

Feature Farmer Pu'u O Hoku Ranch Molokai, Hawaii



Area Under Production: Pu'u O Hoku Ranch is on the eastern tip of Molokai, surrounded by thousands of acres of conservation land. The ranch has kept about 20 acres of farmland in production, and a few thousand acres of pasture.

Years in Production in Hawaii: About thirty years.

Crops grown, animals raised, and other goods and services?

We primarily grow several varieties of awa, which is processed and frozen; apple bananas, which are dried and packaged. We also grow a variety of greens and vegetables in our garden, and keep beehives throughout the farm that are harvested for honey. Our cattle and horses are rotated through the surrounding pastures. We also run a small store where we sell our products and crafts, gifts, and other products from local artisans and makers. Pu'u O Hoku ranch also has a lodge and guest cottages for vacation rentals.

Number of employees and/or family members involved in the operation? We currently have 25 employees.

What's your production system and fertility management? We maintain biodynamic and organic certification and practices. Beyond managing soil fertility and pest populations, we aim to use these practices for



regenerative purposes, to give back to the land. We rotate crops, make our own compost, and use companion planting throughout the farm and vegetable garden. We plant a diverse population of plants and trees all over the farm to encourage and attract beneficial species into the growing environment.

What's your process in complying with Food Safety Regulations? Because Pu'u O Hoku has several areas of food production in operation, our staff is kept up to date with food safety training within each department. The ranch has two certified agricultural kitchens and designated stations for ava, banana, honey, and vegetable processing.



What are your strategies for controlling costs?

In addition to our primary crops, Pu'u O Hoku has established native banana varieties and other native Hawaiian trees and plants. We are always diversifying what we grow and offer in order to move with

changing economic and environmental landscapes. There is so much potential in farming in Hawaii, and Pu'u O Hoku aims to continue to offer unique and sustainable products locally, throughout the state, and beyond.

Places you sell your products: We currently sell our awa varieties, dried bananas, and honey wholesale to vendors in Hawaii and on the mainland, as well as locally at our ranch store and at other stores on Molokai. The vegetables from our garden are harvested weekly and sold to regular customers and visitors.

What advice would you give to aspiring farmers? The best resource and advice for aspiring farmers is to talk to as many farmers as you can! Connecting with farms and farmers through work experience or just conversation is invaluable. There is nothing like hands-on experience when it comes to finding your way into farming, and most farmers have lots to share about their own experience. And there are so many farmers who share their knowledge generously because they believe in what they do.



Pu'u O Hoku Ranch
Website: <https://puuohoku.com>

Mahalo nui loa to Pu'u O Hoku and Jennifer Hawkins for this article and photographs.