

Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation Organic Symposium

The Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation's (HFBF) Organic Committee organized an Organic Symposium on May 27, 2011 in Mānoa. Seventy-five people attended, with Pua Burgess providing the opening keynote address that stressed the importance of having a shared vision of the future for organic agriculture.

Sylvia Yuen, Interim Dean of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), Russell Kokubun, Chair of the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, and Myrone Murakami, President of HFBF, gave the next set of presentations, followed by questions from the audience. Dr. Yuen highlighted all the work that CTAHR has done and will continue to do to assist organic producers. Chair Kokubun shared his interest in working with organic operators to implement policies aimed at supporting them, while Mr. Murakami welcomed the group.

The concerns expressed by the audience focused on the need for organic-specific research and outreach and the Hawai'i Food Safety law Legislation HB 667. Currently, HB 667 does not contain any exemptions for small farmers and the HFBF farmer's market at Kapiolani Community College calls for all vendors to be food safety certified by March of 2012. Chair Kokubun indicated that once Federal policies and procedures were in place for food safety, Hawai'i would proceed. A Hawaii Organic Program and collaboration with the Department of Health to legalize raw milk were suggested.

A second panel consisted of Jim Hollyer, CTAHR Food Safety coach, Sarah Townsend, Certification coordinator with International Certification Services, Inc., Kelly Lange Abbott, Hawaii Organic Farmer Association (HOFA) coordinator, Colehour Bondera, organic farmer and National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) rep-

resentative, and Nicola Giardina, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Mr. Holler and Ms. Lange gave presentations about the programs that they coordinate. Mr. Bondera reported on the April meeting of the NOSB, where he received an overwhelming amount of information; noticed some conflict between small and large producers on the NOSB; and heard little discussion that would have a large impact on Hawai'i organic producers. Ms. Giardina highlighted the EQIP and organic EQIP cost sharing programs that NRCS provides. Many organic producers are not aware of these programs.

The final panel was comprised of four organic farmers from Maui who shared the stories of their farms with the group. The farmers included Chuck Boerner, Ono Organics Maui, Vince Mina, who produces sprouts, Lisa Hotchkiss, a new farmer, and Steve Wilson, an experienced farmer. Mr. Boerner, who was the first president of HOFA, shared the organization's history, while also encouraging the group to examine the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education's (WSARE) calls for grant proposals as a possible source of funds.



The last task accomplished at the symposium was a brainstorming session to identify issues that need to be address in the future in order for organic agriculture in Hawaii to thrive.

List of Issues Identified

- How to get financial support for organic farming
- 90% food from outside
- Support for new organic farmers
- Organic community could become partner for small farmers
- Industrial model of agriculture
 - Biofuels? If it all-coconuts
- Food sustainability for Hawai'i, how do we do that?
- Agricultural design review board
- Putting the land first
- Grow native food, soil, and practices
- We need more quality growers and community horticultural education
 - Market access
 - Vague regulations for organics
- Respecting the place and community
- DOH is missing at the table
- DOH can shut down agriculture
 - Plants and livestock -> DOH
- What is safe/nutritionally superior food? What is it we eat?
- Natural farming is cheaper
- Backyard can be a farm
- Mind, Body and Garden = Yogarden
 - Party well and no hang over!
- Health and the food we eat or link of health and access to good nutrition
- Holding lawmakers and departments accountable
 - Create a food garden for ACC
- Having access to share info with other farmers
- How do we dream food sustainability into reality?
 - If you think 8 to 5 is hard, try farming
- Pesticide drift beyond your control
- Air, water, and soil
- More education to and for farmers
- Funding priorities for organic farmers must change
- Meet and address DOH and present our issues and create change
- Let the garden teach you
- Build permaculture community
- Live on the farm (not on street or in jail)
- Building community and biodiversity
- Food security momentum for paradigm shift
- DNA is tied to the 'Āina, but what if no 'Āina to farm?
- Coordination (natural allies)
- Political campaign
- Distribution
- Nutrition Report
- Organic Committee
- Raw Milk
- Young Farmer
- Organic cooperatives
- Food safety and small farming
- Organic awareness
- Pesticide drift
- Good land is not farmed but there-heal the land, heal the people
- Permaculture and ideal growing season
- No GMO activism on campus (yet)