

Featured Farmers: Faith and Tio Tuipolotu

Tuipolotu Farm, Ho'olehua, Moloka'i

Area under production: 8 acres

Crops: Yam (*Dioscorea alata*), cassava (tapioca) and Taro. Yam is primary cash crop. Approximately one acre of organic papaya has been planted. Pigs are also raised for food and sale (80 head).

Fertility management practices: Synthetic fertilizers in conventional crops. Locally produced meat and fish meal (tankage) is the primary source of nutrition in organic papaya. Use of compost in all crops is being investigated.

Pest Management: Fallow rotation and hand weeding. Fields are rested for 2-3 years before replanting to minimize root knot nematode problems. Young plants must be kept weed free for maximum growth; yam is particularly sensitive to competition from weeds.



Tuipolotu Farm: Organic papaya in foreground, pigs in back.

What Sustainability Means to You: Being financially stable (pay the bills), be able pay family for labor. Producing food for consumption in the state. Continuing to diversify the types of crops on the farm.



Recently harvested yams stored under vines to prevent sunburn.

How did the next generation successfully integrate into the family farm? By encouraging them to try something different and have their projects on farm. One son is starting organic papaya, and will be doing eggplant, pineapple and fruit trees. Sons feel that farming is a way to perpetuate their Hawaiian and Tongan heritage.

How do you price your products? Yam is sold by the bin. We pay attention to resale value. Some of our buyers resell, so as they increase their price to what the market will bear we increase our prices as well.

Where do you market your products? Honolulu (90%) and Maui (10%). We sell to individual buyers.

How do you promote your products? We have not needed to promote, we get our customers via word of mouth. We cannot keep up with demand.

How do you adapt production to meet the needs of clients?: Primary adaptation is to expand production.

What does the future look like for your farm? Demand far outstrips supply so we will expand Yam production. Continue to diversify in son's operation with organic papaya and other crops.

*Mahalo nui loa to Faith and Tio Tuipolotu for this interview.
Photos: T. Radovich*

HOT TIP from Tuipolotu Farm

Take full advantage of the Cooperative Extension service, which is an excellent resource. Also, make sure to network with other growers in your community to make sure you are aware of events, trends, and opportunities that come up.



Faith and Keola (son) Tuipolotu.