

Feature Farmer Justin Hirako Kamuela, Big Island

Area under Production: We are actively farming about 100 acres on plots of land located on both the wet and dry side of Waimea town. Our company, Hirako Farms, was started by my great-grandfather, Seijiro Hirako. Over the years, Seijiro and my grandfather, Kiyotsugu, expanded the farm to what it is today.



Years in Production in Hawaii: About 93 years.

Crops grown, Animals raised, and other goods & Services: We grow leafy greens, including leaf lettuce, head lettuce, romaine, head cabbage, Chinese cabbage, mustard cabbage, broccoli and daikon.

Number of Employees and/or Family Members Involved in the Operation: We currently

have 3 employees and 6 family members working on the farm.

What is your production system and fertility management: We grow using conventional methods. We also do test our fields for nutrient levels to better gauge our fertility. We pack and ship our crops, so we are involved in the production from start to finish.

Pest management Practices: Rotating insecticides is important in preventing resistance among the pests. The rotation schedule and support provided by CTAHR has been helpful in controlling the diamondback moth population on our crops.

What is your process in complying with Food Safety Regulations: The Produce Safety Grower Training course, as well as the guidebook has been helpful in getting acquainted with the regulations and providing a "template" for us to follow.





What are your strategies for controlling costs: We focus on bulk sales and achieving scale. This helps our operation run more efficiently, thus keeping costs in check.

Places you sell your products: We primarily sell our produce to the KTA supermarkets around the Big Island.

How do you promote and keep up with market trends? We are fortunate to be partnered with KTA. We haven't focused too much on promotion of our products. Our respective companies each do what we do best. Our farm grows the produce

and KTA promotes and moves the produce. As far as market trends, we keep an eye on what is moving in the markets and grow what is in demand. We also communicate with KTA regularly to determine the latest trends in the markets.

What does the future hold for your farm: I believe that technology will hold an important role on our farm and in agriculture as an industry. Reliable labor is becoming increasingly difficult to find and I believe that technology will help transform and revitalize the industry in Hawaii.

New products/services Provided: For now, we are monitoring the markets and the effects of COVID on the industry. Once things settle down further, we may consider offering new products.

What advice would you give to other aspiring farmers: Candidly speaking, farm if it's something you are truly passionate about. It's hard and often thankless work. As in any profession, do what you love, and success will naturally follow.