

Growing Organics Conference
October 28th, 2013

Keynote Speech: Scott Enright, Deputy Director, HDOA

Q1: There is currently no Organic certifying agency in Hawaii – is there a plan for that?
Scott: That is something that is being discussed in these meetings ...

Q2: What about alternatives to ‘organic’, such as KNF or natural farming methods, can those groups work in collaboration with the organic industry?

Scott: With my work at ADC we are working with Mike Dupont on a model for piggeries using KNF on Oahu and looking to take this model statewide.

Q3: Would a ban on GMOs help impact organic and small scale farming in Hawaii?

Scott: They are currently looking for organic farmers to lease HDOA land on Kauai but I really can't answer that question. We support all types of agriculture if it's deemed safe? Biotech companies didn't do a good job on public relations. HDOA is not in conspiracy with biotech companies.

Q4: ADC on Kauai leases 6000 acres to biotech companies. I'm happy to hear ADC is now reaching out to organic farmers.

Scott: I'm the chair of Ag Lands Dev Committee within ADC and am the point person for that.

Q4: We would like to know what pesticides are being used, what quantity, and where. They are doing research, not conventional farming. We ask the DOA to explain violations and they say that sometimes it takes a few years to understand the violation; but we want more information.

Q5: The Ag Stats was incredibly helpful to commercial farmers to help them make better business decisions. (Jim Cain)

Scott: During the last economic downturn that whole floor was emptied. I'm charged with putting that back in place and we are going in for funding for positions in the next legislative session. With Ulupono we are doing a study of Food Metrics, but we don't know if 85% is the amount of food being imported and we want to explore that with Jeff's study. And we want to fund a market analysis position. The feds are cutting back on funding of NASS. We should be back online in 2 years if not sooner.

Q6: How open will the DOA be to providing incentives to organic farmers on state leased land – land rents, water costs, etc. (Max Bowman)

Scott: So that means flexibility in the state government. It's doable. You ask and I'll attempt to work on it. I'd be willing to work with the industry on that.

Q7: Invasives. You guys were focusing on biocontrol and established populations of coqui in Waipio or fire ants – that those aren't a focus of the Department b/c they are already here. What is HDOA doing to help farmers keep these invasive species out. What kind of tech support is the Dept providing to fight those species here now. (Shawn James)

Scott: We have 4 positions in Hilo working on fire ants. We are working with the Hilo Airport, where it was detected, to have programs around the state at all airport, and then move to harbors.

Our chemical/mechanical grant division is still working on coqui but in locations where they do not exist, such as Kona. We are putting positions back in place in state government but these specialty positions – plant quarantine – but finding people who have those qualifications has been exceedingly difficult.

Q8: The ability to collect data on organic production – are there good resources for that? One of the challenges is it's hard to manage and appreciate something you can't count. To develop a mechanism for reporting organic production will bring credibility to the effort and help us allocate resources as we go forward. So how do we count the rising tide of commercially available organic product so we can respect the industry b/c of its numbers and not just its aspirations? One of the challenges for the industry is to get counting. (Jeff Melrose)

Scott: We will be working on this as we move forward. ... I will have a conversation with this committee as we move forward.

Q9: Food Safety Modernization Act. What is the HDOA doing to ramp up farmer training?

Scott: We want to see how the FSMA will impact farmers; public comment is up November 15th. We are petitioning the FDA to take back the produce rule and do a complete second draft. We are not alone in asking this; Farm Bureau is asking for the same thing. If the produce rule moves forward as it is there will be tremendous problems in Hawaii and nationally. We are working with our Quality Insurance Division to see how we will work with farmers in regards to FSMA.

Q10: Comment on Jeff's question. It would be useful to see a daily price report. If we see something like that in place you will see a huge increase in production.

Scott: A useful tool that HDOA needs to provide is Market News, bulletins on a weekly sales price of farm products and commodities. We will start collect this and it will be available online. I intend to do it for the ag industry, so we'll see if it's also something that the organic industry wants.

Q11: Monsanto on Hawaii Island.

Scott: Monsanto has no presence on Hawaii Island. When sugar was going out biotech wanted leeward sides of islands with irrigation water, so they looked at Maui, Oahu, Molokai, and Kauai. If they wanted to be here they would have looked at Kau and they have more financial wherewithal than anyone who owns former C Brewer land. I think they didn't do it because of the vog. They say they don't want to be here and I believe them, because if they wanted to be here they would be already.

Q12: Where are we going to get the farmers to produce our food? At Farmer's Markets they are looking for produce to sell and there is a big lack of farmers producing product to supply our island's needs. Many ship to Oahu so our good farmers ship off island. How do we change that?

Scott: That discussion happens every week at the meetings I'm in and I don't have a good answer for that. We need a paradigm shift. Ag is hard work and we don't seem to have that younger generation opting in. When I heard Max Bowman was farming on the Hamakua Coast I made a point to walk onto his farm and introduce myself. But young farmers aren't stepping forward, its hard work. We are still transitioning from sugar and pineapple, we don't have a strong history of family farms like on the mainland where the next generation steps in and takes over.

Q12: Why don't we bring the farmers from communities elsewhere to Hawaii. Growing them here is important.

Scott: That hasn't been a function of state government but it is a question we are talking about within HDC. We are trying to cultivate and fund new agriculturalists.

How today came about: Melanie Bondera

When HOFA stopped certifying questions and conversations began about what we could do next. Russell Kokubun said that the focus of the specialty crop block grant was organics and that TKC should apply for a grant to look into this question.

Project Purpose: Liam Kernal

- Mahalo to everyone who has done this without compensation since January.
- In the meetings we have identified issues, needs, and barriers and made a Matrix.
- We had gaps and invited people from other industry groups to provide testimony and input from processors, distributors, certifiers, retailers, senators, and value added producers.
- We translated the matrix into public surveys – six different types.
- We then put together draft recommendations.
- We are here today to get your reactions and feedback to these recommendations to include them into the process.
- HDOA will get the final report in January; report will be made public in March.

Survey results summary: Ted Radovich (info in packet)

- Total surveys: 345 (60 ag professionals, 16 buyer sellers, 135 consumers, 6 distributors, 24 processors, 104 producers)
- 65% expected the industry to increase and demand for organic service increase
- Majority felt there was not enough local research for organics, so in the absence of peer-reviewed studies people had trouble making recommendations.
- Preferred Hawaii Based Certification: 40% wanted HOFA or local/independent certifier; 13% wanted HDOA; 29% wanted a combined organic/food-safety certification service; 9% wanted natural farming; 10% wanted a local certifier that's not NOP accredited.
- What type of venue do you operate: 60% grocers ...
- Strength and importance of 'local, non-organic' is increasing, however has a slightly lower percentage than buyer's preference for 'organic, non-local'.
- Environmental responsibility/stewardship was the #1 motivating factor influencing people to buy organic products.
- No respondents identified more than 10% of their inventory as organic or local.
- Supply is inconsistent or inadequate.
- Supply and costs were the most significant barrier faced when processing organic products.
- Fruits and vegetables are the primary organic product.

Organic Panel Recommendations: Panelists

1. *Representation: Improve representation for Hawaii's organic industry:* Hawaii's organic industry would benefit from an independent, representative organization with adequate funding, staffing, and resources to provide advocacy, education, marketing, and constituent support. Additionally, the industry would benefit from a staff representative and/or program office at HDOA to provide information, education, tech assistance, marketing support, and possibly certification services. Other notes: current property tax rates favor ranching; if we could get an organic property tax rate at or below ranching you would see a shift towards organic farming. It took me 6 years to convert to organic. (Dave Matsuura)
2. *Certification: Improve access to affordable, less burdensome organic certification and food safety certification.* Cost and documentation are cited as most common barriers to obtaining and maintaining certifications. (Una Greenway)
3. *Land: Increase access to affordable, certifiably organic or remediable land.* Open up access to dormant/fallow farmland owned by the state and large private entities. Other notes: this isn't necessarily an organic specific problem but a problem for ag in general, that there isn't enough land to farm. If the government is the landowner than there is the possibility that they could provide incentives to help grow organic farming. For private landowners perhaps it is explaining the benefits of organic farming and providing them an incentive to lease land. Provide incentives such as tax breaks, lower water rates, etc. (Max Bowman)
4. *Inputs: Increase research and extension services focused on local, NOP-certifiable inputs and pest and disease solutions suitable to Hawaii's crops, livestock, and conditions.* Promote local development of certifiably organic feeds, fertilizers, seeds, and pest and disease management solutions. Other notes: The main input we need is help, a brother sister auntie uncle boyfriend girlfriend to help take care of the books so the others can work on the farm; that's how we got where we are. We need to get locally produced fertilizer, cattle feeds, etc. We need help from the feds with new programs that are coming out. I think it would be great to have an informational aid in the HDOA office, a warm body where we can call and ask where we go to get certified, etc. UH needs to invest in organic farming by letting them come and teach in classes – tell our trade secrets, etc. (Chuck Boerner)
5. *Supply: Increase the supply and availability of Hawaii grown, certified-organic produce and products.* Respond to demand from processors, consumers, and retailers for more Hawaii grown/made organic products to decrease dependence on imports. Other notes: Some of the details in the matrix and surveys centered around marketing and the need for strong marketing support from HDOA. From a supply perspective it is clear that the market can grow. Getting more growers and making it easy for existing growers is where the most progress can be made. A lot of the issues are similar to small growers in general – distribution, food safety, cold chill, etc. Specifically organic growers point to costs – but that is similar to other growers. Regarding certification there is cost reimbursement – federal money to the state. So one suggestion is to line item funds for this so if federal money disappears there is still support for this. Why not 100% reimbursement for a limited period of time. Help foster struggling co-ops, and input and machinery coops. Help with paperwork b/c it is an extra level of stuff to do and if you haven't done it

before; having some hand holding your first time would go a long way. Support new farmer training programs to improve their capacity to help more growers. Participants want to start at organic – the gateway drug to agriculture. Helping these programs be prepared to give proper guidance to farmers who want to be certified organic. People are concerned about stream runoff, pollen drift – so we need to quantify what is happening. For papayas there are distinct practices that can be done to ensure that GM doesn't contaminate non-GM; so help from colleges and state agencies to help farmers establish systems and deal with these issues. (Ted Radovich)

6. *Economic Viability:* Improve the economic viability of local organic farming and production. Increase profitability of Hawaii-grown organic products by reducing costs and increasing price/market share. Other notes: He defined ‘viability’ from Merriam Webster: “having a reasonable chance of succeeding; financially sustainable; capable of existence and development as an independent unit; capable of working, functioning, or developing adequately.” We are not just talking about money – it’s about more than that. Tax breaks is a way to get there but what about case studies from UH on profitability to prove those realities. Research on the cost effectiveness of fertilizers, pest management, etc. Local certified organic feed is needed; that combination ‘local’ and ‘organic’ is important b/c when you have to bring in products from out of state it is very expensive. Some people feel that costs are too high for organic certification. Cost of shipping and transportation are high. When large scale entities are making a lot of profit in organics, it is hard for the smaller farms to remain competitive. (Colehour Bondera)
7. *Processing: Increase the number of certified organic processors and/or processing facilities.* Facilities offering additional processing methods would expand variety of viable, local, value-added products. Other notes: Sixteen years ago we transitioned from conventional to organic farming. We are not certified so I’m looking forward to that afternoon section on how easy it is to become certified! Processors cannot find enough locally grown organic products, and the supply isn’t sufficient. It is hard to find organic certified kitchens. We need more certified kitchens, a certified mobile slaughter facility, work to create food hubs that facilitate organic washing, processing, and packing. California has passed a cottage food law and I think Russell Ruderman was thinking about something similar. In order to process we are back to the question of supply. Supply must be sufficient and consistent. (Chris Kobayashi)
8. *Distribution: Improve inter-island and intra-island distribution channels for certified organic products.* Build infrastructure for affordable distribution of certified organic products, including cold chain and inter-island transport, without comingling and with appropriate documentation and labeling. Other notes: I will talk about local distribution. I feel it’s directly related to production, you have to have enough to distribute. Organic is a value added product instantly. We have integrity and we want to keep that integrity in your product, in your distribution, show up when you say you will, create loyalty in your customers at stores and in markets, etc. Getting product to Oahu – this population base that is a dark hole where you can keep dumping product. We use Young Brothers and Air Cargo and they work well. We have overnight with YB from Maui and from Hawaii Island. We need to fill an entire container and get it to Oahu – that is the first challenge. (Chuck Boerner)
9. *Marketing: Invest in marketing of Hawaii’s certified organic products.* Encourage consumers, buyers/sellers, and institutions to buy certified organic products grown and

made in Hawaii. Other Notes: Down to Earth is a big supporter of organic. But there is a lack of local organic and that is a big issue for us. We only bring in organic produce from the mainland, but here we can only get 1/3 of our organic produce from the state. I am the current president of HOFA. We need to increase demand for products as well. Invest in education consumers, promote the benefits and combat misconceptions. Approximately 50% of people responding to the survey don't feel there is a significant benefit to buying organic. Have HDOA and Organic trade organizations further promote 'Made In Hawaii'; start a 'Local Organic' marketing effort; develop a 'Hawaii Organics' brand; revive the HOFA blue sticker. So many people don't want to buy GM food – and organic food is not GMO – so it's a huge marketing opportunity for us. But tying it to organic could be negative b/c legislators are put off by it. (Mark Ferguson)

10. *Education and Enforcement: Increase knowledge and understanding of NOP standards through education and enforcement.* Educate producers, processors, distributors, buyers/sellers, and consumers about what 'certified organic' means, and the consequences associated with misuse of the word 'organic'. Other notes: I work on the Farm to Table movement at Mao Farm on Oahu. I worked as a farm inspector for HOFA and on the certification committee. Many people are unaware what the term 'certified organic' means; there needs to be education concerning the seriousness of that term. There is confusion that local is equivalent to organic. We recommend outreach by HDOA, education on penalties of misuse of the term organic. Training sessions will increase knowledge and increase compliance. The lack of oversight leads to the misuse/abuse of the term. People need to be trained to do audits to increase correct use of the term. (Terri Langley)

Concurrent Workshop 1: Developing a Policy Agenda for Hawaii's Organic Industry

Panelists: Diane Ley, Russell Ruderman, Colehour Bondera, Gary Hooser
(Audio A7 / Liam videotaped)

Diane Ley:

Talked about her history in farming and her work with the HDOA prior to the Farm Service Agency. (I had to step out briefly)

Russell Ruderman:

We really need to work on value added food products on-island. We bring in pallets of chips and there's no reason we can't make chips here, even if we have to bring in potatoes. Another good example is iced tea. If we can only solve the container issue I think we can make iced tea here in Hawaii too. I am trying to propose a food security package at the leg this year. As a freshman my other bills went nowhere but I am a marketer so this year I'm going to market them differently, as a package. My bills are aimed at small farms. Some are in partnership with Ulupono and the Farm Bureau. This package will exclude the controversial issues – like GMOs – so it will have the broadest possible support. My interest is to solicit your support for a local food package.

Colehour Bondera:

Operates a certified organic farm in Honaunau with his wife, Melanie Bondera. I am active in the KCFA, Farmer's Union, sell at a farmer's market, etc. Within the KCFA is to serve on the Geographical Identity Committee, b/c Kona Coffee doesn't have very good recognition at the

state level, so I am designated to work at the state level. Geographically based food is an important reality and I will continue down that path. I serve on the Organic Standards Board – anything that's going to affect the law we advise the Sec of Agriculture – their efforts have to have our support before they can turn it into a law. Goals for organic growth and coalescence – if you want something to be recognized as organic it has to become recognized, renewed, etc. at the national level. People in Hawaii – it's tropical – there are crops used in ways and grown that are different in other places. So people need to learn how to petition for things, and request exemptions for things – to affect national policy. These decisions aren't decided in Hawaii, it's a larger scale of definition. Papayas aren't a terrible example. People elsewhere in the US aren't going to have a lot of knowledge. Many of Hawaii's crops aren't grown elsewhere in the US. Hawaii does have opportunity and potential but we have to get on the same page on what we want to pursue and who is going to be advocating for it. If it's very small or very questionable who is going to have the time to show up and testify, and petition, etc. and some of my personal views on how that can best be pursued it to identify who, how and what is going to be pursuing those issues at the national level. Not anyone can become a certifier; the national entity has to recognize the entity granting certifications. So realistically we are talking about a methodology to communicate with the NOP and this is necessary. I am the first and last Board member from the State of Hawaii. They don't always involve someone from Hawaii but aim for more ag producing states. His tenure is over in 2.5 years.

Gary Hooser

Member of Kauai County Council. In my heart I'm an advocate and looking for ways to help accomplish policy changes. He met a man who was very eco-conscious and he asked him why he didn't get involved in the leg and he said, "I don't do politics." And I said, "If you don't do politics it will do you." I want to encourage everyone to 'do politics'. The community needs to leverage us in public office. Bill 2491 was just passed by Kauai County, the smallest county in the state, and it forces the four largest chemical companies to disclose what they are spraying. I introduced it with a co-sponsor. It started in the living room of a friend. The companies threw everything at them. We won and are waiting for the mayor to sign it into law. It is a tremendous public policy change for our community, encouraging people to take ownership of their government. It's a lot of work, you have to read and testify, but we can do so much more and better. Look at big things because you'll never get that but you'll get something smaller. Imagine if we legislated local food in schools and prisons, which would have a huge impact on agriculture. When government tells you there is no money, and you see they are spending money on this and that, what they're really saying is it's not a priority. It's up to you, the community, to make it a priority. Know who your representatives are. If you have a relationship you get listened to more. My wife and daughter can sway him more than anyone else. If you don't have a relationship with your policy makers you are starting at the bottom. Affiliate with like-minded people, and then you can leverage your activity and your work.

Scott: We'd like to open it up to the audience for questions and comments.

Vince Mina: Colehour, could you share from your experience with the NOP's Standards Boards the trend, where it's going, the people coming on, how the standards are being watered down.

Colehour Bondera: Things are changing as organics grows. Organics are growing a substantially faster rate than other choices. I have interacted with another member, one of the writers of the organic food productions act. He is a farmer. He says, when we wrote that it wasn't for food processors (1990) But now how is it different? Right now people want to sell a lot of processed organic products. What has happened is that members of the Board, even in the last 2.5 years, have evolved to be more and more coming from the mentality of processed food questions rather than items you can grow, simpler things. The result has been that we are getting more petitions for synthetic products to be allowed in organics. Because they want exceptions so they can be used in processed products. There is demand for more of these things and I think this industry will grow. I am one of 4 producers and you don't have to look very far, the other producers even though they own a farm So when people are making decisions from other than a producer perspective (b/c you just have to 'own' a farm to be considered a producer) ... my view of how things have evolved, I wouldn't say that it's that distinctly different. Lately things have divided between liberal and conservative, in terms of: do we want growth in organics (more however we can achieve it) or do we want to maintain organic integrity even if it means limiting that growth. And I see the 15 of us divided along those lines. Small farmers voices aren't easily represented b/c who has time to do that?

Franz. Certification has rules and regs, but there is no enforcement? Why get certified b/c I can call my product organic. Nobody follows up?

Russell: It's an important problem and I don't have the solution but I am open to suggestions. There is not an agency that deals with non-compliance.

Colehour: I don't have an easy answer. The way the system is set up is that a complaint needs to be filed and then it legally has to be pursued. It will be addressed. A formal complaint needs to be filed with NOP – go online.

Franz: But if you file a complaint NOP won't enforce it. A state agency needs to enforce it.

Scott: Well that's why I'm here. We are moving in that direction. The department has funded this task force and this function b/c we are interested. Hopefully we will put this in place with this group. It needs to coalesce into a commodity group that speaks with one voice. We move forward on issues that you agree upon. Right now you have a department that is willing to work with you.

John: What we are talking about is having cleaner food. Getting rid of food-like substances so people can make proper decisions for themselves. Organic certification is the problem. We are looking to penalize someone for using a little bit of 'chemical x'. A total of 75% of those that want to be certified aren't. We are talking about enforcement. We should have a moratorium on organics. I like your law on Kauai – let's make it a state law and find the heaviest users. It's all an honor system that people aren't going to use these chemicals. What if we put certification on hold for 5 years, let people have a free exchange of information. Do chemicals leave a residue? Do they contaminate water and soil? We should have a pesticide-free label. Right now it's a one size fits all. Unfortunately this one size is getting degraded. If someone is using IMO or biodynamic they're not allowed to put that label on to get extra credit for the extra distance they are going. There is a system that can happen here, the land will teach us. As far as stimulating agriculture, the whole big island can become a geographic area. Big Island – Kona. Big Island – Kau. Some of the Kau coffee is better than Kona coffee. We shouldn't allow green coffee from other countries into the state.

Russell: If DOA enforces based on complaints do you need legislation?

Scott: Its rule making.

Chuck: I feel privileged having you here. Can you walk us through the path to getting a state certification system?

Scott: This is how I envision it working. The report from this group will come to the DOA in January 2014. We will sit with the stakeholders to see how this will go forward. I haven't seen the inputs yet so I don't know what's been said.

Chuck: What if we said we need a state organic program what would the next step be?

Scott: We sit down with you and figure it out. We intend to use some barrel tax money to help the organic industry. It's a special tax on every barrel of oil and we get a small share – about 15c/gal – and we use it for innovative programs across the state.

Una: Scott you said that this department supports all farming. One problem is pesticide drift. I hear there are laws. I don't know if they are enforced. What are you willing to do, the HDOA to give teeth to enforcement to defend us? Can we get a dialogue on that?

Scott: I will check with the pesticide division and find out what they have to say about how many complaints they are getting.

Chuck: A neighbor sprayed and all his papayas died. I took him to court. Bottom line is they hadn't done a study on how much paraquat it took to kill papayas so they couldn't prove it.

Scott: We do need a dialogue b/c we need to see the extent of the problem and then how we can enforce it. The police will have to do the testing to determine it was paraquat.

Una: You have to do blood tests immediately to determine if it was pesticides. And that didn't happen on Kauai.

Scott: The HDOA will put in 10 new positions for the pesticide division this session and we will look for money to do tests and we will look to do a better job at the HDOA. Some of those positions will be outreach to educate. We are going on the premise that the majority of people want to be good neighbors.

Tane: One problem is scale in regs. Labor, food safety, equipment laws. If we can't scale regs, can we provide an income based cost share for that? What about a 75% cost share and then work with these people to help get them legal. Russell – that's a question for you – to be part of your bill. There are some things you can't sell at your store – b/c of regs at the health dept or planning. How do we help people get in the ball game. If you want to help small farmers, can you create a cost share for compliance for regs generated at the state and county level? I have to put a legal kitchen in and it will cost 10 grand, my income is 10 grand, can we get a cost share to get them compliant?

Russell: I would love to propose it if you will help me understand it. I don't think you'll ever get big farms to help subsidize small farms. I'm concerned about the FSMA and its effect on small farmers. If you can help me think of a solution in our capitalist-based society I'd like to help pursue it.

Kimberly Clark: One solution is to make our farms more productive – we have labor issues around retention and training. How do we help current farmers have better supplies of labor so

we are more efficient? If we are going to increase production can we inventory public lands and private lands to have a future of land in trust for perpetuity that aren't contaminated by GMOs. Gary: At the county level we can charge proportionately for regs based on land size. ADC is looking for farms and it's my understanding that they have lots of land but the issue is infrastructure – fences, roads, water – but maybe the County can help. It's a management admin function to make that land available; I don't think there's a shortage of land.

Audience: Provide labor access for immigrant farmers. Having materials available in their language to tell them that there is a market for organics and that they can also be a part of it.

Audience: Will there be formal policy drafted from this? What are the next steps going forward from today?

Scott: It could be policy, could be funding streams. Input from today gets put into the formal report from The Kohala Center. Information is still being collected. From that will come recommendations to the HDOA on how to move forward and then it's my job to help the industry move forward.

James Rushing: We have a platform for education – certification, organic practices, all our students are local farmers. There are a lot of programs out there. We need help funding these education programs. Education, even starting at pre-k, is hugely important. Help in funding ag education is important.

Diane Ley: In your handouts is a 2-pager with a green circle. USDA has a lot of programs to support agriculture, including the organic industry. Some of the focus is certification – we do provide 750\$/entity to reimburse farmers for certification. If certification is something you want then apply to get reimbursed. The darker bulls-eye is related to the organic industry. But there is information there for education – SARE for example. People get frustrated with the federal govt b/c we are complex and we are but we have a large constituency to take care of. Be broad in your thinking, the industry is broad but it's a small industry. You need partners and you need to work together. Reach out to your non-profit organizations; they will help you get through the complexities of applying for them. If you are a producer or a beginning farmer, come and visit with us. See USDA RD, NRCS, FSA – we all have programs that benefit producers.

James: We need to make people aware that these programs exist.

Diane: Know what your goals are, your challenges, and then come and talk with us. On each island we have service centers. We are happy to help the college. We have to educate those kids.

Concurrent Workshop 2: Food Safety: Best Practices and Certification for Organic Operations

Panelists: Jim Hollyer, Maile Woodhall, Chris Robb
(Audio A8)

Jim Hollyer

We built the nation's only 1 to 1 food safety coaching operation. We want to sell food that is safe and healthy for people.

Consumer Quiz (I didn't get this handout)

Should large farms, small farms, and/or schools

Q1:

Q2:

Q3:

Q4:

Q5:

Q6:

Q7:

Q8: Make sure that the lands and water around the production area are not a potential source of contamination

Q9:

Q10: Use appropriate water quality for irrigation and crop rinsing as required by federal and state regs and industry best practices ...

Q11: Install a ‘back-flow prevention’ system on the farm/garden irrigation system to protect municipal...

Q12: Clean and maintain the packing shed and storage area, harvest baskets, tools, non-porous food contact surfaces, and refrigerators so that they are not a potential source

Q13: Take precautions to reduce/prevent damage/vandalism ...

Q14: Label each box of produce with farm/garden contact information, “Grown in YOUR STATE, USA” and the appropriate field and harvest information to allow for timely identification to a specific field

They have been on 290 of 1000 farms in the state. Maile has been on about 500.

Business Culture: the way you do business, what you expect out of yourself and your employees (volunteers, WWOOFers, interns, students, etc.), and what the consumers can expect out of you and your products. It is about integrity.

What is the NOP: Dan Glickman, Secretary of Agriculture

NOP final rule on Dec 20, 2000. Dan Glickman stated, “Let me be clear about one other thing. The organic logo is a marketing tool. It is not a statement about food safety. Nor is ‘organic’ a value judgment about nutrition or quality. USDA is not in the business of choosing sides

Integrity is doing the right thing when no one is watching. Inside a bottle cap. This includes organic but also food safety.

Dr. May Okihiro, a pediatrician at the Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center .. “In Hawaii we value food as an expression of gratitude and love. It’s a thank-you gift, it’s a love gift...”

Grow Food? Use GAPs! Because you’re growing somebody’s dinner. GAPs are about prevention – or at least significant risk reduction.

Food borne illness by the numbers: 48 million sickness each year. 128,000 hospitalizations each year. 3000 deaths. The economic loss is \$78B each year. Children, elderly, pregnant women, and immunocompromised people are most at risk.

January 28th, 2014: Jensen Farms. Canteloupe. 33 deaths. Court decision will come down. It has elevated what happens to you when you get people sick.

Leafy greens, melons, tomatoes – generate 65% of the food borne illnesses.

We all have different experiences and that colors our perceptions of what is ok.

Human hygiene: toilet with no paper, no paper towels at the sink, when you flush a toilet you atomize stuff and this farm kept scales in the bathroom ...

Use conventional and organic pesticides by the label.

Organic doesn't check for worker protection. Neem is a pesticide it kills things. Be careful around bees because it kills them. The label is the law. Protect your vulnerable places. They all require long sleeve shirt, long pants over socks and boots. From there it can go up.

Restricted Entry Interval (REI) and Pre-Harvest Interval (PHI) – pay attention to these on your chemicals. Don't harvest before the times are up so you don't exceed your max pesticide level.

Worker protection standard training must occur before the 6th day of work. Our coaching team does it and the DOA will do it.

You need to have a CNS – a central notification site. Pesticide applications must be posted for up to 30 days post application. Federal labor law must be posted - \$17K fine.

Subcontractors have exemptions – depends on the classification of your workers. WWOOFers are employees.

Regarding inter-island shipping: don't load your food into a dirty truck.

Think of your farm as a kitchen.

Maile Woodhall, Organic Certifiers

OC is a 3rd party certification company. They offer dual O/FS and FS stand alone in Hawaii by next year.

Why certification programs exist?

It brings opportunities to producers/farmers

Growing market/consumer awareness of social and env. Problems associated with food

...

Certification in a nut shell:

Understand what is being asked of you

Create a farm plan

Submit the plan/application

Have your plan audited and crop(s) inspected

Pass the audit/inspection

Get certification
Sell to buyer

It takes about 2-3 months between turning in your application and receiving certification.

Shop around for an agency that you have a good relationship with; OC assigns you a representative that helps you through the process. Our system is now paperless which aids the process. OC simplified the process by reducing paperwork.

Basic requirements: 3 years with no application of prohibited materials, implementation of an organic system plan, use of natural inputs and/or approved synthetic substances on the national list, develop a record keeping and monitoring system, maintenance of buffer zones (25-40 ft, depends on neighbor use), no use of GMOs, no sewage sludge or irradiation, use of organic seeds when commercially available (in the quality and quantity needed), restrictions on the use of raw manure and compost.

GAP/Food Safety: In January 2002 USDA AMS implemented GAP and GHP audit verification program.

GAP standards for certification: worker hygiene, toilets and hand-washing facilities, irrigation and spray water quality, on farm wells, manure sources and application, compost sources and on-farm storage and compost application, wild animals in field/storage/packing shed areas,

Key sources of farm food contamination: people (pathogenic bacteria, viruses, and parasites infecting other workers, as well as contaminating equipment and crops, generally through bodily fluids and substances (feces, urine, sweat, blood, coughing and wheezing)), wild and domestic animals (pathogenic viruses, bacteria, and parasites generally through direct or indirect contact with feces), water (pathogenic bacteria, viruses, and parasites, infecting workers or contaminating equipment and crops through irrigation, input mixing, hand washing, drinking, or equipment cleaning).

Approaches to food safety: become proactive and anticipate challenges, do your own ‘audit’ and take notice, make communication a priority, everyone from farm to table needs to take responsibility for food safety, inform and educate the industry and the public about public policy issues and risk analysis.

Traceback and recordkeeping: if you had to identify a potentially contaminated load/lot/bin could you find out which field it came from, how much was picked, when, etc.

Organic and Food Safety

Similarities: both are voluntary, inspections cover various topics Many others

Differences: food safety expires every year, organic requires a yearly update/inspection ... many others

Chris Robb

Jensen Farm brothers are looking at 6 years in jail.

I have two accounts: Whole Foods and Armstrong Produce / Foodland

Whole Foods requires organic certification

Armstrong is pushing for Food Safety

The challenge is keeping up with the changing regulations

If you want to be in business you have to play the game

Kyle: Irrigation is from the upper Hamakua ditch, how do you deal with the ditch water ad being FS certified?

Chris: Jim had done water samples from my place.

Jim: It's a manageable situation. The key is not on the edible portion of the crop.

Kyle: With ecoli testing there are different kinds, and they aren't all harmful. So you don't have a fair picture.

Jim: Everyone realizes this isn't the best indicator.

Una: FSMA and organic egg production – chickens cannot leave their confines?

Chris: Cornucopia Institute keeps talking about that ...

Jim: There is nothing in the rules on that.

Renee: Recordkeeping is a big issue – at UH Maui we are trying to pick up online apps for record keeping. Any recommendations?

Maile: Cogpro, Attra, Organic Certifiers has samples

Discussion of what Hawaii's organic industry needs from a non-profit or trade organization (Audio A9)

We need to increase product so support for farmers is important. BUT we need an industry or trade organization or program office as a point for multiple things. It could be advocacy, education, whatever the industry needs in order to grow.

Organic Industry Representative Organization

“Job Description”

Local organic certification and food safety certification agency

Legislative voice for ‘industry’

Advocate for farmers

Market and promote value of organic vs ‘natural’

Education and training at ALL levels – to consumers and different levels of farmers (new, emerging, etc.)

Resource for information and forum for exchange of ideas

Clearinghouse of info for those who are currently doing the work – help them grow and work together

Database of organic consultants

Mandatory classes in schools for organic farming
Develop farmers as business people – teach business skills
Negotiate discounts for members for supplies, inputs, etc. through bulk purchasing for example
UNITE the industry in ‘one voice’
Serve as a facilitator/coordinator among existing agencies
Learn each other’s corporate culture
Discounts for insurances, shipping/UPS, etc.
Serve as a facilitator/coordinator among existing agencies
Learning and understanding each other’s cultures
Tie organic to care for healing of ‘aina and human health (we have been ‘forced’ to eat things like Kentucky fried chicken, etc. ... the essence has to be to heal the earth b/c we can heal us from good food)
Need to regulate/significantly reduce pesticide use / carbon credit tax on pesticide use b/c it destroys carbon
Advocacy role for the organization / full-time lobbyist
Research role within parcels that farmers owned / farmer initiated research
Look to other countries to identify what works
Protecting Hawaii as a brand – lobbying, leg efforts
Examine fair pricing practices and guidelines – fair compensation

Ted (What UH can do)

Having a 3rd party to coordinate existing activities, lobbying, etc. – UH can help with that but cannot do all; don’t recreate what UH is doing – they can provide content, guys and materials if someone else coordinates the research

Scott (What DOA can do)

We will look to you to give us direction. HDOA will have a partnership with this commodity group.

Colehour

This organization doesn’t need to be one entity, 19 or 20 states (primarily small states where there aren’t enough organic farms to support certification) have let the DOA who are going to farms for varying reasons do organic certification and have received the training. All of those states have separate non-profit entities that do education/outreach for agriculture – sometimes they are coordinated and sometimes they are not.

Melanie

Like Richard Ha says, ‘if we aren’t making money we are gardening’

Chris Trump

There is a small coop on Oahu, a non-profit on Hawaii Island, and a coop on Hawaii Island. The non-profit is mandated for promotion and education. The coop will be an access place for high quality regulated inputs, bio inputs made here on the island, IMs to revitalize the soil. Helping the entire island hasn’t happened yet.

Una Greenway

Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation: We are statewide and have 11 chapters. I am co-chair with Kimberly Clark and Ted Radovich. There aren't too many organic farmers in the Farm Bureau. We have Chuck, Max is interested. One of the purposes we can serve is that we have an excellent lobbying voice. We have a small budget. We meet on the telephone mostly via conference calls.

Vince Mina

Farmers Union United. Formed in 2010. Active chapters on Maui and Hawaii Island. Board members on Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii Island. Looking to develop Oahu. We advocate for small farmers to create a vibrant farming community. Legislation, education, and cooperation are our 3 goals. We will present some ag bills – one on farm mentoring with KNF. Senator Nishihara has expressed interest in KNF. We are set apart b/c we are looking at it from the point of view of regeneration. We are pointed in the direction of living soils. We support farmers not miners. We advocate for people who are in the mindset of regenerating soils. In that spirit there are daily issues that we have.

Mark Ferguson

History: Was formed in 1993. In 2002 among the first organic certifying agencies under the NOP. Due to the conflict of self-certification, farmers could no longer serve on the board of HOFA. In 2011 due to increased costs of maintaining accreditation as a certifying agency HOFA gave up certification. Made arrangements with International Certification Services (ICS) to ensure a smooth transition for HFOA's certification clients.

Today we have the website where we provide info and resources about certification and organics, we have a directory where you can find farmers who grow certain crops – at Down To Earth we use that.

Mission: Further organic and sustainable agriculture, land care, and lifestyles in Hawaii, thus giving meaning and life to our state motto.

Purpose: support organic ag through advocacy, education, and assistance. While HOFA is supportive of all sustainable ag practices, our focus is promoting certified organic.

Methods:

Advocacy: passing legislation that strengthens the organic industry

Education: convene organic conferences and trainings

Organizational: build membership, build a volunteer base, strategic planning, etc.

Board Members: Mark Ferguson, Granz Weber, Zach Mermel, Kim Clark, Hector Venezuela many others

We need: committed board members, more farmer involvement, we invite you to become members and show support for organic in Hawaii

We are flexible and want to work with people. Let's try to get things done to make organics stronger here in Hawaii.

Comments:

Vince: Legislators listen to organizations and we feel strongly about that. We would like to partner with FB and find common ground with them.

Kari: Can we capitalize on the energy and info here, we talked about a 3rd party NGO, can we take advantage of the numbers here Sign up for Kari's steering committee.

Mark: We need to come together and work with one voice. If we need to change things let's change things.

John: Are you talking about looking to other countries that have banned pesticides.

Vince: There are 4 levels in Germany.

John: A pesticide free level, a transition level, etc.

Next steps:

TKC cannot support this process beyond January besides fostering some communication. We can get permission to share contact information so people can begin to organize themselves. We will continue to take input and send out a draft report. Give folks 2 weeks to get back to us. Our role will end by March 1.

Una: Let's do a multi institution meeting

Betsy: There is a state call with the specialty crop block grant to help fund a coalition or future activities. We can provide help with the development of that grant for an association.

Closing Notes: Nancy Redfeather

Thank you to all the speakers, HDOA, beginning farmer training programs, etc.