

## Featured Farmer: Vincent and Irene Mina Kahanu Aina Greens, Wailuku, Maui



**Area under production:** 1200 ft<sup>2</sup> growing, 400 ft<sup>2</sup> compost, 400 ft<sup>2</sup> processing

**Years farming in Hawai'i:** 23 years

**Crops grown, animals raised, other products/services:**  
Microgreens of Sunflower, Green and Yellow Pea, Kaiwari Radish, and Wheatgrass

**Number of employees and/or family members involved:** Our son, 2 part-time family members, and volunteers

### Production System

**Fertility management:** All of our greens are grown in seedling flats using a plant based compost that we have cultured over the past 23 years from recycling the harvested flats into static piles; building a new pile behind the one we are harvesting to use. It takes about two months of decomposition for the compost to be used again. We take CEC soil analysis to balance minerals before reusing the material: basically re-adding Ca, Mg, B, and protein meal.

**Pest Management:** We grow in a shade house and pests are a non-issue since the crop is a seven day crop and the vitality is high.

**Food Safety:** We have a processing area with a cement floor and washing tubs specifically designed to answer food safety issues with a filtering system that recirculates the water when cleaning the greens. At the end of the day we then dump the water into the sewer system.



**Strategies for controlling costs: Production planning:**

Limiting our inputs by recycling our growing medium is a big cost saving. At first when we started we were paying \$200 every 8 days on sunshine mix. Now we reuse all of our material with our only input being coco coir and black cinder to lighten up the medium, since it has been cultured and re-used for 23 years.

**Marketing Strategy**

**Pricing:** We sell wholesale at \$8 a pound.

**Promotion:** At this point in our development our product sells itself by our focus over the years on Mister Service and Mister Quality.

**Product characteristics:** Flavorful and long shelf-life is what we hear in feedback from those that buy our products.



**Places you sell your products:** Health food stores, supermarkets, hotels, restaurants. We have one health food store that goes through 100lbs a week on just sunflower greens alone.

**Approaches to keeping up with market trends:** By focusing on quality and service folks continue to purchase so much that we sell all we grow, so there has not been a trend that has hindered our ability to market our greens.

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

**What does sustainability mean to you and how to you plan to ensure Sustainability for your operation?**

Making the farm attractive to our son to keep him interested in the business. We put his name on the mortgage to continue sustaining it as a family farm. By going the route of using compost as a medium for growing our greens this has set a standard of vitality that has resonated with the community in our being successful, while also having limited our outside inputs.



**Explain how the next generation successfully integrated into the farm, how it happened or didn't happen?**

Our son has been on the farm since we started when he was 10. He grew into it after trying other areas of work and seeing how much this resonates with his being.

**Challenges you expect to face in the next 5-10 years:** Food safety is a big one, especially since some of the regulations appear to be draconian and not realistic, with the onus being put on the farmer. In our 23 years of existence, have never heard of anyone getting sick from our greens, we only hear how much folks love them. Our Achilles heel, so to speak, is that our seeds come from the mainland. I would love to see the ability for our seeds to be grown here locally.

**New products or services you are planning:** Stay tuned: I'm waiting to see what our son has in store and how he envisions our growing forward. As of now it's steady as she goes with getting real good at what we do.

**HOT TIPS from Kahanu Aina Greens:**

- Grow what you love and share it with your community.
- Develop strategies to recycle nutrients back onto the farm.
- Find your niche and hone it to be a fine-tuned operation.