



2024 Policy Priorities

Adopted by HFUU Members at Annual Meeting January 14, 2024

- 1. Regenerative Agriculture and Climate Change Adaptation**
- 2. Workforce Development and Living on Farms**
- 3. Local Supply Chains & Food Hubs**
- 4. Government Efforts that support Hawaii's Family Farmers**
- 5. Food and Nutrition Programs**
- 6. The development and enhancement of food systems for Maui
County relief and recovery**

1) Regenerative Agriculture and Climate Change Adaptation

Family farmers and ranchers are working to adapt to the changing climate by implementing conservation practices to build soil health and make their land more resilient. Farmers and ranchers can play a key role in mitigating climate change by storing carbon in soils and restoring ecosystems. We support regenerative agriculture - a system of farming and ranching principles and practices that increase biodiversity, enriches the soil, purifies watersheds, and all while increasing in-farm fertility, which help producers save money by reducing input expenses. Regenerative practices include no tillage to minimal tillage, diverse cover crops, multiple crop rotations, agroforestry, silvopasture, Hawaiian Indigenous natural agriculture and Korean natural farming, all of which should be augmented by holistic grazing guidelines. We advocate and support formal, informal and non-formal education for regenerative agriculture through the practice of Aloha 'Aina values. We support:

- Incentives for regenerative farming and ranching practices that sequester more carbon, improve soil health and productivity, slow erosion and build up topsoil, and increase water filtration; and
- Practitioners of conservation practices should be rewarded for contributing to carbon sequestration and for other ecosystem services including a carbon tax credit to incentivize landowners for the planting of trees and other crops to strengthen natural water systems.

2) Workforce Development and Living on Farms

HFUU promotes access to land for family farmers and recognizes that the lack of availability and high cost of land are major constraints for new and established farmers in Hawaii. We support:

- Legislation for farmers to live on the farm;
- Living on Farms as a statewide priority for farmers because:
 - living on-site allows farmers to better understand, monitor and respond to the effects of local weather on crops;
 - farming is very hands-on and requires an intense time commitment;
 - farmers can attract, train and employ farm workers by offering housing as an employee benefit; and
 - it helps with on-farm crop and equipment security and protection from theft.
- State regulations and county zoning ordinances to protect agricultural lands and enable farmers and workers to be permitted to live on the farm and to afford additional housing for farm workers;
- Affordable and adequate housing for family farmers and their farm workers;
- Protecting family farmers and their workers from short-term vacation rental (STVR) regulations that affect farmers' ability to house volunteers, work-traders, interns, apprentices, workers, visitors and owners; and
- Officially recognizing farmers as essential contributors to public health. Include farmers in the broader framework of essential workers, especially during emergencies and crises.

3) Local Supply Chains & Food Hubs

In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic, unexpected shifts in supply and demand, natural disasters, and market concentration have caused significant supply chain disruptions for family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. The members of HFUU operate several community-based cooperatives and food hubs that played an essential role in food systems response and recovery during the pandemic. We support:

- Extending government funding that optimizes the role of food hubs to provide locally grown food for foodbanks and non-profits in response to community needs for food distributions;
- Expanding resources to develop our islands' food systems value chain infrastructure from local food production to consumption via storage, processing and distribution; and
- Increasing funding for Act 313 - the Food Hub Pilot Program.

4) Government Efforts that support Hawaii's Family Farmers

We support:

- Expanded funding for HFUU efforts that became law in 2022 including food hubs, farm apprenticeship program, cover crop and composting reimbursement program;
- Representation of family farmers in the process of implementing laws in the development of studies, projects, programs and regulations;
- County level efforts to address climate change, its impact on regional ecosystems, and long-term sustainability of agricultural systems;
- All government efforts of enhancing the attractiveness and authenticity of Hawaii grown products through labeling;
- Prioritization of local food procurement by all Federal, State and County government agencies;
- Tax programs that enhance farm viability;
- Increased funding for municipal and institutional composting and nutrient recycling; and
- Increase funding and regulations to control the spread of invasive species and agricultural pests, and protect biosecurity in the state of Hawaii.

5) Food and Nutrition Programs. We support:

- Increased funding for SNAP Double Up Food Bucks Program;
- Expansion of SNAP Double Up Food Bucks Program to include the full range of food products including proteins and dairy;
- Establish funding for a Hawaii Farm to Foodbank program;
- Expansion of nutrition programs to include farm-to-school, WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs, programs that allow SNAP and other federal nutrition program beneficiaries to double their benefits at farmers markets and others;
- WIC benefits to purchase the full spectrum of locally-produced foods and removing the barriers to access;
- Programs which allow SNAP and WIC users to purchase food directly from farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, and local producers; and
- Allowing cultural starches (kalo/poi, 'ulu, 'uala) to be allowable purchases under the GRAINS category in the WIC program.