



## Hawai'i Agricultural Leadership Program

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### Who We Are

- \* Class XV
  - \* 17 month program, 7 four-day seminars, and a 2 week national trip to Washington D.C. and Oregon
  - \* 10 members include: Farmers, ranchers, researchers, regulation educators, outreach coordinators, land managers, and a veterinarian involved in a leadership development program for people committed to strengthening agriculture in Hawai'i
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We recognize that a healthy, thriving, sustainable agricultural sector is critical for Hawai'i's future

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### Our Collective Observation on Agriculture in Hawai'i

Hawai'i is facing an unprecedented influx of new development and population, quickly losing prime agricultural and conservation lands. There is a need to designate land and water in Hawai'i for agricultural purposes. While Hawai'i's environment is suitable for growing crops year-round, Hawai'i imports 90% of its food. We need to attract and support upcoming generations of farmers. In order for agriculture to continue and expand in Hawai'i, we need cross-sector partnerships, support from our policymakers, engaged consumers, and available farming infrastructure. We seek to embrace technology and education that reflects healthy people and holistic food systems. **With the closing of Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Company, 2016 marks the official end to the "plantation era", and now more than ever, we see a heightened need to maintain agricultural land, water, and infrastructure for the benefit of generations to come.**

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### Top Current Trends and Challenges

- ◆ The Human Resource
  - ◆ Making Farming Profitable
  - ◆ Natural Resource Availability and Management
  - ◆ Public Engagement / Cultural Sensitivity
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## The Human Resource

Growing Hawai'i's agricultural workforce begins with identifying methods by which communities can "Farm Farmers," making agriculture an attractive profession for future generations. Investing in education and training programs that focus on both the science and business aspects, providing early exposure to gardening and food programs in schools, bolstering college degree programs and designing training opportunities that offer hands-on experience are ways to fuel growth in the industry. In addition, farmer mentoring programs could offer a way for seasoned farmers (majority of farmers in the United States of America are 55+ years old) to pass their knowledge along to the next generation.

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## Making Farming Profitable

*If the farmer can make money, the farmer will farm.*— Richard Ha

In post-plantation era Hawai'i, agriculture must move beyond commodity crops towards a more diversified offering. In order for this to be successful as a business model and food security platform, those entering agriculture as a profession need to know that they can turn a profit. The entrepreneurial skill required to generate profits is necessary and Hawai'i's leaders should strive to develop policies and a system where banks/lenders, land owners/managers, legislators/policy makers, and buyers/distributors act with successful agriculture as the common goal. This includes capitalizing on Hawai'i's position as a global destination with year-round favorable growing conditions.

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## Natural Resource Availability and Management

The greatest barriers to overcome for new farmers in Hawaiian agriculture remain: land availability and cost, water sourcing and logistical infrastructure, and access to affordable and renewable energy. As populations expand and economies grow, the competition for limited supplies will intensify. We encourage creation of policies and programs that address these issues and ensure productive and efficient use of land, water, and energy resources in order to meet present and future demands for agricultural products.

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## Public Engagement / Cultural Sensitivity

Three years ago, there were 6,000 farm workers in Hawai'i (NASS 2013). That was 0.4% of our population. This growing distance between consumers and farming communities leads to mistrust of the farming industry. We encourage an open dialog between the agriculture industry, lawmakers, and consumers.

For Hawai'i, indigenous food systems and place-based knowledge are equally important in guiding our future. Respect for Hawaiian culture and use of responsible and sustainable methods for the farmer, consumer, and the environment should be the common glue which holds the industry together.

