

## Farmers and ranchers voiced their concerns

*Jolene Lau, Public Affairs Specialist, Natural Resources Conservation Service*

HONOLULU, December 16—The Farm Foundation held a Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act (RCA) roundtable in Kunia recently to collect valuable input from farmers and ranchers in the islands. The Farm Foundation has a cooperative agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to assist with the statutorily mandated public participation phase of the RCA. More than 40 producers and agency partners came together for a productive session on addressing conservation on our islands' natural resources.

"This was an excellent turn out," said Tim Brennan, Farm Foundation's Director of Development. "We are hearing some very interesting concerns raised here."

Participants gathered at the Hawaii Agriculture Research Center in Kunia and brainstormed ideas on soil health, water resource management, and the resilience of soil and water resources to climate change and extreme weather events on farms and ranches in the region. Speakers included Dr. Rich MacKenzie and Dr. Christian Giardina both from the U.S. Forest Service; and Dr. Jonathan Deenik, from the University of Hawaii.

"We had key stakeholders at our session and it was an incredible opportunity to acquire their input," stated Craig Derickson, NRCS Acting Director in the Pacific Islands Area. "We appreciate the time they took out of their busy schedule to help us."

The conservation perspectives and solutions will be brought back to U.S. Department of Agriculture leaders and Congress through a national forum scheduled for early 2015. The information will also inform the next RCA Appraisal, scheduled for release in early 2016. For more information, visit [www.farmfoundation.org](http://www.farmfoundation.org) or [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

