



# A NEW DAY IN HAWAII

## Food and Agriculture

### An Agriculture Renaissance in Hawaii

It is time for an Agricultural Renaissance in Hawaii. Prior to Western contact, Hawaii was entirely self-sufficient in the production of food and supported a population nearly as large as Hawaii's current population.

Of course, diets and lifestyles have changed, but it is important for us to remember the potential of our rich islands. As recently as 50 years ago, about half of our food was still produced locally. Now, it is estimated that 80 to 90 percent of our food is imported.

Our dependency on imported food is a problem we ignore at our peril. Any disruptions to food supply lines—international crises, natural disasters, or labor disputes—would leave us with less than a week of food.

The continual importation of produce increases the chances of introducing harmful invasive species that could devastate our ecosystems and our agricultural economy. And finally, Hawaii is collectively “going out to eat” at a cost of about \$3 billion, which leaves our economy each year. Producing just 10% of that amount locally would keep \$300 million circulating in our own economy.

Producing our own food has other benefits. It will help to preserve open green space, as well as traditional culture and rural communities. We will reduce our carbon footprint when we reduce transportation distances for our food to travel. And the nutritional content of locally produced food is higher, meaning healthier people and lower healthcare costs.

Local products are generally more expensive than imports, which often have considerably lower costs of inputs, land, and labor. Initiating the effort to produce and buy local food will absolutely require a Governor who can leverage the land and monetary resources of the federal government.

I am committed to doing this because the people of Hawaii are also committed. Talk to people across the islands as I have, and you will see incredible dedication, determination, and ingenuity on Kauai; Molokai; Lanai; Maui; Hawaii Island; Oahu's North Shore, Central Plains and Leeward Coast; and in school, community, and home gardens all across our islands. We have the agricultural land, we have the expertise, we can rebuild the infrastructure, we can inspire and train our young people, we can build local markets, we can export more, and we can all participate in meeting the challenge before us.

#### **Guiding Principles: Food and Agriculture**

- Food security as the primary goal
- Entrepreneurial farming and jobs
- Preserving and advancing rural communities
- Sustaining natural resources
- Agricultural innovation
- Dialogue, planning, and shared commitment

## **PRESERVE AND START GROWING ON AGRICULTURAL LANDS**

We will have legislation to protect Important Agricultural Lands from future development. Furthermore, by leveraging relationships in Washington, D.C., we will make full use of conservation easements through the USDA Farm and Ranchland Protection Program and the Department of Defense (DOD) “buffering” program, where applicable. The Governor must take the lead in these efforts.

## **REPAIR IRRIGATION SYSTEMS**

Water is Hawaii’s most limiting natural resource, and Hawaii’s irrigation systems, built by old plantations, are inefficient and in disrepair. Fixing them is critical to address and resolve water controversies, create more opportunities for farmers, and recharge ground water aquifers for potable water use. Key to improving these systems are the watershed improvement programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. These can provide significant funding if the state provides matching funds. Addressing the efficiency of water systems will offer solutions to controversies between water users, such as the ongoing debate on Maui. One clear example that could be addressed right away is the cleaning of Lake Wilson in Central Oahu—ending City and County of Honolulu dumping of sewage into the reservoir would release 3 billion gallons of unrestricted-use irrigation water to an existing irrigation system that serves the North Shore. Also, as done in Kekaha, Kauai, we could easily generate hydroelectric energy along repaired irrigation routes for farm operations or even for input to the grid. Storm water recapture projects, reservoirs, and other improvements should also be in the mix.

## **DEVELOP INTEGRATED AGRICULTURAL/ ENVIRONMENTAL/CULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

We will support efforts in schools to familiarize students with job opportunities in agriculture and develop scholarships, internships, and other incentives

for prospective farmers. We will also promote entrepreneurship training in schools, community colleges, and universities. But traditional agricultural education in our schools can only go so far. The scope of “agriculture” must be broadened to include environmental/ecosystem education and integrate the teachings of the Native Hawaiian host culture such as the concept of *ahupua’a*. Farmers and ranchers are Hawaii’s front-line environmental stewards. We need our children to think critically about their place in the ecosystem.

## **LOWER THE COSTS OF FARMING FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ENTREPRENEURS**

Hawaii must take full advantage of the USDA’s Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education (SARE) program. We must also address the high cost of importing agricultural inputs—feed and fertilizer in particular—so that farming can be competitive and sustainable. We will form public-private partnerships to develop sustainable local feed and fertilizer, making it a focus of research in the UH system, employing extension agents, and designating experiment stations.

## **RAISE THE SUPPLY OF LOCAL FOOD**

Traditional agricultural policies like subsidies, tax credits, low-interest agricultural loans, and crop insurance can help kick start local food production. But the long-term solution must include the development of competitively priced, sustainable, locally produced feed, fertilizer and energy, which will also help in the development of a sustainable aquaculture sector. Hawaii will also meet President Obama’s challenge by taking full advantage of the USDA’s “Know Your Farmer; Know Your Food” initiative, which consolidates a wide variety of USDA loan, grant, and technical assistance programs that can strengthen local food production.

## **RAISE THE DEMAND FOR LOCAL FOOD**

Government, including schools, hospitals and prisons, must lead by example in supporting local agriculture by giving a preference to locally grown and produced products. The state will work with grassroots advocates and actively participate in a coordinated "Buy Local" campaign to increase use of local foods in restaurants and hotels. We must also strengthen our food safety process at local farms to secure the confidence of consumers through Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification. We will build on the success of farmers' markets by helping them to expand and to continue growing in popularity with local families. We will also explore science-based labeling to emphasize the higher nutritional value of locally produced food so consumers understand that cost-per-nutrient often makes local foods cheaper than imports.

## **SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL EXPORTING**

We need to restore agricultural inspection capacity so that government processes don't become a barrier to business and, at the same time, take all steps possible to protect Hawaii fragile ecosystem by limiting introduction of alien invasive pest species. We will also protect Hawaii brands and partner with businesses to coordinate "Hawaii Channels" that aggressively market products and services via the Internet, television, and other media for global export. Government will also help to coordinate trade show presence, consolidating logistics to help businesses break into bigger markets, supporting private trade organizations, and selling more local products through commissaries. With a Governor who understands Washington, D.C., we will work closely with the USDA to ensure that export protocols are readily available so export markets are accessible. Hawaii must also capitalize on research and development and the potential to export our knowledge around the world.

## **SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH STORM WATER RECAPTURE AND COMMUNITY, SCHOOL, AND FAMILY GARDENS**

We need the people of Hawaii to participate in an Agricultural Renaissance. We will empower individuals to participate, and encourage backyard, rooftop, and lanai gardening as well as aquaculture/hydroponics to further increase local food self-reliance at the household level. We also will encourage storm water recapture projects at homes, schools, and businesses. School-based programs are particularly critical so that all children of Hawaii have a better understanding of their environment, food, nutrition, and culture.