

AGRICULTURE, DIVERSIFICATION, ENVIRONMENT, AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Council of the County of Maui

MINUTES

October 10, 2024

Online Only via Teams

CONVENE: 1:33 p.m.

PRESENT: VOTING MEMBERS:

Councilmember Gabe Johnson, Chair
Councilmember Shane M. Sinenci, Vice-Chair
Councilmember Tom Cook, Member
Councilmember Alice L. Lee, Member (In at 1:37 p.m.)
Councilmember Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez, Member (In at 2:24 p.m.)
Councilmember Nohelani U‘u-Hodgins, Member

NON-VOTING MEMBERS:

Councilmember Tamara Paltin, Member (In at 1:40 p.m.)

EXCUSED: VOTING MEMBERS:

Councilmember Yuki Lei K. Sugimura, Member

STAFF:

Samantha Tanck, Legislative Analyst
Ellen McKinley, Legislative Analyst
Maria Leon, Committee Secretary
Megan Moniz, Legislative Attorney
Jean Pokipala, Council Services Assistant Clerk
Ryan Martins, Council Ambassador

Mavis Oliveira-Medeiros, Council Aide, East Maui Residency Area Office
Roxanne Morita, Council Aide, Lāna‘i Residency Area Office
Bill Snipes, Council Aide, South Maui Residency Area Office

ADMIN.:

Rogerene “Kali” Arce, Director, Department of Agriculture
Lauren Nelson, Food Access Coordinator, Department of Agriculture
Kaiea Medeiros, Agriculture Advocate, Department of Agriculture
Nahulu Nunokawa, Deputy Corporation Counsel, Department of the Corporation
Counsel

OTHERS: Ana Tarano, ‘Āina Data Hui

Testifiers

Scott Lacasse, Executive Director, Grow Some Good
Chana Makale‘a Dudoit Ane, Climate and Resilience Director, Living Pono Project
Genesis Young, Teran James Young Foundation
Cristina De Leon, Teran James Young Foundation

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Ana Tarano
Junya Nakoa
Terese Masters
Nara Boone
Jasee Law

(15+) additional attendees

PRESS: *Akakū: Maui Community Television, Inc.*

CHAIR JOHNSON: *... (gavel) ...* Aloha. Will the Agricultural [*sic*], Diversification, Environment, and Public Transportation Committee Meeting of October 10th, 2024 please come to order. The time is now 1:33 p.m. Members, in accordance with Sunshine Law, if you're not in the Council Chambers, please identify who, if anyone, is in the room, vehicle, or workspace with you today. Minors do not need to be identified. Also, please see on the last page of the agendas for information on meeting connectivity, and remember to silence all cell phones. Good afternoon, everyone. I look forward to Chairing a productive meeting. I'm Gabe Johnson, your Committee Chair, alone in my office on my side. Also joining us today is Vice-Chair Shane Sinenci. Hello, Councilmember--and there's no testifiers at the Lānaʻi District Office--Councilmember?

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Hey. Aloha and good afternoon, Chair, here at my home office. I'm here by myself, and there's no testifiers in Hāna.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Councilmember. Let's move...I don't see Council Chair Alice Lee just yet. Correct me if I'm wrong. We'll move on to Committee Member Tom Cook. Aloha, Councilmember.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Aloha, and good afternoon. There are no testifiers in the Kihei District Office, and I'm here.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Councilmember. I know that Committee Member Rawlins-Fernandez is...will be...will be attending shortly, and Yuki Lei...Councilmember Yuki Lei Sugimura is excused. And I notice that Committee Member Nohelani U'u-Hodgins is here, so aloha, Councilmember.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Aloha, Chair. Aloha, everyone. I'm at my private residence, and my son is here with me as well, and I do not have any testifiers at the Pā'ia Office or at my house. Thanks, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: All right. Our Non-Voting Members are always welcome. That would be Councilmember Tasha Kama, as well as Councilmember Tamara Paltin. From the Administration, we have Kaiea Medeiros; Lauren Nielsen [*sic*], Food Access Coordinator; and Director Kali Arce. And from Corporation Counsel today, we have Nahulu Nunokawa, Deputy Corporation Counsel. From the Committee Staff, we have Sam

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Tanck, Legislative Analyst; Ellen McKinley, Legislative Analyst; Megan Moniz, Legislative Analyst [sic]; and Maria Leon, Committee Secretary.

**ITEM 1(26): DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, DRAFT MAUI COUNTY
FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY PLAN (Rule 7(B))**

CHAIR JOHNSON: Let's see. So, on the agenda today, we have one informational item, ADEPT-1(26) Department of Agriculture, Draft Maui County Food and Nutrition Security Plan. Thank you, Members, resource personnel, and Administration for being here. And we...I think...because there's only one item on the agenda, I'll open up public testimony after the presentation, and I think we have--it looks like Megan Moniz is the Legislative Attorney today, my...my mistake. So, we're going to go right into the presentation. Looks like Councilmember Paltin has joined us. So, aloha and welcome, Councilmember Paltin. *(pause)* Well, maybe she's getting her camera set up and everything. So, once she turns her cameras on, and Staff can let me know, we can...we can address her. So, Department...let me see, I have some notifications here. Department of Agriculture, Draft Maui County Food and Nutrition Plan. Members, in June, a survey by the Hawai'i State Rural Health Association of 2,097 residents of Maui County, including 1,105 fire-impacted individuals, found that 60 percent of respondents, and more than 70 percent of fire survivors, report cutting back on groceries and food for financial reasons. The Hawai'i Food Bank says that 30 percent of the State population was food insecure in 2023. Among those who are affected by the fires, that figure jumps to 49 percent. And I'm going to stop right here, and I see Council Chair Alice Lee has joined us. So, welcome, Council Chair Alice Lee.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Good afternoon. Sorry I'm late, but I'm here to join you, and hope...looking forward to the meeting. Thank you. Home in my workspace alone.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair Lee. Okay. So, I'm just going to continue on. We're going to open up public testimony after we have our presentation. So, 40 percent or more of those surveyed by the food bank who identified as Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino, and/or Native American, live in food insecure households, at least 10 percent higher than the general population, showing that this is...issue is also a racial equity issue. Food insecurity hurts our children and families especially. The food banks found that households with young children and school-aged children are significantly more likely to be food insecure. It impacts the next generation of our leaders and workforce. Fifty-one percent of UH Maui college students reported experiencing food insecurity in the prior 30 days, according to 2021 data collected for the UH System Student Basic Needs Committee. And I'll just jump in here. In my personal experience, when I was in college, we...we were so poor, I would go and give plasma--you know, give blood--but give plasma just to get, like, \$30. And then what we would do with the money, we would go and buy 99-cent cheeseburgers. I mean, that's just so unhealthy. And many of the young kids are doing that to this day. So, according to the Aloha United Way, 52 percent of Maui County households earn below the survival budget for the County, meaning they cannot afford basic household essentials,

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including food. That data was from 2022, and we know how costs have only risen since then. Hawai'i has the highest cost of living in the nation. All of this data points to what our community already knows...our people are struggling just to get by, and as a result, do not have stable and consistent access to healthy and nutritious foods, a problem which is hurting the most vulnerable among us, such as young families and children, fire survivors, racial groups who have faced historical oppression and exploitation. For this reason, I'm grateful that the Department of Agriculture is making the County Food and Nutrition Security Plan a priority, so that we can have a strategy to address issues in our local food system, and work to fix one piece of the unaffordable crisis, which is driving away and displacing residents. In doing so, we also have the opportunity to increase our food sovereignty, support local diversified economy, and reduce dependence on food imports, making up an estimated 85 to 90 percent of our food supply. Today, I have invited the Department of Agriculture to give a presentation on their Draft Maui County Food Nutrition Security Plan, which is currently accepting public feedback. I hope this agenda item will increase the public participation in the plan, and help us, as policymakers, better understand how we can collaborate and make decisions that help our constituents become more food secure. Mr. Medeiros, Ms. Nelson, and Director Arce, thank you for being here today, and please proceed with your presentation. The floor is yours.

MS. ARCE: Chair, I have opening comments, if you'd like?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Please, Director.

MS. ARCE: Okay. Good afternoon, Chair Johnson, and ADEPT Committee Members. The Department, through its Food Security Division and Ag Advocacy Division, has promoted agency coordination within the food system sector among agencies and stakeholders to work together on the development of the Maui County Food and Nutrition Security Plan. This plan strives to represent shared goals and visions for the County. The four goals outlined in the plan align with the Department of Agriculture's powers, duties, and functions stated in the Maui County Code of Ordinances. The Department will play an important role in implementing some of the strategies that are developed for some of the food system plans that come out of this important plan. In closing, the Maui County Food and Nutrition Security Plan aims to boost resident health and food security, and increase access to locally-grown agricultural products. I hope you have any feedback and questions integrated into our work that we're trying to produce. And as you know, this is the first draft, and a lot of work has been put into it. Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Director. Now, does anybody else want to speak to the presentation?

MS. NELSON: Aloha. I'm Lauren Nelson, the Maui County Food Access Coordinator, and I'm joined here today with our Agriculture advocate, Kaiea Medeiros. I'll share the presentation, and then we'll all be available for questions afterwards. So, mahalo, Chair and Councilmembers, for the opportunity to share the Maui County Department of

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Agriculture’s work to develop a food and nutrition security plan for Maui County. Our first draft of the plan is open for public comment and available on our website. The purpose of the Maui County Food and Nutrition Security Plan is to ensure that all Maui County residents have access to affordable, nutritious, culturally-appropriate food. This plan includes the power--pardon me--this plan acknowledges the power of our food systems as drivers of health, cultural connection, and resilience. Food systems are one of the greatest levers we have to improve human health, longevity, quality of life, and the environment. As Director Arce shared, the Food and Nutrition Security Plan is being developed as an action plan to carry out our department’s...the Department of Agriculture’s strategic plan and foundational goal to...to increase the accessibility of healthy, local food for residents. To start, I think it’s important to share our definition of what we mean by food security. We are using the World Food Summit’s definition that states that food security is defined when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Within that definition are four essential components, which include availability; accessibility, which includes affordability of food; utilization; and the stability of food supply chains. Our plan further emphasizes nutrition security in its title. As we know, that to develop...that we need to develop a food system that not only meets the caloric needs of our community, but also ensures that Maui County residents have access to nutritionally-balanced, culturally-appropriate food at all times. Nutrition security is defined as the consistent access, availability, and affordability of foods that promote well-being and prevent diseases for all racial and ethnic groups and vulnerable communities, such as lower-income and rural and remote populations. To give further context to the Food and Nutrition Security plan, I wanted to share some data on the current state of food security in Maui County and in Hawai‘i. Mahalo, Chair Johnson, for sharing many statistics already. We wanted to highlight the report that Hawai‘i Food Bank released this year on data that they collected in 2023. Their State of Food Insecurity in Hawai‘i shows that since the pandemic, Hawai‘i has seen an average increase of 25 percent in food prices, which we are all feeling at the grocery store. Across Hawai‘i, 29 percent of families with children are facing food insecurity, and these numbers are only exacerbated by system inequities. The report estimates that 43 percent of Native Hawaiians are food insecure across Hawai‘i, and hunger costs residents and the State a great deal. For Hawai‘i, food insecurity is associated with \$800 million per year in added health care costs. We know that food and nutrition security are not possible without access to housing and financial security. There’s a heartbreaking expression in my field, which is that, “Rent eats first,” and the Hawai‘i Housing Factbook reported this year that Maui County residents pay the highest rent costs in the United States, and that over 52 percent of our population in Maui County is rent-burdened. As you are probably already well aware, in Hawai‘i, we pay the highest food costs in all of the United States. And prior to the fires, Aloha United Way found that across Maui County, over half of our residents either fall below the poverty line, or fall within the ALICE category, which is Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, and Employed. So, it’s those who earn too much to qualify for Federal assistance, but do not make enough at their jobs to cover the basic cost of living, and they struggle to afford health care costs, bills, and food. So it’s over half of our population is struggling to afford the cost of living. As

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we know, the experience of food insecurity differs within our populations on our islands. Last year, Hawai'i Food Bank found that 31 percent of Maui County residents, as Councilmember Johnson shared, experience food insecurity, but for households that were affected by wildfires, that number is 49 percent estimated experiencing food insecurity. And we also know that our rural communities face significantly more health challenges than urban residents. As Councilmember Johnson shared, Lisa Grove's recent report for Maui Together found that 60 percent of Maui County residents recently cut back on food and groceries for personal financial reasons to cut costs. This is greater than the 54 percent of residents who had to cut back on food and groceries because of costs in 2022 during the COVID pandemic. Among our fire-impacted community, that number's even greater, at 71 percent who have had to cut back on grocery spending. There's a greater need, now more than ever, to coordinate within our communities to create food systems that are equitable, accessible, and affordable. As inflation, food prices, and the costs of living increase, our community is facing greater challenges in affording food and accessing healthy diets. Working with community, the Maui County Food and Nutrition Security Plan will lay out strategic recommendations to improve nutrition security, climate and emergency resilience, and opportunities for our local producers. The content and recommendations in this plan are very specific, as we knew we needed to address the specific needs of Molokai, Lāna'i, and Maui. Our islands' food systems are influenced by many global factors, and State and national policies. But for the purposes of this plan, we wanted to focus on the parts of our food system that we can influence within Maui County. We aim to create recommendations that reflect the unique needs and opportunities in our Islands, guiding us towards a more resilient and just food system that is in alignment with our local values and our community's goals. Each action item and recommendation in the plan originated directly from specific community feedback. Our community is what makes up our food system, and we all have a role to play, as we all consume food. I especially appreciate this graphic, the community-based food systems, because you can see that we all are a part of our food system. Through three years of data-gathering through surveys, events, and most recently our community talk story sessions this spring, we've captured information from over 600 community members across Maui County to learn about their food system priorities and the food security solutions that they would like to see championed. Here are photos from our Talk Story sessions, with our Molokai Talk Story up top, and our Lāna'i Talk Story session shown below. This plan is informed by community, and it will be led by community. While the Maui County Department of Agriculture will oversee the advancement of the Food and Nutrition Security Plan and its coordination, the plan and its actions will be carried out and co-led by community leaders, including nonprofits, small businesses, and government-supported projects already working to build a better food system for Molokai, Lāna'i, and Maui. We know that our community has already developed many brilliant solutions to build food security on our islands, and we are not looking to reinvent the wheel. With our plan, we hope to highlight and uplift these existing efforts, and to help increase coordination and resource sharing. We are also identifying critical gaps that need community and County support. The Food and Nutrition Security Plan will be carried out through four key goals. Goal-1 focuses on food access to ensure all residents have access to nourishing, culturally-relevant foods at all times. Goal-2 is to support our food producers to create abundant,

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self-sufficient food systems. Goal-3 is to build our local food economies to ensure that future generations of farmers, ranchers, fishers, and food system workers have profitable career pathways to pursue careers in agriculture. And Goal-4 is foundational to all other goals in that we must protect and promote healthy, resilient ecosystems, and responsible natural resource stewardship to be food secure. Each goal is broken out into objectives which will be carried out through specific actions. Within Goal-1, to expand food access, there are the objectives to leverage existing institutions, infrastructure, and programs to increase access to nourishing foods...increase access to nourishing foods and lower rates of chronic disease, increase community self-sufficiency through home food production and access to wild foods, increase individual and community capacity to remain food secure in times of emergency, support economic security, food affordability, and financial safety nets to prevent poverty and food insecurity. Goal-2, to support farmers and expand food production, includes the objectives to protect and expand access to agricultural lands, improve water infrastructure and management to support food production, improve agriculture infrastructure and establish new facilities to increase capacity and resilience, diversify food production and increase the amount of local food grown for local consumption, and support producers to navigate regulations and reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens. Goal-3, to build vibrant local food economies and profitable ag career pathways includes the objectives to increase market access for local producers and support value chain coordination, support producers in navigating regulations and reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens, increase farm viability and the viability of farming as a sustainable and fulfilling career, and develop future generations of farmers and support ongoing advancement for current producers. And Goal-4, to promote healthy, resilient ecosystems and responsible resource stewardship includes the objectives to promote soil fertility and composting, support ridge-to-reef resource management, and manage invasive species populations. Each goal is broken out into objectives which will be carried out through specific actions, and each action will be championed by a community partner, a County department, or a business or organization already doing work in this area. During the first draft phase that we're in with this plan, we are connecting with potential action leads to get their buy-in and ask for their edits to each of the objectives, goal, and action language, and to learn their suggestions for the necessary resources, partners, and metrics to use to track the success of each action. If there is a group that would be essential to work with to carry out any of these actions, we are meeting with them now to get their feedback and buy-in as a co-leader of this plan. For example, to carry out Goal-1's action, to increase vendors' ability to accept DA BUX and work at farmers' markets, we are planning meetings with the Food Basket, who coordinates DA BUX for all of Hawai'i, and will be working with farmers' market managers and the Hawai'i Farmers Market Association. So, with all of our action leads, we're in the process of scheduling meetings to gain feedback and support of the plan. The first full draft of the plan, including our list of actions, can be found on the Department of Agriculture's website. We are currently in the process of soliciting community feedback on the first draft of the plan, and we have a community survey that closes tomorrow, where we are asking Maui County residents to prioritize the objectives for each goal. The survey asks participants to identify where they live, and then participants are asked to prioritize and rank the objectives for each goal. We are

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happy to share this information with each Councilmember to show what the top priorities are per each residential area. This plan will be revised based on community feedback and shared through two rounds of public comment, which will include this current period of public comment on the first draft of the plan, including public meetings and our one-on-one interest meetings with potential action leads. And in November, we'll share our second draft of the plan, incorporating the community feedback we receive for the community to validate if we correctly captured their input. We aim to have the plan finalized by January of '25. We wanted to share this slide twice to encourage community to please provide feedback to this...on the plan through the survey before it closes tomorrow on October 11th. We also invite our Councilmembers to complete the survey, and to provide feedback on the first draft of the plan if they would like. We hope to have the chance to present our second draft and finalized plan to the Council if they would be interested. Mahalo for this opportunity to share, and we look forward to learning your questions.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you so much, Lauren, I really appreciate your presentation. If you don't mind, Staff, can we take the presentation down for now? I'd like to recognize Councilmember Paltin, who's joined us. And aloha, Councilmember Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Aloha 'auinalā and shekoli kākou. Streaming live and direct from Nāpili. I have two canines here with me, one minor, and one adult named Kingy Poo Paltin-Vierra, and any moment, there will be an adult male named George Vierra in the workspace with me as well. Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you for that. Members, do we have any clarifying questions? Because we're going to jump into some testimony. Seeing no hands raised, so thank you...thank you, Members. Let's open up public testimony. Staff, I assume we do have public testimony?

MS. TANCK: Yes, Chair. If you don't mind reading the testimony script?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yep.

MS. MCKINLEY: And we will go ahead and get right into it.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Oral testimony via phone or video conference will be accepted in addition to in-person testimony. Individuals wishing to testify in person may sign up with a Staff member at the entrance of the Chamber. For those joining the meeting on Microsoft Teams, those wishing to testify can let Staff know by using the raise-your-hand function if you wish to testify. Once you've been added to the testify log, Staff will lower your hand. Testifiers wanting to provide video or audio testimony should have joined the online meeting via the Tiny...TinyURL link, or by calling into the phone number noted on today's agenda. Written testimony is encouraged and can be submitted via the eComment link at mauicounty.us/agendas. Oral testimony is limited to three minutes per item. If you're still testifying beyond that time, you will hear a second timer go off after 30 seconds, and I will kindly ask you to complete your

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testimony. We ask that you state your full name and organization, but if you prefer to testify anonymously, you...Staff will identify and refer to you as Testifier. Please also indicate the agenda...well, we know it's only the one item. So, Staff, will you call the next...the first testifier?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the first testifier is Scott Lacasse, to be followed by Makale'a Ane.

. . . BEGIN PUBLIC TESTIMONY . . .

MR. LACASSE: Aloha, Chair. Get closer? Aloha, Chair Johnson, Members of the ADEPT Committee, and the Maui County Department of Agriculture. I am Scott Lacasse, the executive director of Grow Some Good, a 501(c)(3) focused on cultivating a healthy community by strengthening local agriculture and improving access to nutritious and affordable food. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on the draft Maui County Food and Nutrition Security Plan. We appreciate the Plan's focus on ensuring access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally-appropriate food. Its recognition of food systems as drivers of health, cultural connection, and resilience is deeply aligned with our mission. Grow Some Good and its partner organizations contribute to a self-sufficient and abundant food system through our core programs, Nā Māla Kaiā'ulu, Farm-to-School, and in Kumu Mea Kanu kits. For example, our Nā Māla Kaiā'ulu Agroforestry Initiative, in partnership with the Maui Family YMCA, is transforming nearly three acres of County-leased land into a thriving community food forest. This work promotes resilient ecosystems and responsible stewardship, which aligns with Goal-4 of the Plan. Our Farm to School program, reaching over 8,000 students annually, supports Goal-3 by fostering future farmers and food system leaders by integrating agricultural education and distributing nearly 4,000 plant starts. Through our Kumu Mea Kanu kits, we empower families to grow their food and strengthen food security. While we're proud of these contributions, additional collaboration and support are essential. Increased access to infrastructure like tools, water, funding, and workforce housing for our school garden coordinators would help us expand, especially in underserved communities. One area where we urgently need support is expanding permit approvals for land and building use related to our agricultural activities. Navigating SMA rules, exemptions, building permits is often complex, and more straightforward guidance and review would significantly expedite our progress on key projects. Additionally, streamlining the County's grant process for organizations like ours that annually receive line item funding would enable us to focus more on delivering results and significantly increase our efficiency and impact. This change is crucial for the success of our initiatives. In conclusion, we want to reiterate our full commitment to supporting the County and realizing the vision of the Food and Nutrition Security Plan. We're committed to working closely with the ADEPT Committee and the Maui County Department of Agriculture to achieve our shared goals. Together, we can build a just, resilient, and culturally-connected food system for all Maui residents. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

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CHAIR JOHNSON: Thanks so much for your testimony. Members, do we have any questions for our testifier? Seeing none. Thank you once again for your testimony, mahalo. Staff, will you call the next testifier, please? And I'm really curious of all the testifiers, did you fill out the survey? . . .*(laughing)*. . . We really want that survey filled out. So, any time I get a chance to tell somebody about the survey, please fill it out. Staff, call the next testifiers, please?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Makale'a Ane, to be followed by Genesis Young.

MS. ANE: Aloha. 'O wau 'o Chana Makale'a Dudoit Ane. No Mililani, O'ahu mai au. 'O Kahului, Maui noho ana. 'O Community...oh, never mind. Climate and Resilience Director of the Living Pono Project. Mahalo for having this on today's agenda. This is...has been a long time coming, and I...and the Living Pono project is in full support of this amazing plan and document put together by our County Department of Agriculture. Thanks for even having a Department of Agriculture. It's...the work that's being done has really led all of the counties in this space in prioritizing agriculture and circular economy in Hawai'i. The one...and we definitely...the Living Pono project would like to serve as an action lead, especially as we see the need from people affected by the fires to get into better job security, a better way of living for themselves, and being connected back to the land. We, the Living Pono Project, currently hosts a hub...a distribution hub in Central Maui, where we distribute to over 400 families affected by the fires, between 400 to 700 families weekly, and this is only going to increase as hubs on the West Side phase out and people move to Central Maui. So, we really identified...we've grown our program for the past ten years, focusing on Maui's agriculture system, finding the gaps and resources that farmers need to be able to survive and thrive, and contribute to a circular economy in Maui, and this has only been exacerbated by the Maui fires. And as Councilmember Johnson and Department of Agriculture has said, the people affected by the Maui fires have felt this impact even more profoundly, and we are dedicated to helping them grow and contribute to the agriculture economy in different ways. So, we...we have submitted a few different grants to other organizations, but we really want to focus on helping connect people affected by the fires that are looking to get into a different industry, connecting them with farmers, and connecting farmers to resources that can bolster their...their survival in this system, which is really against small farmers. So, we really love this plan. Our feedback, we've provided feedback in our written testimony, but I'd really love to see that this plan is connected to other State plans so that we can really bolster getting more funding to these...to our agriculture in Maui so we can connect it to the State Biosecurity Plan, State Climate Action Plan, our own County and Resilience Action Plan, our Agriculture Water Use and Development Plan, and Hawai'i's Agribusiness Plan. So, if we do this, we can align ourselves up for better resources. We can seek funding from the U.S. Economic Development . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . Administration, Rural Development Plan, and other...other support resources. So, Mahalo. Thank you very much.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Ms. Ane, for your testimony. We do have questions from Councilmember Shane Sinenci.

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VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Makale'a, for your testimony this afternoon. I did see Living...Living Pono plant a whole bunch of 'ulu trees, and I was just wondering, how...how many acres are you guys farming?

MS. ANE: So, currently, we are farming in the Waikapū area for the...the nonprofit partners with Bobby Pahia. And in that small parcel, we've...we farm two acres, we are partners with other farmers, and we have sheep, and other crops on other farms. And we're also the ag partners to AES Solar, which we have access to 500 acres under all the solar panels that are coming up. So, we have 200 sheep on that property, and we're also the ag partners, or conservation partners, for Maui Land & Pineapple, where we manage 10,000 acres in West Maui. And we'd like to do a lot of fire mitigation and native plantings out on the West Side to help...to reduce fire risks, especially on the West Side. So yeah, plenty acres to do a lot of good work.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Are you guys just delivering fresh produce, or are you processing foods?

MS. ANE: Currently, we are purchasing fresh produce from local farmers and distributing that to our local people affected by the fires. But we're also...we purchase...or we're renting two lots at 150 Hāna Highway, where we used to offload containers and distribute, you know, not perishable...nonperishable foods to affected fire families. But on those two lots, we're looking at building out a resilience hub where we can store dry goods, get a refrigerated container. We have a mobile poi mill. It's a old like army trailer where it expands from 8 feet to 24 feet, and put a lot of resources there so we can really serve the community in blue skies, and times of crisis, and times where we need to activate as a community again.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Awesome. Awesome to hear. Thank you. Thank you Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you so much. Any other questions for Ms. Ane, our testifier? Seeing none. Thank you once again for testifying. Mahalo.

MS. ANE: Aloha. Mahalo.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Staff, will you call the next testifier, please?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Genesis Young, to be followed by Cristina De Leon.

MR. YOUNG: Aloha. Can you hear me?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Loud and clear, Genesis.

MR. YOUNG: Okay. Thank you, and aloha, everyone, Chair, and Councilmembers. And I just wanted to say thank you and congratulations for producing a plan for food security for our wonderful community. And so great to have a Department of Agriculture. I'm glad they're working towards figuring out the goals and the objectives, and I just wanted to

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be in...to be in full support of that, and...and I imagine it will continue and continue to be funded, as I think it's really so critical. And I see that the...I haven't taken the survey yet. Tried to take the survey, you know, and it's like asked me to prioritize things which are all equally important, making it very difficult. And then when I read the...the draft report, I think it could be a little...to me, it's got a lot of really good information, but the goals, I think, are...they're long. Each goal has a long title. I think we could get more to the point. Rather than saying, "Ensuring all residents have access to nourishing, culturally-relevant foods at all times," they could just split that up into...into, you know, something about food and nutrition, something about cultural access, something about, you know, making sure everyone has enough to eat. Like split it up, I think, would be easier to understand and to prioritize. Like for me, it's like...doesn't really prioritize what I was thinking it was going to be about, which is food security for the County because we are importing most of our food. And that's like critical if there's an emergency or problem on the mainland or anywhere, and we stop getting our imported...imported food, and we're not growing enough here. And that's like we need to grow all of our own food, as much as we can, and import the very least. And so, that's sort of like really critical infrastructure for farming that's needed here, that seems to me to be a high priority for the Plan for the County from a very high level look at. And then making sure no one's going hungry. That's...like no one should go hungry in the United States of America, let alone Hawai'i. We can grow all the food we want. And one of the things we've been working on is have a right to garden ordinance that we tried to get passed Statewide, but didn't make it, of course, through the legislature. But a lot of places, like where we have our youth shelter, you can't grow food there, apparently. We're planting fruit trees anyway because I think it's important to be able to do that, but we're not allowed. And many organizations are not allowed to grow fruit...food or vegetable gardens or anything where they're renting, or they have a condo, and that's...you know, like basic right to garden on your own property should not be possible to disallow that by community associations. It's just...it's just wrong to me. And it, you know, flies in the face of what we want in terms of having personal food security, growing your own food, and having...you know, being able to share that with...with your 'ohana, and your neighbors, and so on. So, yeah, I just really think this is an important . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . thing. If we could split it up, perhaps, a little bit more precisely and...and shorter terms for each goal. More goals, shorter goals. Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Young. Members, do we have any questions for our testifier? Seeing none. Thank you once again for your testimony. Staff, will you call the next testifier, please?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Cristina De Leon, to be followed by Ana Tarano.

MS. DE LEON: Aloha, Councilmembers. Just confirming you can hear me?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Loud and clear, Ms. De Leon.

MS. DE LEON: Thank you so much. My name is Cristina De Leon with the Teran James Young Foundation. I will keep my testimony short and just say that I'm very grateful

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that the County is taking the time to create a plan to increase our food security on Maui, and it's obviously very important work. And I think especially working with a lot of the grassroots organizations that are involved already with food security, and supporting them as much as possible is a great step, as well as what Genesis mentioned, which is allowing more people to grow food on their own property, just as a sort of simple step towards better food security. Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you so much for your testimony. Members, do we have any questions for our testifier? Seeing none. Thank you once again for testifying. Appreciate it. Staff, will you call the next testifier, please?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, the next testifier is Ana Tarano, to be followed by Leonard Nakoa.

MS. TARANO: Hi. Can you hear me?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Loud and clear, Ms. Tarano.

MS. TARANO: Hi. Good afternoon, Councilmember Johnson, Maui County Department of Ag, and Members of the ADEPT Council Committee. My name is Ana Tarano. I live in Miami, Florida, and I'm an assistant research professor at Arizona State University. I'm here on behalf of the 'Āina Data Hui, a network of researchers, educators, and community leaders from Maui County and beyond, including UHMC, Huluhia, and Responsible Markets. Our goal is to promote equitable food access in Maui County while fostering both climate adaptive and regenerative agricultural practices. To do this, we are co-developing tools that use satellite imagery and AI to quickly determine crop and vegetation conditions, disaster impacts, and other things. Our efforts directly aim to support Maui County's Department of Agriculture, farmers, ranchers, and the Department of Land and Natural Resources. In short, our hui is in full support and committed to help achieve the goals outlined in the Maui County Food and Nutrition Security Plan. After the August 2023 wildfires, we quickly identified affected residential and agricultural areas in Kula, Upcountry, and Lahaina using satellite imagery. This helped Maui United Way distribute emergency aid within days. We currently also publish a monthly newsletter called The Crop Monitor, with updates about growing conditions across...*(clears throat)* excuse me...across Maui County, including vegetation health, precipitation, land surface temperatures, evapotranspiration, kaulana mahina, and opportunities from the Department of Ag. We can also provide this data localized to farms, as we are doing for Okamura Farm, so they can guide irrigation decisions. We're also supporting efforts to manage axis deer populations by identifying areas where they are most likely to be found, and enabling automated counts of deer from DLNR thermal videos. We also have NASA acres funding until March 2028, to continue one, co-developing the newsletter content; two, collaborate with Department of Ag to support their outlined goals; three, prioritize the ag-related needs like fire risk, and fuel load, or invasive species. And three weeks ago, we met with farmers, ranchers, and community members who are deeply committed to stewarding the land, and educators who are super dedicated to giving a voice to students, and safeguarding their future on Maui Nui. And these conversations really reaffirmed our priorities and the community's

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interest in our work, while infusing new perspectives. So, for example, on Lānaʻi, we heard that the use of our Survey123 app to document farming activities was used to support homesteaders in selling their products at local farm stands. And so, this app was actually originally used by students in our ʻĀina Data stewards . . .(timer sounds). . . program to *(audio interference)* ground truth data with farmers. And so, we just wanted to say that the challenges we heard really reflect broader concerns that the Maui County Food and Nutrition Security Plan seeks to address, from water management to agricultural data accessibility, there's a clear need for this support, and we want to thank Councilmember Johnson, Department of Ag, and the ADEPT Committee for the opportunity to share our work. And we welcome any questions and look forward to discussing how we can further help. So, thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you. Is it Dr. Torino *[sic]*? I...I wanted to ask you, how do...how do folks contact you? Because it seemed a lot of data is out there that you guys have gathered. Maybe the Department of Ag can reach out to you, myself, but what's the...the community. What's the best way to reach you guys?

MS. TARANO: So, you can email me at atarano@ASU.edu. I can put it in the chat, but basically, it's A-T-A-R-A-N-O@ASU.edu.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. And during this meeting...meeting, are you available to stick around? And we can make you a resource, if you're available.

MS. TARANO: Yes. I'm planning to stick around until, I believe, it's 3 your time.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. TARANO: And then, my colleague, Dr. Hannah Kerner, will be joining in and popping in...on...for the rest of the time.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Members, without objection, can we designate Ms. Torino *[sic]* as a resource person under 18(A) of the Council...Council Rules, considering her expertise in this data-gathering on farming?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. So, thank you so much. Staff, will you call the next testifier?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, currently, the last testifier signed up is Leonard Nakoa.

MR. NAKOA: Aloha. Yessah. How are you guys? Gabe, I nevah take the survey, so no scold me. I not one farmer. . . .*(inaudible)*. . . I nevah...yeah, but I just wanted for jump on because, again, kind of timing because I had the meeting with the Maui Land & Pine guys, and I got ahold of Jeremy DelosReyes, and he's ready to fire, so I going go...I coming to you, Gabe, this weekend, coming Lānaʻi for the Paddle For Life for the cancer

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survivors. So, going hang out over there, and then after, when I come back, I going get some action going, you know, like, say, speaking about canoe, you know, we're all going to be in a canoe. We all gotta paddle together, so we can finish the buggah, you know? So that's what I going plan on doing. Yeah. Mahalo to the Ag Department. This is chicken skin stuff. I mean, I said it two times, I going say 'em three times. We get...we...we...we talk...we talk, but now we just gotta get action, and I think we are going to do it. So, we going...we going to get this thing done. Mahalo to you guys for all the hard work. But yeah, like I told you, pua ting, the guys went get in touch with me, Maui Land & Pine, we going call 'em out. Let's go hold 'em accountable. Let's go. Okay, You guys have a good one. Mahalo.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Nakoa. Members, do we have any questions for our testifier? Seeing none. I'll see you when you come over to Lānaʻi this weekend.

MR. NAKOA: Yessah.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Junya.

MR. NAKOA: Yessah.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Any more testifiers?

MS. MCKINLEY: Yes, Chair. Terese Masters.

MS. MASTERS: Hi. Can you hear me?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Loud and clear, Ms. Masters.

MS. MASTERS: Wonderful. Good afternoon. Nice to see you all. Thank you for giving us an opportunity to discuss these goals of the Department of Ag. I think they did a fantastic job, really pulling all elements in together and trying to expand as much as they could on a subject. And then, as they move forward, I imagine it'll all be focused in. So, well done. I...as I look through it, I was really impressed with some of the points that they're coming up with, like the...the re-utilization of wastewater in agriculture. I think that's like one of the most important steps to push forward. Access to ag land is kind of a hard issue because it...it means at least \$1 million down for a small bit of acreage, and then you have to put in all the funding for the rest of your operations, so having the ag infrastructure that you talk about be close, and keep that system small so it can stay resilient, and attach the infrastructures onto the ag processes, so that it's not traveling more than a mile. Really, it should be on the same property, like it...we shouldn't be transporting the food as much as possible. And then doing...as we grow more local food, having more access for community kitchens...super important. This will actually jumpstart the community because it would all be based on community action, community growth of food, and community development. And so, starting at this ground level, grassroots, is really the way it's going to strengthen Maui County. And so, if we could then put the infrastructure for the processing of the foods to the top of the

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list, so that we can get that developed food out there, get Maui County small businesses going and operating, and start rolling it forward. One thought I had was Hawai'i Tourism Authority continues to push for some kind of agricultural . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . economical growth. I'll finish this one point. And I think if they really want to help us with our economic growth, they should help us pay for some rent for small businesses in high-traffic areas to be able to sell their Maui-made products. Maybe a commercial kitchen in Maui Mall, and then an adjacent store where all the people who made their stuff gets to sell their stuff, just because they made it there, and try to like build the infrastructure, and then invite the people to come, and then look to the State . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . who are trying to push us into economic recovery, to help us with that. And tool equipment libraries would be super helpful for farmers. So, not everybody needs to have a tractor on their five acres of land. Okay, that's all. Thanks for your...for your time.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Masters. Members, do we have any questions for our testifier? Seeing none. Thank you once again, Ms. Masters, for your testimony. Before we call next testifier, I'd like to recognize Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez, she has joined the meeting. Aloha, Councilmember.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Aloha 'auinalā, Chair. Aloha 'auinalā, kākou. E kala mai for my tardiness. There are currently no testifiers at the Molokai District office, and I'm working on getting my camera up. So, my apologies.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Welcome, welcome. And I thought we might have one more testifier. Staff, do we have any more testifiers?

MS. MCKINLEY: Yes, Chair. Nara Boone, and there is someone in the Chamber that may want to testify after that.

MS. BOONE: Aloha. Can you hear me?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Loud and clear, Ms. Boone.

MS. BOONE: . . .*(inaudible)*. . . Well, aloha. This is Nara Boone. I'm with the Maui Housing Hui, and I'm just calling in in support of this. I loved the draft. What I didn't hear in the presentation was the latest UHERO report on housing, and on poverty. And right now, our community is suffering more than it ever has. It's not just fire survivors, but it is our general public. And I know that fire survivors have needed, absolutely needed, our focus, and we need to branch out and focus on the rest of the community as well. One in three people that worked in Lahaina, but didn't live there, has been displaced...displaced since the fires. Our poverty level has increased quite a bit. And I would just like to draw that correlation between the high rents and the struggle to pay for food. Right now, the prices have already been outrageous, and they started...the food prices started to be that way during COVID. But now, with the struggle for people just to keep a roof over their heads, they're having to choose between that and food. In the UHERO survey, it talks about the rent increases...that a one-bedroom has

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increased...the price has increased by two-thirds; for a two-bedroom unit, it's increased by 30 percent; and in some cases, for larger dwellings, as much as 80 percent. So, when you look at that, and you look at the larger families that need this space and the demand already for money for the rents, and then the demand for food. I'm one of nine kids, I grew up really poor, I know what it is to not have food. I am also very much in support...I love the part of the program where you focus on the deer. I want to implore that there be more programs, like the one that gives away ground venison Upcountry in a couple of the stores. That's also one way to combat the invasive species that we have. As far as the cultural food aspects, I know that there was really a cry for more Filipino food after the fires. And when we talk about culturally relevant food, I think it's important that it...there is Hawaiian food, but not just Hawaiian food, yeah. We have so many different ethnicities that live in this beautiful place. Also, I am seeing that Mahi Pono is growing...is planting a lot more, especially on the North Shore. But from what I've seen, it looks like more citrus, and I would like to urge that if we have such large plots of land that are being . . .(timer sounds). . . used for growing, that we actually grow the food that we need here, as opposed to exports, as opposed to just watermelons and citrus, a lot of which right now is going to rot. And I did not take the survey. I would love a copy of the QR code, so that I could disperse that out to my general community as well. Thank you for your time. Aloha.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Ms. Boone. Just a reminder, I think we have until tomorrow to do the survey. So please tell everybody you can, please fill out the survey. Members, do we have --

MS. BOONE: Sorry, can you tell me where I can find the survey, other than the presentation that just happened?

MS. TANCK: Chair, that --

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I'll send it to you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Excellent. Oh --

MS. TANCK: And Staff would be happy to put a copy in the chat.

MS. BOONE: That would be great.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Look at us, all working together to get the word out. Members, do we have any questions for our testifier? Seeing none. Thank you once again, Ms. Boone. Staff, will you call the next testifier, please?

MS. MCKINLEY: Chair, there's currently no one signed up to testify. Would you like to do a last call?

CHAIR JOHNSON: At this time, if --

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MS. MCKINLEY: Oh --

CHAIR JOHNSON: -- there's anyone else wishing to testify on this item --

MS. MCKINLEY: Pardon me, Chair, someone's at the podium.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MR. LAW: Aloha awakea, Chair, Luna Ho'omalua Johnson. This is Jasee Law, live and direct from the...shoot, I forgot how to say 8th Floor. Mr. Ambassador is going to help me with that. Mahalo for considering this matter in your kōmike. In my opinion, we have enough food, but it's all processed junk food with way too much sugar, so if there's a shortage, it seems to me that it's a shortage of fruits and vegetables. I thank you for working on this problem. I'll sleep a little bit better knowing our leaders are doing something. What popped into my head, my po'o, when I was waiting for the Committee to start was the ships. What happens if the ships don't come in to bring us the food? And finally, I wonder if...which Committee might be able to take up the Jones Act in the future?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Law. Any other questions...any questions for our testifier? Seeing none. Thank you again for your testimony. Staff, do we have any other testifiers?

MS. MCKINLEY: No, Chair, not at this time.

CHAIR JOHNSON: So, Members, seeing there's no more individuals wishing to testify, are there any objections to closing oral testimony for ADEPT-1(26)?

COUNCILMEMBERS: No objections.

. . . END PUBLIC TESTIMONY . . .

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. So, let's jump into our deliberations, Members. ADEPT-1(26), Department of Agriculture Draft, Maui County Food and Nutritional [sic] Security Plan. I propose three minutes per Councilmember for each round of discussion. As a reminder, our resource personnel are here to answer any questions you may have. And we'll start down the list, starting with Vice-Chair Sinenci, followed by Committee Member Nohelani U'u-Hodgins, followed by Committee Member Tom Cook, Committee Member Keani Rawlins-Fernandez, Council Chair Alice Lee, myself, and then Councilmember Paltin. So, Vice-Chair Sinenci, the floor is yours.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Hey, mahalo, Chair, and mahalo for the presentation. And I think I might have taken the survey a couple times. I'm not sure, but I...I did when it first came out. My question was...and hearing some of the discussions at the HSAC at the State level, and them wanting to, you know, expand more agriculture production in the State, was refreshing at the least. But I'm always wondering how...or if there has been any

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efforts to try and get fresh local food into--and I know it's into the school system, I know it's a State system--but has there been any success, or maybe at the...the Legislative level to include more locally-sourced fresh foods in the local cafet...school cafeterias?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department?

MS. NELSON: Director, is it okay if I respond to this? Feel free to jump in.

MS. ARCE: Yes.

MS. NELSON: Okay, thank you. So, we're fortunate to have a good working relationship with our Department of Education. Their School Food Nutrition Service Program is working to expand their school menus to include more local foods, to meet their goal of 30 percent of the budget spent on food by 2030 to be sourced locally. However, as we know, there's many delays to that, and currently they're not projected to meet that goal. So, the reason why we've included support for farm-to-school in our plan, even though we aren't in charge of it at the County level, is because we understand the importance of advocating for both our farmers to have access to the largest restaurant, DOE, in the State, and also, of course, to ensure that children get access to culturally-appropriate nutritious foods. There are barriers right now that, like in support of equity that require unified menus for cafeterias. So, it's not possible for one farmer to just drop off their sweet potatoes at their local school. Menus have to be...all menus would have to have the poi, or the sweet potato, or whatever the local food product is. So, there's been strides to get more poi on the menus, and we hope to just keep supporting these efforts to ramp up more local food. We understand that not only is...this is vital for nutrition and support for our farmers, but also, it's building that taste education and re-educating youth about traditional foods, and really building the palate for future generations. So, we understand the importance.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: And then, do we have . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . enough small farms to...to meet the supply or the demand?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department?

MS. NELSON: So the Food Hub Hui, I should have mentioned earlier, they're making really great efforts to work with producers on all scale to be able to aggregate enough to meet the Department of Education's large order numbers. And they're also working with our farmers as a way to gain compliance so that they can become vendors with our Department of Education, and so that they follow food safety standards. So, this is work that we're hoping to build out further in our department. And right now, we're assessing who is doing what, so that we can fill in the gaps and not, you know, be redundant as a department. But there's quite a lot to do to build the compliance and food safety standards of our farming community, or just that they get in compliance. Many are already doing these practices, we just need to gain the compliance so that they can become a DOE vendor, and our Food Hub Hui has been a huge support in making that possible.

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VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Chair, for that extra time.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Of course. Let's move on to Committee Member U'u-Hodgins, followed by Councilmember Tom Cook.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you, Chair. And thank you, everyone, for this draft plan. I think it's wonderful. I just did the survey earlier today, so thank you for sharing that, I appreciate it. I, too, was going to ask about culturally-relevant foods. As a Hawaiian-Japanese, I like to eat my kalua pig with rice. So, are we going to grow rice? You know, like majority of us eat rice. What does that look like?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department?

MS. NELSON: As a department, we are in support of all of our food producers on island, and we don't direct what they grow. We know that Upcountry Maui used to have some, you know, like a medium level of rice production in the past. But I know that the farmers who have attempted to grow rice have met many struggles, I think, with like fungal issues primarily. So, we know that there's a need to grow more staple crops, like you mentioned. And also to shift diets is really...relates back to the Department of Education and farm-to-school, shift diets so that our cultural staples--sweet potato, and 'ulu, and kalo--are also as frequently used as carbs. So, the...the staple crops that we can grow here are consumed as well. But as a department, our goal is not to have a zero percent imported food rate. We want to have food security, but we understand that food supply chains are what they are, and we're not trying to stop anyone from eating their culturally-significant foods that need to be grown elsewhere. We just want to build our resiliency here, to be able to handle shocks.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Yeah. No, I get that. Thank you. I do also appreciate where we talk about supporting food, home production, and access to wild food. As somebody who lives Upcountry, and I'm actually taking my meeting from my house, I could probably go outside and see food jumping across the pasture. So, I do appreciate that, and utilizing that invasive animal as food, so I think that's great. Do we have a timeline on when we think these goals will be met?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department?

MS. NELSON: So, we are currently working with our action leads and meeting with...for each objective, you'll see the bullet points underneath them is the action.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Um-hum.

MS. NELSON: For each action, we're identifying a potential lead or co-leader to champion that action. And with these meetings that we're having currently, we're establishing timelines, metrics to track success, and also potential budget or resource needs to carry

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out those plans. So, on our second draft and our final draft, we'll have much clearer timelines for each action. Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you very much. Best of luck doing all of this. What a monumental task, and we appreciate it. Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Councilmember U'u-Hodgins. Let's move on to Councilmember Tom Cook.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair. I don't have any questions right now. I'm working on my computer.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you, Councilmember Tom Cook. Let's move on to Committee Member Keani Rawlins-Fernandez.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair, and aloha. Mahalo for the presentation, and for the work that you folks are doing. I already shared the slide. I took a screenshot, put it on my Facebook page, and also put the link so that anyone looking at the page can just easily click it, and...oh, I didn't put the deadline, I'll add that. Deadline tomorrow. Okay. I attended the meeting that the County Department of Ag held on Molokai. I think that was pretty good engagement and, I think, good feedback. I'm supportive of this, you know, initial plan being on the books, and...and very much supportive of it ever evolving as like a living document, but this being the launching point. Waiting for perfection is never going to happen, so I think, you know, just starting and then like continuing to work on it is...is the direction that we need to go. So, mahalo for everything that you all are doing. I've been kind of tracking...you know, like, I...I understand some of the questions, Member Sinenci's question, about getting more local food in schools, and understand that one of the problems is that they expect...the State allocates like what?--\$1.30...\$1.30 per plate, or something impossible to...to feed all the students. I ran into Hale Kealoha owner, Auntie Tammy, and she said that she's taking on the contract for O'ahu's Meals on Wheels. And even Meals on Wheels program is just...it's just the cost is impossible. The...the budget that you're given, like, I mean, when we think about how much we spend on lunch, just a plate lunch, you know, I mean, on average, it's like between, you know, 10 and \$20 now...10 is harder and harder to find, so probably closer to like 15 to \$20. What kind of things can we do to help support these programs that are so inadequately funded?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department?

MR. MEDEIROS: All right. Aloha. Appreciate that question. And yeah, I think that's an important question to ask. And yeah, just to reintroduce myself, my name is Kaiea Medeiros. This is my new kuleana within our Department of Agriculture, is Agriculture Advocacy. . . .(timer sounds). . . . But to speak to Councilmember Keani's question, I think for us as a County, we really have to look at what are the funding mechanisms, or the legislation and policy to fund it at a County level? We understand at the State level their, obviously, agricultural budget is incredibly small, and at the Federal level,

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there are definitely multiple millions of dollars out there to help address some of the challenges that we face in the agricultural space. But I know at a...at a County level, we do have challenges with Federal grant coordination, administration, and all of, you know, the skills that are needed to access those funds. So, really, for us here on Maui, Molokai, and Lānaʻi, we really have to as a community, look at how we can fund, incentivize, subsidize the food production, really, at the core. That's the most foundational aspect of food security is being able to produce food. And I think ultimately we...we kind of have to collectively wrap our brains around the production piece of food. Mea 'ai, 'ai pono, it's initially not going to be economically sustainable or lucrative, but that's the foundation of food and nutrition security. And as we build up the practice of cultivating food, then we can look at different opportunities for economic returns of investment. But like Lauren pointed out, just at a fundamental food production level, even though the return of investment may not be financial, at least immediately, the social, the ecological, the health returns of investment are invaluable...and probably, when calculated, in the multiple millions. So, I guess that's kind of a roundabout way to answer that. You know, we, at a County level, we just have to figure out where the funding mechanisms are and how to incentivize and subsidize just local food production.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo. Mahalo, Chair.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you for that response. Let's move on to Council Chair Alice Lee, followed by myself.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you, Chair. And following up with that question from Member Rawlins-Fernandez, Mr. Medeiros, are you...after reviewing the results of this survey, and then revising the final draft, are going to try to be more specific on how much money you'll actually need? And then...because we have to start with the number somewhere. And so, what would you say the bottom is, and what would you say the top is? So what range are we talking about from the County?

MR. MEDEIROS: Yeah.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Mr. Medeiros?

MR. MEDEIROS: Great question. So, I don't know if this is the appropriate time or space to share specific numbers and just...relative to our department and, you know, potentially sharing sensitive information. But I can definitely speak just from a production standpoint and, you know, relative...and we have the data, just looking at the grants that were submitted through our department that we have an incredible shortfall of the funding needed just to fund all of the potential grantees through our department. And that's only considering that those are the grantees that have the skills, access, and ability to write grants. So, we're not even considering our producers who aren't able, or don't have the skills to write grants. So, I'll say incredibly conservatively, we're probably looking at a minimum of another \$10 million, and that's on the low end. That's not even considering, as was mentioned...and I do want to point out that this Food and

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Nutrition Security Plan, I think it...in a lot of ways is incredibly comprehensive, and there's a lot of programmatic steps that we can take to achieve food security. And as was mentioned by one of the testifiers, the agricultural infrastructure piece is, again, another foundational component of it, and that's probably looking at another nine-figure budget. So not to scare any of our Councilmembers or our community, but ultimately --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Oh, we're not scared.

MR. MEDEIROS: -- that's what we're looking at. Okay. I like that.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: We're not...we're...we're not scared at all. We...we know you have start somewhere, and...and the...and the initial stages will be more expensive, you know, until you get your...your feet settled. And so, I just needed to...to have an idea, you know, what...what we're looking at, and so that as...as we go through budget amendments and Federal funds coming down to the...and State funds coming down to the County, at least we can keep that in the back of our minds. So, thank you very much. Thank you.

MR. MEDEIROS: Yeah, mahalo. And if I could just add to that real quick, I mean, a lot of...again, the foundational sciences, and...you know, I would be remiss to not bring up our 'ōiwi and our 'ōiwi . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . sciences and technologies, and different 'ōiwi-integrated microbial systems management practices that, as you alluded to, Councilmember Lee, is once we can put the initial investment into re-establishing these ancestral sciences, we understand that they will sustain themselves for multiple generations. So, it's just making that initial investment.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Excuse me. Thank you so much, Chair Lee, for those questions. I'll...I have some questions for the Department. So, you know, we were at the HFUU farmers con...convention just the other day, and I saw a lot of you folks there. The big topic came up was agriculture theft. And I've heard discussions, well, ag theft is theft. And yet, I don't see the...the kind of, you know, concern that...that we should have when it comes to someone coming in--not just stealing a mango or two--coming in and stealing your whole crop, stealing equipment, and what that does to farmers. Can you speak a little bit on...on anything you guys would consider tackling that issue?

MR. MEDEIROS: Yeah, I can speak a little to that, having experienced ag theft...not directly, but as part of the co-op that we're a part of at Hawai'i Taro Farm in Waikapū. You know, I think probably, you know, one of...well, it's...we'll just say it's a very nuanced and dynamic situation. And I know Lauren has mentioned in the presentation, you know, fundamentally, we provide people, for example, our community food security, then crime decreases, for example. So, you know, that's one aspect of it. And then, I know what was mentioned in this plan, which is definitely spot-on, to decrease ag theft is providing pathways for our farmers, ranchers, fishermen/women to be able to live on the 'āina that they cultivate. So, that's, I think, one of the best ways to address ag theft. I know as a mahi'ai who doesn't live on the 'āina that we cultivate, we have to just leave it up to Akua and a big yellow gate that says, do not enter. And that hasn't stopped

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theft from happening within our cooperative space, so I think one of the best ways to address it is ag housing and having our producers living on the land that they cultivate.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you. . . .*(inaudible)*. . . Support producers in navigating regulations and reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens. Oh, can you guys hear me? Uh-oh. Okay, it looks like I --

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: I can hear you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: -- got poor network quality, so I'll just ask my question. Okay. Basically, you know, the...reduce unnecessary regulations. You know, I have a bill working with Planning Department...two bills, working with the Planning Department, trying to get the food trucks, as well as the...the water catchment system, and then ag tourism, I guess...so three bills all said and done. But all...basically I'm working with the Planning Department to try to reduce . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . the burden on farmers to get, you know, special use permits. So, can...can...can you speak on the kind of work you folks have done as a department to work with other departments within the County to reduce some of those regulatory burdens?

MR. MEDEIROS: I'll leave that up to our Director, Kali Arce. And I mean, what I can say is we have had initial meetings with our Department of Planning. It was mostly around important agricultural lands, but I know that as our department grows, that the Department of Planning is a very key department to build that relationship with, to really look at all the aspects of agriculture. But I'll hand it over to our Director.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. ARCE: Hi. Yes, we're...we have been meeting with Planning. We have quite a lot going on with our department also having Kaiea and Koa still addressing recovery issues. But we've started initial conversations with some farmers to talk about I think it's called HC Biz *(phonetic)*, and also with other farmers in the...what is it called?...it was an initiative put together a while back with the Ag Working Group, and it slips my mind what it was. But we did start conversation with that, and we also met with all the departments in May of last year to start that conversation. Oh, it's the Bona Fide Farmer, that's what it was. And it didn't go anywhere because we --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

MS. ARCE: -- the Department --

CHAIR JOHNSON: -- going to turn my camera off, a little laggy. All right. I think I heard my timer, so I'm going to move on to...oh, I'm sorry.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Did you say it's my turn?

MS. TANCK: Chair Johnson, you --

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CHAIR JOHNSON: Councilmember Paltin, go ahead.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Oh, okay. I heard Director Arce say that they met with all the departments. I'm not sure if you were watching this morning's meeting, and you know, Chair Lee said she...she didn't want people to be in a position where we're fighting over water. But, you know, in listening to things that are being said at community meetings, Kamehameha Schools, Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization, about shifting the way that we look at large fallow ag lands, and you know, this is the second time that we've had kind of disastrous fires begin over here in large fallow ag lands. And I guess, you know, are you folks a part of the conversation that is going on with Water and Department of Environmental Management in terms of where our R-1 water goes, and if it's at the correct...if it's applicable for agriculture if not all the nitrogen uptake occurs. I just was wondering because, you know, they're...we're in a housing crisis, we're in a food security issue, and we just had the biggest crisis of all with a town burning down. And so I just wanted to ask if you're also involved in those conversations. Because as we were making our West Maui Community Plan, there was an effort to make Kamehameha Schools land Parks or Open Space, and they pushed back against it. They wanted to keep it in agriculture, but the thing that is preventing agriculture from occurring, that's preventing large fallow ag lands, is access to water. And I know each district has its own challenges, but that's a big challenge for us. And I just...that's my question. Are you involved in the discussions that Department of Environmental Management and the Water Department is having regarding our R-1 water and where it goes?

MS. ARCE: Yes. Kaiea --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director?

MS. ARCE: -- has been working on that. Maybe you can speak more to that, Kaiea?

MR. MEDEIROS: Yeah, definitely. So, as we have dual roles, of course, since the emergency...so, Deputy Director Koa Hewahewa and I are the co-leads for the Natural and Cultural Resource branch of our Office of Recovery. So, we haven't been in direct conversations about R-1 yet. We do have a meeting, though . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . on the calendar to meet with Director Shayne Agawa about that. But we have been in conversations, whether directly or just a part of greater conversations, with Kamehameha Schools, Maui Land & Pine, and...and really, right along the lines that you're talking about is determining where that R-1 water is going to go. I think that's a very important question that needs to be asked, and I kind of have an idea of where our Lahaina community wants it to go. And obviously, our kuleana is, you know, wherever the Lahaina community in this case wants it to go, it's for us to champion that.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you.

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CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Members, we're at our ten-minute recess time. Do you want to take a ten-minute recess and then do the final round of questions, or do you want to just go to final round of questions? I don't see any opinions, so ten-minute recess is good?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: I don't think all of us have final rounds.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: You know, but --

CHAIR JOHNSON: So, how about we --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: -- it's up to the group.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah, okay. You guys --

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: I don't have any.

CHAIR JOHNSON: -- just want to go and go...okay. Let's go down the list then, once again, and then...so, we'll start again at the top of the lineup order...Vice-Chair Sinenci, followed by Committee Member U'u-Hodgins.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Mahalo, Chair. And I just got a couple other questions. For Director Arce, has the Department taken advantage of some of these Federal funding or opportunities in the Farm Bill to...to kind of help with this program, or just with the general infrastructure for the Department?

MS. ARCE: Thank you, Vice-Chair, for asking. Yes, we recently secured close to half a million for a Maui Nui liaison position, which will address mapping critically-endangered...critically-imperiled lands from the fire, and to determine relationships and collaboration efforts with other agencies to mitigate fire and other emer...other storm and relevant events. And we're currently working on developing the PD for that, and we'll be onboarding a person, aiming for maybe two to three months, hopefully sooner.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: Okay, thank you. And yeah, we would just encourage the Department to pursue, as our work at the national level, we're constantly getting a lot of grant opportunities from the Federal Government. My other question was for Mr. Medeiros. He mentioned that \$10 million number. Is that...does that include resiliency hubs or...or the creation of processing centers?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department?

MR. MEDEIROS: No, that...that would be primarily for individual producers or small-scale agricultural businesses, mostly nonprofits who came to our department for grants. So, yeah, we're looking at resiliency hubs or ag infrastructure, like commercial kitchens. I

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believe that's...that's going to be another multiple millions of dollars, you know, just for one commercial kitchen. And I know Lauren wants to add to that.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: And...and those applicants to the small ag...the small agriculture grants, are...are those applicants being held to, or contributing to, this food and nutrition sustainability program?

MR. MEDEIROS: I would venture to say, yes. I mean, we have a pretty small community of producers, so in one way, shape, or form, they're all connected to the various...the food hubs, for example, or distribution sites that we currently . . .(timer sounds). . . have, whether it be Living Pono, for example, or the Food Bank. But yeah, we're hoping to draft a budget, you know, with the final plan, and like Lauren mentioned, develop the timeline and metrics come January of '25.

VICE-CHAIR SINENCI: All right. Awesome. Mahalo. Mahalo, Chair, for this...this meeting today. Thank you.

MR. MEDEIROS: Certainly.

MS. ARCE: Councilmembers, may I interject? I'd like --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Feel free, Director.

MS. ARCE: -- Lauren Nelson to share about the grant that she applied for. Lauren, can you share about the...the USDA grant that you shared...that you applied for?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Ms. Nelson?

MS. NELSON: Yes. We are still waiting to hear back from the Healthy Food Financing Initiative through the USDA's program to support community-based subsistence. We have applied for this...these funds to support the Lānaʻi Farmers Market that we are in the process of launching, in partnership with the Parks Department and the community of food producers on Lānaʻi. And mahalo to Councilmember Johnson for your support with that project as well. We will keep Council up to date if we receive the funds. Fingers crossed. We hope to hear any week now.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Wonderful news. Okay. Let's move on to Councilmember U'u-Hodgins, followed by Councilmember Tom Cook.

COUNCILMEMBER U'U-HODGINS: Thank you, Chair. And thank you for...everyone for being with us today. I have no further questions, and I appreciate this discussion. So, thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you, Councilmember. Councilmember Tom Cook.

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COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Thank you, Chair. Mr. Medeiros, what is...having people live on the...on the land where they're cultivating, what are some of the barriers of entry? And I know that . . .*(inaudible)*. . . just if you could kind of...from what you've experienced from top down, what are the barriers?

MR. MEDEIROS: You know, I can, I mean, speak in my own experience, and really, the top barrier is just the cost, right? The cost and the economic opportunities to be able to have an income, to be able to put a down payment. I mean, the last time I, you know, even ventured to look at what was available on the market, I mean, the cheapest piece of land was \$600,000, and that was 10,000 square feet with no infrastructure and no access to water, and you still needed a, you know, six-figure down payment. So, you know, I think definitely top of the list is cost.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: I guess I...what I was thinking of is like property that you showed me where people are leasing or have access to, that are investing a lot of time, effort, and heart into it. Has there been any discussion with basically being able to do like kind of temporary housing because that would enable...it just seems like there's an opportunity for a lot of housing. I didn't know if it was a plan...it's a combination of planning, potable water, sewage, and wastewater. It's kind of like camping out.

MR. MEDEIROS: Yeah, that...no, that's a great question, and I definitely don't know, off the top of my head, all of the...the barriers that are there. But yeah, that...that is a great opportunity though, because there are many co-ops or cooperatives where...like for example, you mentioned that at Hawai'i Taro Farm, we have 26 different farmers and producers on 300 acres, but no one is allowed to live there, even if it was a lease. So, I'm very happy to have those discussions, whether it's with Planning or, you know, whoever we need to...to and I'm sure there are probably individuals and organizations out there who have already done the studies to understand what the barriers are. But yeah, I think that is definitely a space that we have to go and look more into.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: So, I mean, for what it's worth, I think that's something that's worth pursuing with...whether it's Planning, and even like the Maui County ag lots where people can't live on the land, but they have very long-term leases. So, I mean, people have told me it's kind of like a moonshot, Hail Mary pass, but I think that the benefits, not simply because of the security aspect of it, but the lower cost of living on the land, and actually, the productivity . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . would skyrocket.

MR. MEDEIROS: Yeah, and I think that's the most important piece of it. It's the productivity. So having the opportunity for our producers to live on the 'āina that they cultivate, yeah, undoubtedly will increase production exponentially.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: And I know I'm going a little past my time, Chair, but if you allow me one more statement?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Please, go ahead.

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COUNCILMEMBER COOK: I think that that would also inspire and then enable more people to be willing and believing that farming and cultivation is something that's possible.

MR. MEDEIROS: Yeah, I know, and if I can just comment on that. I mean, that speaks to the point that, you know, collectively, in the food system, that we need to develop and look more into is the...the workforce development, and building the industry, and removing a lot of these barriers that prevent our youth especially, or our graduates from high school and college who want to get into agriculture that can't. So yeah, I definitely support that.

COUNCILMEMBER COOK: Maybe we can get creative, Chair, and make that happen. Thank you.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah. Well said. Okay. Let's move on to Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez, followed by Chair Lee.

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo, Chair. I guess I...I did want to respond to my round one question. So in...in Goal-1, ensure all residents have access to nourishing, culturally-relevant food at all times, the two programs. One is, you know, like DOE...Department of Education is under the State, and so, you know, County...I mean, I guess we could insert ourselves for Maui County schools. And then, Meals on Wheels is a Federally-funded program, but it's managed by the County. And so, you know, like these are our keiki and 'ōpio, and then our...our kūpuna, and the makule in our community. And so, you know, I...I understand that the response to my question was about reducing the cost for production, and so many produce, such as corn and soy at the Federal level are so heavily subsidized, the dairy industry, that it...it...that system makes it hard for those that...the produce that don't get even a fraction of that level of subsidy to...to compete. And that's, you know, oftentimes how it becomes possible for \$1.30 to put together food because the cost of corn and soy that produce junk food are subsidized on the production end. And so, I did write it down...oh, but...it...for...I have two keiki, and for me, I didn't let them eat any fast food. Fast food is designed...and junk food, nutrition-deficient food, often has a lot of sugar and other addictive products that...ingredients in it to, you know, make children learn the behavior and...and...and cultivate this dependency on...on junk food. And so, I never fed my children that types of food. But the schools, you know, because their budget is so small, that at the schools, they're...they're feeding our children this kind of . . .*(timer sounds)*. . . nutrition-deficient food, and they're developing a taste for that kind of food instead of culturally-relevant, highly nutritious food. And so, I don't know if, Chair, you want to let them answer my question, but the question is --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Sure. Department? Oh, I'm sorry, ask the question. . . .*(laughing)*. . .

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: . . .*(laughing)*. . . Mahalo, Chair. Mahalo for your eagerness. The question is, so in...in looking at the budget, is...are we just hyper-focusing on production when, you know, like our farmers really can't compete? The cost, the level of subsidies that we provide versus the level of subsidies the...the

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Federal Government provides, do...do...are we also looking at some of these programs and like just supplementing? So, like per plate, if it's like \$1.30 per plate, if we, you know, added like another dollar or two...and I...I think Auntie Tammy and others who perhaps have this contract to...to provide, and she...she...she makes nutritious, culturally-relevant food on O'ahu, which is why I was super excited when I heard...when she told me that she got the contract and she's doing it, it's really hard work because of the small budget, but she's making it work because it's important to her. And so, is that something that we're also exploring since it's...you know, Meals on Wheels is managed by the County?

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department?

MS. NELSON: Great question. I think we're looking at --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director Arce?

MS. NELSON: Oh, Director. Pardon me.

MS. ARCE: I just wanted to share that I...I do agree with Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez that we need to look at subsidies that can help in this area, and that's one of our goals. And Kaiea...Kaiea is...I guess that's one of our goals, to have him work and...work towards that. He might have more to share. I don't want to misspeak, but I do have that on our list for our department to achieve. And Lauren, if you want to share, you can go ahead. Thank you.

MS. NELSON: We are looking at models across--what you said, I really appreciate you lifting that up from O'ahu--examples of food boxes, produce prescription programs that are utilizing culturally-relevant and local foods, which is a new model for Hawai'i across the mainland. Many produce prescription boxes will be like funded through Amazon, you know, will...will deliver the food. So, it's not local food getting to people, but we understand that local food is health here and is, like essential to any produce prescription work that could funnel in insurance company-funding to actually help offset the costs of food. And we're looking at different avenues from schools, to our Federally-funded programs, to locally-funded ways to inject more buying...local food purchasing funds to our Maui Food Bank, and will definitely be in touch as we work further to have specific subsidy recommendations. As you know, the way that we help our local farmers produce culturally-relevant foods currently is through proposed tax credits. So, it's a State Legislation to provide tax relief to farmers of certain foods, like kalo. And I think we could both expand those programs and then look into State and County subsidies, potentially. Because as you noted, our subsidies are our Government's commitment towards the food systems we want to see. So, do you want to add to that?

COUNCILMEMBER RAWLINS-FERNANDEZ: Mahalo for that response. Mahalo, Chair.

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CHAIR JOHNSON: Thank you, Councilmember Rawlins-Fernandez. Okay, let's move on to Chair Lee, followed by myself.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Thank you. I have no questions.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you, Chair Lee. So, this is probably for Director Arce, but if the...if the team wants to answer, that's fine. Let's get some feedback from your grants process as far as farmers. Have they reached out to you guys and said it's working, it's not working...can you speak on that?

MS. ARCE: Yes. Thank you for the question. We did have our grants coordinator develop the grants application process. He's not here to answer, but it was modeled after the OED process, and on the first...it was Fiscal Year '24. For this fiscal year, it was revamped, but it's still paper application, and then there's a review by...by a Committee, and recommendations made. If you want more specific details, then we can connect you to our grant coordinator.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. I...I'm just curious if the farmers are saying it's working for them, you know? Is it...I've often heard that getting County money is such a burden that many farmers will just back away from it. So that's really where I was going with that question. So, I'm going to ask the next question about the GE Tax in...in the Plan, about how you're looking to make healthy food access programs with the GE Tax? Is that another...I thought that was for infrastructure? Maybe you guys can clarify that?

MS. ARCE: Yes, I was...I was trying to re...recap my memory from that May meeting. So, we were trying to address how we can develop the Bona Fide Farmer plan, to make it more succinct and applicable to our farmers, and to align it with our departments that all have a hand in applying their different processes that need to get inspected. And during that meeting, we didn't make too much headway. We do need to regroup and try to look at that again. And it was at a time when we were not...we did not have all the staff that we have now, and now that we have full staff, I think it's time to relook at some of these...you know, some of these recommended plans that...that these ag committees have suggested, such as the Bona Fide Farmer. And --

CHAIR JOHNSON: Sure. Keep us posted, if...if --

MS. ARCE: Yes.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Great. Keep us posted if any...any progress is made. Now, my next question is in regards to, you know . . . *(timer sounds)*. . . we don't want our departments working in silos. You know, we want everybody working together to solve complex problems. We talk about Department of Transportation and the ability to travel to a grocery store, for example, or the Department of Housing. How...how are we even going to afford our groceries when rents are so darn high, right? Like, so, can you kind of speak on any type of coordination you've had in looking through the lens of, you know, getting folks healthy food?

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MS. ARCE: Sure. So, we've...in fact, just yesterday, we were...I bumped into MEO Transportation Manager, and kind of discussed setting up a meeting to talk about transportation for community members if...if and when our Lānaʻi Farmers Market gets implemented. And so, I will be meeting with her about that so we can make...provide efficiencies in the...you know, in that area so people can get food if they don't have opportunity to carpool.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Yeah. That's a great example. If...if the kūpuna want to come to the farmer's market, they can't go back with, you know, ten pounds of groceries in their hand and MEO doesn't take them. So, very interesting, in the interconnectivity with all these systems. So, thank you --

MS. ARCE: Yeah, and --

CHAIR JOHNSON: -- for that response. My...okay?

MS. ARCE: Yeah. I also want to add that you also...you asked about the like relationships between the County departments. Yeah, we work closely with DEM, EP&S. We both co-wrote...Cecile Powell and I co-wrote a grant with...HDOA Grant for their compost greenways collection to mitigate CRB. So, we work closely with them.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Right on.

MS. ARCE: And we work closely with Planning as well. And we'd like to expand and work with other departments. We also work with Water Department. I mean, the...the opportunity has to be such that it ties in with agriculture, and I think now that we have full staff, we can begin to make more connections within...within the County Government itself.

CHAIR JOHNSON: That's some wonderful news, Director. Thank you for that. My time is up, so we're going to move on to Councilmember Paltin.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: Thank you, Chair. I guess my question may not be for this Department, but in taking the survey, there was something about encouraging young farmers and things like that. And while I try to avoid feeding my kids junk food or fast food, they get ahold of it without my say--so many times . . . *(laughing)*. . . because they sleep over at their older sister's, or whomever, or I did not cook dinner...I'll take that. Whatever the case is, and...and I would say they're addicted, and...and I would say among their peers, maybe they're not as bad as some of the others, too, so maybe they're in the middle. But, you know, because of the occupation and everything, we're not able to have the continued...continuity of growing kalo from preoccupation until now. Ka Malu 'Ulu o Lele was burnt down, and all like that. And then growing up, to some extent, like we had to kind of relearn a little bit, and maybe it...it seemed like a foreign food upon re-introduction or something like that. And, you know, like there...while there are many hungry children out there in the aftermath of the fire...like one--I don't know if I should say this, but one of my family was staying here, and...and...and they

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wouldn't eat the food that we had, and that's all the food that we had, and there were some other issues. And I was like maybe you do got to go out backside because they got McDonald's on the outside or something, you know? And so, that's really concerning, and...and maybe it's not the Department of Agriculture, but because you're doing the work of connecting people and like that, like to get our kids more into eating what we produce locally. I mean, like, you know, I was a big proponent of the Little Chef Big Chef. And maybe it can be like with all on-island ingredients like that? What was it, the no-import challenge for a week or 90 days? Because that's kind of a thing. Like, you know, if you publicize it and make it into a challenge, or a fun, or something like that, or like, you know, your best 'ulu recipe, your best kalo poke recipe, or...or whatever it is...like because...because I am concerned about growing young farmers, and then growing young farmers, and then having our kids eat what young farmers grow, you know, is...it's a big concern of mine. When I...when I...I seen that, like and...and...and they were like, we got to get this kid some food, and I'm all like . . .(timer sounds). . . peanut butter-jelly sandwich, you know, or whatever. I was like tripping...little bit tripping out. But like, you know, I...I don't know what...what to say, like if...if kids are just going to starve until McDonald's opens or...or what? Because I guess it is...that's what it is. I didn't realize it was like addictive, like coffee, or other things, but I guess that's part of my concern. Like, and...and, you know, you can make 'ulu taste really good. You can replace potatoes or whatever, but you just got to know how. And I think, you know, with the balance of people here now, like maybe a significant portion of the population doesn't even know how to...like when to harvest an 'ulu, or how to cook it in its different stages and things. And not saying that this is your issue, but with all the net that you guys cast onto people, just some ideas to throw out there.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Department. You have any response to all of that?

MS. NELSON: Yes. I would really love to just uplift the work of our community that is trying to change palates. In Hāna, at Hāna School, we have Ma Ka Hana Ka 'Ike, with their culinary programs, and of course they have Mahele Farms as well, so they're teaching students how to grow the food, and also teaching students of a wide range of ages how to actually prepare food. And as we know, getting it into schools is the way to get families and parents to start eating different. Grow Some Good, Scott Lacasse was here to provide testimony. They are getting kids excited about vegetables from growing them at school in their gardens, Lāna'i Cultural Center, as well as setting up gardens both at schools and at homes of students who participate in their summer programs. And then, the Eat Local Maui Challenge that you had mentioned is great. It's the challenge...I hope you can all do it this year, it's coming up next month, I believe. It's a commitment to eat only 100 percent locally-grown, or raised, reared, caught food for an entire week, and it is a challenge, but everything from your spices to your food. And we encourage you to participate if you're interested. And just want to uplift our ag teachers, Britney James at STEMworks and our 4-H leaders who are helping to educate youth about food. We know it's going to take a cultural shift, and it's going to involve our keiki all the way through to providing, you know, ag career pathways to really cement making this food, these cultural shifts around food, permanent. But I do want to highlight, like, you know, in times of stress, we need culturally-relevant foods. And as you mentioned, the food

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that you grow up with is your culturally-relevant food. So, if our youth are growing up with fast food...if our zoning allows for fast food, and that's what our youth are exposed to, that will be their food of comfort. And can't blame anyone for wanting their food of comfort when they are in peak stress, right? So, I think we just need to continue to uplift the work of our partners who are re-defining what that food will be for our future generations. And if you need any recommendations for great 'ulu fries, let me know. I know of some great ones from walking distance of the...the building.

COUNCILMEMBER PALTIN: I've tried those. And just to the point, a lot of those rural communities that you mentioned, they don't have a McDonald's down the road from them. And so, I feel like we need to make a little extra effort where the McDonald's is down the road because...I mean, like, maybe if farmers or someone want to give their seconds or off-grade to like the Boys and Girls Club and...and like do a cooking class or something like that...because I know like the Boys and Girls Club often feed their kids snacks, but I don't know that they're always healthy snacks or locally-grown.

CHAIR JOHNSON: I see...I see Director Arce's hand up. Maybe she wants to respond to some of your comments, Councilmember Paltin.

MS. ARCE: Yes.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Director?

MS. ARCE: Yes. Well said, Lauren. And the effort does continue also on Molokai. Kaiea and I connected with the HFUU there, and we also met with the FFA kids, and also the new youth advisory, the Farmers...Young Farmers. So, there's two groups that are making waves on reintroducing agriculture to our young people. And the last comment I wanted to make was, Lauren challenged our staff to the Eat Local Challenge. And...yeah, and it was fun. I think I won because we already collect a lot of our stuff here on Molokai, so...it's hard, though. It's really, really hard. So, I don't know if Lauren wants to share, but you really all should try it. It's from spices all the way to produce and meats. Thanks.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Wow. Challenge accepted, huh? Okay. Well, that's fascinating. Thanks for all of your efforts. And thank you, Members, for all of this discussion. It's been really good. That takes us to the end of two rounds, and if..without any objections, unless anybody has any other questions, I'll defer this item. Any objections, Members?

COUNCILMEMBERS VOICED NO OBJECTIONS (excused: YLS).

ACTION: DEFER pending further discussion.

CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay. Well, Members, that takes us to the...oh, thank you. That takes us to the end of the agenda. Staff, is there anything else? I don't see that there is?

MS. TANCK: No, Chair.

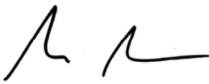
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CHAIR JOHNSON: Okay, Members. The time is now 3:31, and this meeting is adjourned.
... *(gavel)* ...

ADJOURN: 3:31 p.m.

APPROVED:



GABE JOHNSON, Chair
Agriculture, Diversification, Environment,
and Public Transportation Committee

adept:min:241010min:ml:kr

Transcribed by: Kaliko Reed

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CERTIFICATION

I, Kaliko Reed, hereby certify that pages 1 through 35 of the foregoing represents, to the best of my ability, a true and correct transcript of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not in any way concerned with the cause.

DATED the 14th day of November 2024, in Wailuku, Hawai'i



Kaliko Reed