students from WHEA)
- Gather information

## II. Setting the Context Discussion

### ***What is the current state of communication between education entities and the agricultural infrastructure?***

- In Ka'u, the community is famous for killing every project that comes into the community
  - Educate the community on life and business skills (ag skills) toward sustenance
- Educate Farmers
  - Including keeping books and legalities
  - Teach how it's done and initiate practicum for future farmers
- Certificated Training
  - Assist Hawaii Community College with curriculum development
  - Create internships and on-the-job program
- Reciprocal Communication
  - Not adequate communication between farmers and education on all levels (K-12, post-secondary)
- Support Services
  - Create a social network for immigrant labor force
- \$\$\$ (profit and sustainability)
  - Can't hire people without money
  - Infrastructure depends on money
  - Lack of inspectors; increase certified inspectors and seek regulations to provide creative ways to address shortage
  - Remove current legal barriers that inhibit product exportation
- Government process
  - Inconsistent legislation, i.e., farmers here cannot use certain chemicals and yet the produce being imported does not have a similar restriction

### ***What is the current state of labor and labor shortages affecting infrastructure?***

- Current state is poor
  - High costs of shipping, energy, etc.
  - Not sufficient markets on Hawaii Island
  - No established distribution channels
  - Is difficult to compete with mainland wholesale price
  - People shop price first; local products are generally higher price points
- High liability insurance costs
- Difficult to find accurate information and access to resources
  - Centralized online help for farmers that is easy to read
  - Local Japanese farmers might not seek Ag information from non-familial sources

- Limited farmer capacity and lack of information on what the market wants
  - Farmers need to be told where the market demand is
  - Department of Agriculture no longer issues product analysis reports
- West Hawaii Extension Agent position has been open for a long time
  - The University is more focused on research; Cooperative Extension for farmers is needed
  - Certification inspectors and regulators are needed
- New farmer loans from Department of Agriculture
  - 3% interest for new farmers up to \$250,000
  - Farm Services Agency has guaranteed loan program for new producers
- Cash flow challenges
  - Create collaborations and co-ops
  - Educate farmers on how to secure contracts
- Productive labor force
  - Need employees knowledgeable in equipment use, maintenance & repair
- High cost of worker housing
  - Create 'ohana dwellings on the land that are directly related to Ag activities
- High cost of energy and transportation
  - Challenges with HELCO and regulations
  - Work where you live
  - Entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged
  - High cost of monopolistic public utility
- Limited available land and high cost of land
  - Move Ag leases from Department of Land & Natural Resources to Department of Agriculture

### **III. Preferred Vision in 10-20 Years: Best Case Scenario**

***10-20 years from now, from a workforce development perspective, what is the best case scenario for assuring a workforce engaged in agriculture infrastructure?***

- “Food, not lawns”, victory garden-type situation with people growing crops at house
- “Good food, good medicine” . . . non-GMO food
- Farmers adopting schools
- Model farms and communities in every climate zone
- Compost all organic waste
- Farmers getting a living wage
- Average age of farmers will be 40 years old, not 60 as is currently the case
- Business education and mentoring readily available for farmers
- Diversified ag; robust farming from small to large scale farming and ranching
- Strong market for value-added products
- Alternative energy readily available at low cost
- Integrated distribution system in place

- Legal residential camps
- Students able to intern for 3 months in each of the climate zones
- Employees are well trained and receive livable wage
- Significantly decreased imports and significantly increased use of local products
- Vibrant network of school gardens with strong community volunteer participation

#### IV. Develop Priorities

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| <i>What are the <b>opportunities or supporting forces</b> that will move us closer to our best case scenario/vision?</i> | <i>What are the <b>barriers or restraints</b> that hold us back from moving closer to our best case scenario/vision?</i> |
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#### Priority 1: Government (5 votes)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of programs and infrastructure – IAL</li> <li>• New Farmer Loans and assistance</li> <li>• Regulation – level playing field</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulation process lengthy</li> <li>• Administration of programs</li> <li>• Underfunded inspectors and personnel</li> <li>• Smalls farms being regulated same as large scale farms</li> </ul> |
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#### Priority 2: Production (5 votes)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renewable energy</li> <li>• Import replacement</li> <li>• Year-round production climate</li> <li>• Market availability for local inputs</li> <li>• Cooperative hiring of employees</li> <li>• Co-ops</li> <li>• Crop insurance</li> <li>• Value-added</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HELCO</li> <li>• Invasive species</li> <li>• Ag crime and crop theft (farm watch)</li> <li>• Workforce legality</li> <li>• Being profitable; rising costs of inputs, land, energy etc.</li> <li>• Workforce and housing</li> <li>• Lack of diversified seed availability</li> </ul> |
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| <i>What are the <b>opportunities or supporting forces</b> that will move us closer to our best case scenario/vision?</i> | <i>What are the <b>barriers or restraints</b> that hold us back from moving closer to our best case scenario/vision?</i> |
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**Priority 3: Education  
(2 votes)**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Gardens</li> <li>• Veteran interaction in Ag</li> <li>• High school with Ag emphasis</li> <li>• Master Cho (10,10,10)</li> <li>• Farmers as mentors</li> <li>• Farmers adopting schools</li> <li>• “Food, not lawn” program</li> <li>• Certificated training in Ag</li> <li>• Educate about true costs of Ag</li> <li>• Educate public on value of Ag</li> <li>• Community interest in Ag</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication is poor to non-existent</li> <li>• Difficult to find accurate, comprehensive, easy-to-understand information</li> <li>• Regulations and information sources are not user friendly</li> <li>• High education costs</li> </ul> |
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**V. Outline Actions for Priorities**

**Priority 1: GOVERNMENT**

- Increase number of import and export inspectors
- Assist in policy that will decrease imports
- Legislation that recognizes the differences between small farms and large scale agriculture
- Increase availability of transportation options to various markets
- Study feasibility of using volunteer Ag inspectors
- Adapt existing models used elsewhere to Hawaii needs
- Support legislation that will increase the amount of farm worker housing

**Priority 2: PRODUCTION**

- Create small neighborhood co-ops to share hiring, machinery & equipment, and other resources
- Promote “Buy Hawaii, Buy Local”
- Create FarmWatch programs (similar to Neighborhood Watch) to deter theft and vandalism
- Create and issue Market Report (to match market needs with farmer production and vice versa)
- Build more commercial kitchens
- Create website and other information sources that provide farmers with needed information in easily accessible, understandable, user-friendly format