Sustainable Agriculture Skill Panel Forum
December 14, 2011
Practical Application of Agriculture Skills Panel (Oahu)

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Discussion Outline:
I. Introductions: Why are we here?
II. Setting the Context Discussion:
   a. What is the current state of communication between educational entities and the agricultural industry on practical applications for agricultural skills?
   b. What is the current state of labor and labor shortages affecting practical applications of agricultural skills?
   c. What is needed to expand practical applications for agricultural skills?
III. Preferred Vision in 10-20 Years
IV. Develop Priorities
   a. What are the opportunities or supporting forces that will move us closer to our best case scenario/vision?
   b. What are the barriers or restraints that hold us back from moving closer to our best case scenario/vision?
V. Outline Actions for Priorities (time permitting)

I. Introductions: Why are we here?
   • To learn more about youth involvement in Ag
   • Concerned about future for farmers; need new concepts
   • Return nursing to the ground level
   • To look for workforce partners
   • Gather information to build pathways
   • Talk about opportunities for under-employed
   • Outlets for green jobs
   • Land can heal
   • Looking for partners
   • Re-entry of inmates
   • Stop the cycle of homelessness
   • Get data
   • Empower inmates to go into community
   • Skill sets for prisoners
   • Send homeless back into the community
   • Tap incarcerated resources
   • Understand issues and find partners
   • Measure progress
II. Setting the Context Discussion

What is the current state of communication between educational entities and the agricultural industry on practical applications for agricultural skills?

- No one from the DOE is here; that already tells you there’s a gap
- Six pathways developed with Advisory Council, but not with a lot of participation with the Ag industry
- Educational institutions are more Western driven, using more Western measures and less emphasis on the Hawaiian culture
- The education system doesn’t look at Ag as an employment source
- Farm is looked at as an activity; not as a business
- We need more communication between the two
- We are losing Ag teachers; as older ones retire, they are not being replaced
- With a few exceptions, no communication from education to Ag
- The Ag industry is not one entity; there are a lot of small businesses
- There’s no interface with our schools
- The next generation is not interested
- There’s no research on taro; need to be researching areas. UH did research on livestock. It starts with research.
- Food safety
- There is not a clear vision of the new Ag industry as it is today by educational institutions
- From CTE side, under-developed pathway
- Need better communication with DOE
- There is no communication between AG and nursing. There needs to be a healthcare curriculum.
- People don’t have an integrated vision for why Ag is important
- There’s a negative stereotype about Ag like it’s not academic enough
- Some Ag leaders have been cut back to part time
- There is no link to business
- On Kauai, there’s a bioscience curriculum. There’s a long lead time needed to develop a curriculum
- UH doesn’t refer students for internships
- Perception of Ag is blue collar; “dirty,” plantation; in the field
- On Maui, you have science teachers teaching Ag
- Educational institutions could at least encourage Ag as a minor, to go with a major like medicine, law, nursing, etc.
- Some think of farming as a lifestyle, not as a business. It is both.
- One farmer made an offer to UH; no interest
• How do you take the educational system seriously when our politicians have decided that a French fry is a vegetable?

**What is the current state of labor and labor shortages affecting practical applications of agricultural skills?**

• More people are in prison than there are farmers
• Some parolees make more working on the farm than their parole officers
• IHS teaches organic farming, but the graduates couldn’t get jobs
• What are the Ag skills? It’s not just hands in the dirt.
• How many jobs are there currently? (Not many, according to report cited.)
• There’s a disconnect. We need to have other people look at Ag as a business.
• Clients with special needs also need to be supported to do Ag work
• We’re importing seasonal workers on every island. That’s crazy instead of using workforce here.
• There’s a lot of discipline required when you’re in Ag
• How do we find out where the jobs are?
• There are transportation and housing issues
• The Dept. of Labor tries to get job postings out. (Hire Net Hawaii?) Challenge is to get more current information from employers.
• There is no good working definition of “practical applications.” We need this to improve the process. Practical applications are much more than digging.
• Employees are not prepared when they do show up.
• We need to follow clients when they leave incarceration.
• Youth is another labor source.
• Some in prison already have some training
• There needs to be an economic incentive to go into farming.
• We need to create an industry before there are jobs. Look at Japan.
• Problem isn’t skills. We need an industry policy from the state. Ex: Starbucks’ beans
• It’s not just the big farms; smaller farms can be training grounds
• We need localized description of Ag applications

### III. Preferred Vision in 10-20 Years

**What is the best case scenario for assuring a workforce engaged in practical applications of agriculture skills 10-20 years from now?**

• There are models in every community
• It’s a priority for the State.
• An organic farm training center
• Create value for consumers so they can answer: “Why should I buy local when it costs more?”
• Create local and national demand
The image of the farmer needs to be shored up so he’s not the “poor guy.”
Start at an early age
Ag is re-introduced into the curriculum. Teach the teachers.
State has integrated Ag plans
Build the industry
Develop materials for teaching, like a film documentary that gets distributed to schools
Support existing initiatives (like school gardens)
Integrate initiatives so they are sustainable, not just reliant on grants
Why wait 10-20 years?
Re-value the teaching of whole education
Preserve land for Ag
Consumers in the future are educated about the value of Ag
Educational waivers could be offered for participation in Ag
In 10-20 years, the industry is sustainable and affordable
We grow food here; we are sustainable in the future
Every school has a farm and serves food from it
FFA in every high school
Workforce housing exists close to farms
Every household does gardening
Any new development needs to allocate a percentage of land to growing food
Clean water
State and county allow long-term Ag leases and allow farmers to live on it
Culturally relevant
Hawaii grows some percentage of all it eats
Nursing working with Ag from birth to death
Water rebates
Rebates for home farming; reward with health insurance rebates
An educated consumer understands the relationship between food and health
The right players need to be at the table
Ag is marketed like Hawaii markets tourism
Markets are required to buy directly from producers
Dept. of Ag moves its focus from compliance to being a resource
There is collaboration between multiple agencies
Legislative action to make it feasible (i.e. affordable) to make and buy local
Consumers are educated about nutrition and value and they buy local
Farmers are educated about standards (for selling their products to Whole Foods, for example) and about business management
There is housing for workforce
IV. Develop Priorities

*What are the opportunities or supporting forces that will move us closer to our best case scenario/vision?*

- Inspired leaders with vision
- S.M.A.R.T. timeline
- Different voices coming together
- Political will
- Strategic planning around Ag, including measurement
- Budget and resources (can do more cheaply when there are fewer resources; that’s why it’s listed as an opportunity)
- There are good existing initiatives and technology
- The rising cost of fuel is an impetus
- Grant opportunities
- Untapped workforce
- Public awareness

*What are the barriers or restraints that hold us back from moving closer to our best case scenario/vision?*

- Infrastructure support that connects the pieces; pertaining both to the workforce and the industry
- High price of land
- The government hold on land
- The bureaucracy of permitting
- Lack of workforce housing close to farm
- Can’t serve food you grow at school because of food safety concerns
- Industry image
- Lack of education and training about the industry and skills
- Pest challenges
- Unwillingness to extend partnerships
- Lack of understanding by DOE
- Definition isn’t clear; Ag and farming involves full spectrum, from soil, to quality control to marketing, etc.
- Language barriers in workforce
- Old perception of Ag limits interest in Ag careers
- Farming is hard work
- Reality is a barrier
- Plantation mentality
- Competition for cheaper workforce; lei, for example
- “Cheap food” policy
- Cost of living
• Takes time to retrain, re-tool potential workers; they don’t come prepared
• People don’t have first-hand experience

_Cluster and prioritize like ideas among opportunities and barriers_

_Vote:_ _Clusters were not indicated_

• Job Readiness Training (19)
• Planning and implementation (12)
• Public Awareness (16)
• Leadership (8)
• Resources (6)
• Industry Infrastructure (5)
• Land Access (2)
• Cost of Living (1)

V. Outline Actions for Priorities

_What possible actions can we take in the next 2-3 years that will address Priority 1 - Job Readiness Training?_

• Create and fund job-ready specialists around sites where there are potential workers (e.g., homeless shelters, prisons)
• Provide training at worksite
• Provide training where workers are
• Link with one-stop centers
• Create jobs
• Improve interface with PSD
• Support young farmer training programs
• Initiate discussions with DOE
• Establish good data collection and reporting system
• Have more communication between producers and potential workers
• Strengthen CTE Natural Resources pathway to become career ready

Vision for Practical Application of Agricultural Skill Panel
(Arrived at after the fact with co-chair Marc Alexander)

_Agriculture is seen as a desirable and viable career and industry._