

Agricultural Leadership Foundation of Hawai'i
Agricultural Leadership Program Class XVI
White Paper in advance of Congressional Visits
July 1, 2019



Aloha e respected elected officials and staff members,

The Agricultural Leadership Program's class XVI is a cross section of Hawai'i agriculture in its many forms. Our fourteen group members hold many titles and play many roles, yet we speak to you with one voice.

In the last year we have traveled to agricultural operations throughout Hawai'i. During this time, we have interacted with a broad spectrum of agriculturalists involved in farming, ranching, aquaculture, horticulture, inspections, food aggregation, value-added production, farmer training, ag-tourism, research, and other areas. Along the way we saw what worked well and learned about various challenges. We would like to share ideas with you, our esteemed delegation, and hope together we can make a positive impact on the future of Hawai'i agriculture.

Fifty years ago, our plantations were some of the most productive and technologically advanced in the tropical world, yet today massive tracts of land, such as central Maui, are fallow. The plantation era is over and we are in transition. Our travels have shown many positive and exciting developments and there is a sea change regarding the perceptions of food and farming. More consumers want to know *where did my food come from?* As organic, natural, and local grown produce surge in popularity, celebrity chefs feature farm-forward cuisine. Hawai'i's pilot farm-to-school programs could increase our state production footprint, and fascinating models such as MA'O Organic Farms show the net savings and health benefits of buying local grown fruits and vegetables for Native Hawaiian populations at risk of diabetes. Agriculturalists have tapped into Hawai'i's powerful retail revenue stream by selling value added products for local consumption as well as to visitors as suitcase exports — shipping the Hawai'i brand throughout the world. Vertically integrated operations transform basic commodities into desirable items for purchase such as chocolate bars, bottles of rum, dried beef snacks, and taro chips. Ranchers are using high-density rotational forage grazing to sequester carbon to offset climate disruption. Each of these is a step in the right direction, but what more can be done?

As Hawai'i agriculture transitions towards a successful post-plantation era, we would also like to learn what federal resources are available to us. What departments besides the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have programs to assist agriculturalists? How can we support and interact with government programs that minimize investment risk and allow capital to flow to Hawai'i agricultural operations? We would love your input and suggestions.

We propose that it is important to protect and strengthen Hawai'i agriculture through the following means.

Additional details regarding the following items are available upon request from your Agricultural Leadership Program contact

Protect Hawai'i Agriculture

- Address regulatory mechanisms, such as the Plant Protection Act and Not Authorized Pending Pest Risk Analysis rules, to create more protections for Hawai'i Agriculture.
- Address Federal Preemption due to the Plant Protection Act. *The majority of Federally Actionable Pests are for the protection of the U.S. mainland only. Could a system be implemented that screens arrivals from the U.S. Mainland similar to the system the USDA has in place for passengers from Hawai'i to the U.S. Mainland?*
- Modify regulations to allow USDA and Customs and Border Protection to enforce State Agriculture regulations or refer regulated commodities to State Officials.

Strengthen Hawai'i Agriculture

- Maintain and/or increase USDA Farm Service Agency loan totals in the Farm Bill.
- Maintain and/or increase accessibility to funding in the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.
- Use the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Services to assist with funding or other support to the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture to provide needed information to Hawai'i farmers.
- Allow the USDA to conduct inspections for animal slaughter remotely or via the internet.
- Repeal the Jones Act (or exempt Hawai'i) to reduce shipping costs.
- Increase funding to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to increase access to conservation planners.
- Modify the Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) produce safety rule to allow water owners to complete water testing requirements instead of each farmer doing tests.
- Increase funding for the USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture Food Safety Outreach Program to increase understanding and compliance with FSMA requirements.

We are excited to gain your insights. We also hope that this white paper will provide you with some ideas that can be used to benefit Hawai'i agriculture in a tangible way and support those who care for the land and waters that sustain all life. As we remember our state motto: *Ua mau ke ea o ka 'aina i ka pono*: the life of the land is preserved in righteousness. Imua!

Aloha Pumehana,

The Agricultural Leadership Program Hawai'i Class XVI

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