

NOVEMBER 2022



KAUA'I FARMER & RANCHER

Food Access Plan Needs Assessment Report



About the Project

In November 2022, we held two meetings for farmers, ranchers, and food producers across Kaua'i as active focus group sessions, with the question:

"How do we increase access to healthy, local food on Kaua'i?"

Participants were led through rapid group activities to identify their strengths and needs related to the question, voting on their most critical needs in which they would actively participate in addressing, and began drafting potential related goals and objectives. These sessions are a core part of the development of a multi-agency, islandwide Kaua'i Food Access Plan.

The Kaua'i Food Access Plan 2030 will be a guide and a work plan to increasing healthy food access in Kaua'i County, with a focus on our most vulnerable, including keiki, kūpuna, and low-income residents. We aim to identify key policy, systems, and environmental changes that can make an impact towards good food for all.

This project is supported by Hawai'i State Department of Health Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division through a Food Access Capacity Building Project. These activities followed up on our previous 2017 Kaua'i Farmer Survey and our Farmer Focus Groups in 2020 and 2021.



malamakauai.org



[@malama.kauai](https://www.facebook.com/malama.kauai)



stormy@malamakauai.org



[@malama_kauai](https://www.instagram.com/malama_kauai)

Our Farmers & Ranchers



It's the dirt on their hands and the smile on their faces that you might notice first. Then the humble clothes, the tempered voices, and the calm they exude.

These are our farmers and ranchers — watchful, down-to-earth folks who employ their keen observational skills and vast knowledge to create food from soil, food from livestock. Spending most of their lives outdoors, amidst the elements, and amongst the plants and animals, there's a tough yet gentle demeanor to the heroes who raise our food.

They show up with a box of bananas tucked under their arm or a bag of mangos or a cooler of beer — they don't just show face, they come bearing gifts and gratitude. And each food producer represents a handful of others - their families, partners, children, friends, and the interconnected network they've built around growing and raising food, and tending our 'āina.

They are passionate and unafraid of hard work. During a storm or natural disaster, they don't just batten down the hatches, they flock to their fields, tending their animals or saving their crops. They are the first people we look to when the shelves are bare or the barges slow down. And they stand to meet the community where they're at, all while providing nourishment to Kaua'i residents who need it the most.

Their strengths put good food in our bellies. Their strengths preserve what little wide open spaces we have left. Their strengths, if supported by our community and government, can feed this island.

Strengths Identified

Mahalo to our Participants:

- 'Āina Akua Plants
- Circle 5 Ranch
- Cool Water Aquaponics
- Contemporary Flavors Catering
- County OED Ag Specialist
- CTAHR Cooperative Extension
- Dang Fresh Farm
- Hawai'i Farmers Union United
- Hua Farms
- Hulē'ia Farm
- Kalalea View Farms
- Kaua'i Cattlemens Association
- Kaua'i Glory Farm
- Keala Ranch
- Lin's Farm
- Maluhia Cattle Co.
- Maya's Mangos
- NAAJA Organics
- North Shore EVP
- O.K. King Farms
- Omao Ranch Lands
- Pono Farms
- Rainbow Roots Farm
- Sakda Farms
- SBH Taro Farms
- Taworn Farm
- Ulupono Anahola
- Waikahe Farms
- Weeraphon Farm
- Wirat Family Farms
- Yasaka Farm

Participants were asked to identify the strengths of our food system and the work Kaua'i is currently doing to increase access to healthy, local food for our island's most vulnerable including kūpuna, keiki, and low-income 'ohana. Some of our assets mentioned by farmers:

- Hardworking and knowledgeable farmers that can pivot to market demand
- Agencies there to help (Mālama Kaua'i, CTAHR, Hawai'i Farmers Union, Farm to School Hui, and GoFarm were mentioned)
- Active and vocal community support
- Passion, dedication, and initiative
- We keep the majority of our produce on island
- Ag industry responsiveness during disasters
- Quality and diverse products, including proteins





Meeting Summaries

West/South Side

Nov. 2nd at Omao Ranch Lands
20 Attendees

The top voted needs in order of priority:

1. Access to Grant Funding (9)
2. Education for the Next Generation (9)
3. Processing & Cold Storage (8)
4. Costs for Pest Management (4)

Additional needs to be addressed that were mentioned, yet received 3 or less priority votes included:

- More Equipment
- Access to Water (esp. potable)
- Citrus & Avocado Issues
- Workforce & Available Skill Sets
- Regulatory Burdens
- Bigger Markets

North/East Side

Nov. 16th at Anahola Marketplace
26 Attendees

The top voted needs in order of priority:

1. Equipment & Supply Bulk Buying/Sharing (16)
2. Facilities & Cold Storage (On-Farm & Shared) (9)
3. Ag Housing (8)
4. Pest Management & Solutions (8)

Additional needs to be addressed that were mentioned, yet received 3 or less priority votes included:

- Legislative & Political Buy-In
- Affordable Land Access
- Affordable Health Insurance
- Livestock Processing
- Affordable & Accessible Equipment Repair
- Marketing & Community Education
- Selection & Diversity of Crops
- Addressing those with Access Barriers
- Ag Theft
- Increased Shipping Costs
- Broadband Access
- Supporting Native Ecosystems
- Water Access
- Tax and Business Support
- and others

Did You Know?

Kaua'i has the lowest average farm revenue of all Hawai'i Counties

Draft Objectives

Potential draft objectives built from the highest-voted needs were developed in small groups, but working groups are being established to increase specificity and fine-tune objectives prior to voting in early 2023. Drafts so far include:

- To open a USDA-compliant post-slaughter facility with butchering, packaging, and cold storage for small livestock producers in a centrally located area
- To obtain a local, dedicated grant writer to secure and manage funding for projects to support local producers' individual and collaborative needs
- To develop a commitment from County and State government for annual producer grant programs to address key needs related to equipment, on-farm and shared facilities, and invasive species mitigation
- To expand Hawai'i Farmers Union Kaua'i Chapter's Equipment Share and Discount programs and to increase promotion of these programs so more farmers can participate
- To strengthen pathways for education and workforce development for local youth within in-demand agriculture & food systems careers * Further assessment is needed before this objective be made more specific due to many programs currently in development and execution across DOE, Kaua'i Community College, and community organizations
- To provide practical support, in the form of resources or financial support, for addressing invasive species on farms, including parakeets, fire ants, pigs, and diseases. * Strategy TBD
- To create an Ag Housing Working Group to identify possible strategies to address the issue and create solutions and policy improvements



Next Steps

Get Involved



we will be holding four additional Community Meetings and another final Food Access Agency Meeting in December and January, followed by islandwide voting on draft objectives in February 2023.

In the meantime, we will be working with interested food producer working groups to fine-tune objectives, create action plans, and develop budgets to move forward the objectives they identified with the most traction.

After the objectives are finalized and the Kaua'i Food Access Plan is complete, we will be moving further into the Action Phase and continuing community engagement to move objectives forward into reality.

Community Food Access Plan Meetings will be held in each moku in December 2022 and January 2023. The public is encouraged to RSVP and engage in the development of the plan.

To stay informed and get involved in this work, join our e-newsletter or follow us on social media for the latest updates.

You can also contact:

Stormy Soza

Food Access Manager

stormy@malamakauai.org

(808) 828-0685 x11