

Featured Farmer: Koa Chang Ali'i Kula Lavender Farm, Kula, Maui



Area under production: 13.5 acres, at 4,000 ft. elevation

Years farming in Hawai'i: 11 years

Crops grown, products/services: Lavender (Approximately 55,000 plant and 45 varieties) as the main crop, and recently, started to increase diversity on the farm to include: citrus trees, apple, plus about 10 more native plants, such as ō'hia lehua, hibiscus, cane, taro.

Number of employees and/or family members involved: Total 20 workers, including two of the owner's family.

Production System

Fertility Management: The farm depends on mixed management fertility, it depends on each batch/location of the farm needs and growth stage. In the recent years, the farm has been relying more on organic fertilizers and recycling (composting using Bokashi) and producing our own vermicompost.

Pest management: Mainly neem-based pesticides to control pests and it's been working very well for the plants.

Strategies for controlling costs: We focus on minimizing inputs, including strategies such as producing vermicompost/composts, recycling, drip irrigation.

Production planning: We've relied heavily of perennial lavender. We have been replacing 10 year old plants as production has decreased. We are also increasing crop diversity on the farm with both perennial and annual food and ornamental plants (see above).





What is your marketing strategy?

Pricing: The production cost is a bit high, but we are still trying to keep the prices low/affordable in order to continue selling their product. In general its about 40% margin.

Promotion: Mainly on the farm website, some local news letter, and in social events.

Product Characteristics: All made from

authentic natural ingredients, following production standard, and trying to meet highest quality in our products.

Places you sell your products: Mainly on the farm, wholesale markets, in agricultural events, such as Ag Festival.

Approaches to keeping up with market trends: We are increasing crop diversity on the farm, expanding products/goods diversity, and open the farm facilities for more uses, such as weddings, social events, etc. Currently looking for more vendors to expands sales opportunities as well.



Could you give us an idea of the future for you?

What does sustainability mean to you and how to you plan to ensure sustainability for your operation? Sustainability means to keep both production and prices low/affordable in order to stay in business and to meet the changes in the market demands for the farm products.

Explain how the next generation successfully integrated into the farm, how it happened or didn't happen? The current manager is the son of the original owner (Ali'i). The son finished a bachelor's degree in social sciences and took over the farm management in the last three years.

Challenges you expect to face in the next 5-10 years: Rising production costs, especially labor and inputs cost.

New products or services you are planning: As mentioned above, trying to increase diversity of crops on the farm and expand ways of using the farm facilities, such as: weddings and social events.



HOT TIP from
Ali'i Kula Lavender Farm

Utilize value-addition, agritourism and species diversity to improve revenue stability for your operation.

Ali'i Kula Lavender Website
<http://www.aliikulalavender.com/>

*Mahalo nui loa to Koa Chang
for this interview and photos.*