

EACP Committee

From: County Clerk
Sent: Tuesday, June 16, 2020 7:56 AM
To: EACP Committee
Subject: FW: Simon Russell Testimony in Support of EACP-46 & EACP 24
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From: simon@farm-maui.com <simon@farm-maui.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 16, 2020 4:51 AM
To: Shane M. Sinenci <Shane.Sinenci@mauicounty.us>; Keani N. Rawlins <Keani.Rawlins@mauicounty.us>
Cc: County Clerk <County.Clerk@mauicounty.us>
Subject: Simon Russell Testimony in Support of EACP-46 & EACP 24

Aloha Kakahiaka EACP Chair Sinenci, Council Vice Chair Rawlins-Fernandez and honorable members of the EACP committee,

It is my pleasure to write to you this morning in support of your excellent work on the Mālama Maui County Pledge and food security for Maui Nui.

As Mālama 'Āina has been a focus for most of my life, I find the language in the Mālama Maui County Pledge very encouraging, and giant leap forward for the visitor industry, should the County Council adopt and the mayor sign it into law and practice.

With regards to the other item related to food security on your agenda, EACP 24, this is a topic very dear to my heart, so I mahalo you for taking time to consider how to support a food secure Maui Nui.

The overarching issues we have in my humble opinion is that Maui Nui must have and must support a lot more farmers, fishers and ranchers, and they need to be able to afford to live here, and have the inputs they need, the facilities to aggregate, process and distribute from, and the marketing to make sure that they recoup their costs of production and make a reasonable profit (social, environmental, cultural and financial). If food producers cannot afford to live here with dignity, we just won't have enough of them to feed our population.

As a person who lived through and endured the devastation and aftermath of 220 mph (at my hale) Hurricane Iniki on Kauai in 1992, I have witnessed first hand what it is like to have food supply lines in totally cut off for 3 months and disfunctional for years. Maui Nui and the rest of Ko Hawaii Pae 'Āina must always have the capacity to feed itself. To me that capacity is food security.

Until it is too late, we as a society will never be able to make people eat local. Since local food is generally more expensive than imports, consumers pay the premium for it. The solution is local food production must be subsidised to a certain extent in various ways. We must not wait until it is too late. A vital first step is that we must influence our society to retain the knowledge (ike) of local food production in the various microclimates (ahupua'a), and we need to do this work ASAP. Maui Nui must create a unbreakable chain of succession for food producers to transfer their sacred knowledge to the next generation.

To retain this sacred knowledge, it's transfer and the ability of farmers to be in relationship with 'Āina in a way that is truly pono, in 2015 our hui mahi'ai (legislative committee) at HFUU developed a 5 point plan (attached to this testimony) for making farming careers attractive for the next generation, while honoring our kupuna farmers by compensating

them for their wisdom and guidance. This in turn will facilitate the path towards a vibrant and prosperous farming future in Maui County.

The HFUU 5 point strategy to build a prosperous and vibrant farming future here on Maui is a collaboration of many in the membership and was led as a lobbying effort at the State Legislature and HDOA by myself, during the time which I was the legislative Chairman for HFUU 2012- 2017.

Step 1 – Workforce Development: Training the next generation by apprenticing them with local expert producers in different ahupua'a and giving the experts a generous stipend in compensation for their sacred knowledge. This program is now known as the Farmer Apprenticeship Mentoring Program

Step 2 – Affordable Farming Land Trusts – This concept is not new, and puts important agricultural lands in trust so that they may not be parceled off and sold. This practice gives the farmer the security they need to invest in the long term health of the 'Āina and farm in a way that is pono. Ideally, there is also a housing component that creates a pool of equity for the producer to retire on, with the end game for the producer of kupuna housing on the land trust so that they can mentor the next generation on site.

Step 3- Nutrient Cycling Centers - once the farmers have knowledge and land, they will need fertilizer, and we can replace almost imported fertilizers with nutrients and biological amendments made here on Maui. These natural farming amendments are well known in Maui by now, and are highly effective. Nutrient cycling centers located strategically close to waste streams (food and green waste) can produce most if not all of the compost, mulch and biological amendments needed to grow most of our food.

Step 4 – Food Hubs - Once scaled production is achieved, the producer will need to aggregate and process the produce in a food safe manner. Most producers do not have the capacity to do this, as the potable water, food safe post harvest handling area and cold storage are too much cost for any one operation to bear. Therefore it would be wise to have a food hub in each of the major food producing areas of the county, and one near the port for exports, ie. Hana, Kula, Wailuku, Lahaina and near the port of Kahului.

Step 5 – Branding (AKA truth in labeling) - There is a big financial incentive to counterfeit brand Hawaii, since it commands a premium price. We need legal protections with the force of law in place to protect brand Maui, think Coffee, Chocolate, Poi etc... we do not want unscrupulous processors and packers diluting our brands, and negatively impacting their quality. The Hawaii Department of Agriculture has various programs for this including the Grown in Hawaii, Made in Hawaii with Aloha, and Hawaii Grown. Maui County agriculture interests need to be unwavering in its support of our producers to have their pure unadulterated products in the marketplace charging the premium that reflects the producers cost of production plus a reasonable profit.

This five point strategy for comprehensive food security was the outcome of countless hours of committee meetings and producer discussions for years, so I hope that this testimony is valuable to the committee in the deliberations ahead.

Maui County has tremendous potential to produce the food fuel and fiber we need, we just need to solve the issues of lack of expertise to produce at the levels we need, as well as the capacity for farmers to be able to live in the agriculture district, as currently it is too expensive for most producers and their families to afford a dignified and affordable home there.

Me ka ha 'aha 'a
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-Buckminster Fuller



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1 Workforce Development Programs

Training the next generation of farmer's is critical to any farming future here on Maui. The average age of local farmers is over 60!

Capturing crucial information held by our Kupuna about sustainable and natural biological farming practices is the cornerstone of HFUU's Farm Apprenticeship Mentoring program (FAM).

- 2015:** FAM used \$25,000 in Maui County grants to train and graduate it's first cohort
- 2016:** FAM received \$35,000 in county grants, plus a \$40,000 specialty crop grant for Moringa production
- 2017:** FAM has a suggested \$75,000 line item in the mayor's budget to expand the program.



2 Affordable Farming Land Trusts

This is currently a county legislative initiative being lobbied for by your HFUU Legislative Committee representative Dale Bonar. If passed, farmers will finally be able to live on their land leases, cluster their houses, and grow equity in their farms that they can sell when they retire or want to move on.

www.affordablefarmsmaui.com



HFUU has developed a **five-point strategy** to build a vibrant and prosperous farming future here on Maui.

Leveraging the strength of our membership to influence agriculture policy at every level, the Farmer's Union gets results.

We champion the small-holder farm, stand firmly behind organic agriculture, and build capacity toward whole systems and regenerative agricultural solutions that are pono and profitable.

Become a member online at www.hfuuhi.org and help us implement these essential programs!



3 Nutrient Cycling Centers

We need to lower the cost of farming inputs by creating regional nutrient cycling centers for building healthy soil.

Regenerative agriculture requires ongoing and diverse fertility strategies. Manufacturing biochar, effective microorganisms, compost and other necessary soil fertility amendments is central to the HFUU mission. We have commitments from the HDOA and CTAHR to assist in developing new programs. In this legislative session we requested \$1 million for nutrient cycling pilot programs here on Maui.

HFUU is writing a business plan for the first nutrient cycling project, and we are actively looking for collaborators.



4 Food Hubs

HFUU is dedicated to building food aggregation and distribution hubs that serve our farmers, distributors, and local communities. Getting our small holders' products to market affordably in accordance with new food safety regulations is essential.

Maximizing profits for farmers while keeping food prices affordable for local consumers is only possible when there is easy and affordable access to processing, packing, and distribution.

Combining these centers with a permanent home for a Farmer's Market, incubator farms, farm-to-school and other educational programs, agritourism, a commercial kitchen, and a beloved gathering space for the community are the motivations for building a Food Hub.

Food Hubs put the "culture" in agriculture! We need help from HFUU members to develop this plan.



5 Truth in Labeling - Hawai'i's Origin Products Protection

HFUU has been working since 2012 to create a 100% Hawaii Grown label, issued and certified by the American Origin Products Association, or the HDOA.

The word "Hawai'i" on a label sells, regardless of where the crops are grown. Our agricultural integrity and our producers' livelihoods are compromised by counterfeiting and unethical businesses profiting from misleading labeling. We must protect "Brand Hawai'i"!

Join with us to demand origin labeling for Hawai'i grown products.