Sustainable Farming
MASTER FARMER SERIES

Sustainable farming involves producing food using local resources as much as possible. Farmers seek to maintain the health and productivity of the land while making connections between the farm and other ecological systems. Management decisions for sustainable farming are not based merely on short- term, "bottom line" profits, but also on long-term prosperity.

Waianu Farms (Photo courtesy of Paul Peppun)

***The primary goals of sustainable farming include:**

- providing a profitable farm income based on a productive enterprise
- promoting environmental stewardship by protecting and improving soil quality, reducing dependence on non-renewable resources like fuel, synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and minimizing adverse impacts on food safety, wildlife, water quality, and other resources
- promoting stable, thriving farm families and communities

**Excerpted from the 2006 CTAHR publication: "Towards Sustainable Agriculture in Hawai'i"*

Farmer Profile

Paul and Charlie Reppun, Waianu Farm

Waianu Farm in windward Oahu's Waiahole Valley is long and narrow, bounded on one side by a river and on the other by forest. The diversity of crops grown reflects the complicated topography. The main crop is wetland taro, grown in traditional lo'i. Lo'i lands function much like natural wetlands and offer similar environmental benefits.

The way taro lo'i borrow water from a stream on its way to the ocean emphasizes the connections between watersheds and estuaries and how the whole ahupua'a system needs to be healthy in order to be productive.

Harvesting taro (Photo courtesy of Paul Reppun)

Waianu Farm constantly wrestles with the concept of sustainability. Unlike conventional large-scale agriculture that relies heavily on non-renewable resources, Waianu Farm produces food using the practices of what could be called "endemic" farming, using local inputs as much as possible and making connections between the farm and other ecological systems.

Sustainability is a complex concept that requires examination of farms within a broad ecological and sociological context. Like weeding, farmers resolve problems, only to find a new crop coming up.

Brothers, Paul and Charlie Reppun have been farmers for 36 years. Both are lifelong residents of Hawai'i and got into farming by chance when they first planted dryland taro on land owned by a patient of their father (a medical doctor). Paul and Charlie are members of Hui Ulu Mea 'Ai, a group promoting community self-reliance and advocates for backyard gardens.

Processing taro (Photo courtesy of Paul Reppun)

RESOURCES:

University of Hawai'i Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Program: www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/sustainag/

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program: www.sare.org/

Towards Sustainable Agriculture in Hawai'i: http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/TSA_guide.pdf

Organic Soil Amendments: http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/pnm15.pdf

Hawaiian Kalo: http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/SA-1.pdf

Minimizing Non-point Source Pollution in Agriculture: http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/SCM-26.pdf

"Economic Impacts of Increasing Hawaii's Food Self Sufficiency": http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/add/FoodSSReport

"Plant Nutrient Management in Hawaii's Soils: Approaches for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture" UH-CTAHR publication

"The Value of Hawai'i: Agriculture" by Charles Reppun in The Value of Hawai'i: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future a collection of essays edited by Craig Howes and Jon Osorio, 2010.

"Stolen Waters" a short video about the water of Waiahole Valley. Excerpted from "Nā Maka O Ka Aina- Ke Kalo Paha O Waiahole."

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