“MA`O Organic Farms: Our Blueprint to Creating A Sustainable Local Food Movement”

Gary Maunakea-Forth MA`O ORGANIC FARMS
www.maoorganicfarms.org

Product of Waianae Coast Redevelopment Corporation 2009
MA`O - “mala ‘ai ‘opio”

NON-PROFIT 501(C)3 “SOCIAL ENTERPRISE”
GROWING ORGANIC FOOD AND YOUNG LEADERS WORKING FOR A SUSTAINABLE HAWAI`I
What will be needed to create stronger local and regional food systems that are less reliant on imports from elsewhere?

How can we (organizations that have a clear mandate to create sustainable industry) rise to meet our challenge?

What is our role in developing our “indigenous” resources to empower local communities and businesses?

**HOW DOES MA‘O RESPOND TO THESE CHALLENGES?**
CHALLENGE 1:
HOW DO WE GET LAND?

☑ TO EXPAND WE APPROACHED PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTING OVER 400,000 ACRES...BUT SECURED ZERO ACRES

☑ LUALUALEI NAVAL BASE OCCUPIES 7,500-ACRES, YET NOT STRATEGIC, NOT USED?

☑ BASE USES SPRING WATER APPROXIMATELY 1 MGD
CHALLENGE 2: HOW DO YOU CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE WANT TO FARM?

PLENTY OF LAND, PLENTY OF WATER?

- HFBF REPORTS AVERAGE AGE OF HI FARMER IS OVER 60-YEARS
- NEW POTENTIAL YOUNG FARMERS SEE A HAWAII THAT IS GENTLEMEN ESTATES
- INDUSTRIAL AG -- GMO
- $1 MILLION FOR 11-ACRES AG LAND ($150K CLEAN-UP)
- IN THE 1990’S THE WAIAHOLE CONTESTED CASE WATER HEARINGS – ILLUSTRATED NEAR CONTEMPT FOR LOCAL TARO FARMERS
- WHAT DOES THE ABOVE SUGGEST TO A BUDDING YOUNG FARMER?
CHALLENGE 3: WE HAVE NO AGRI-“CULTURE”

- FOR CENTURIES HAWAIIANS FED THEMSELVES, THEY WERE FOOD SECURE, WHY ARE THE VALUES, PRACTICES, RELATIONSHIPS OF THAT MODEL SIMPLY “DEMONSTRATION” PROJECTS, MUSEUM PIECES TODAY?
- WE’VE LOST OUR ABILITY TO GROW, COOK AND SHARE FOOD AND THE VALUE/BEAUTY OF THE LAND CONNECTION...
- LOCAL LEADERS AND THE STATE ENAMOURED WITH THE INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURAL MODEL -- GMO SEED PRODUCTION, BIOFUELS...
- NON-AG LAND USAGE ON AG LANDS – GENTLEMEN ESTATES...
- CAN WE RECONNECT? WILL THE TALK OF “SUSTAINABILITY” TURN INTO REAL ACTION?

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Our Response

* Social Entrepreneurialism: bring wealth into our communities in a way that we control, in ways that fits our communities character, and in ways that promote excellence.

* Youth Development: providing opportunities for young adults to develop their leadership capacity, academic proficiency, farming ability and recognize their kuleana
Become a modern iteration of a traditional practice

- Our kupuna were agrarian- and were a part of a tradition that allowed Polynesians to survive in finite ecologies for thousands of years. Traditional models by definition were sustainable.

- There is no word for nature in Hawaiian- relationships with the land were not abstract.

- Removing the people from the land had an adverse impacted Hawaii’s natural and social ecology- restorative actions must take both the land and people into consideration..
MA`O's OPPORTUNITIES

STRONG BUSINESS PLAN ALLOW US TO GET LAND

✓ NEIGHBORS SOLD US 11-ACRES
✓ POSSIBLE EXPANSION IN COMMUNITY
✓ 237 ACRES – NAVY LEASED IN THE PAST
✓ 7,500 ACRES – CURRENT NAVY BASE
✓ POTENTIAL NEW PARTNERSHIPS
MA`O’s OPPORTUNITIES

PLANNING ALLOWED US TO ACCESS THE CAPITAL TO EXPAND

ATTRACTED OVER $2.5 MILLION FOR EXPANSION

☑️ STATE LEGACY LANDS $737,000
☑️ OМИDYAR FAMILY $750,000
☑️ FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION FOR NATIVE AMERICANS $1.1 MILLION
MA‘O’s OPPORTUNITIES

WHEN PROPER MARKETING MEETS QUALITY PRODUCT YOU GET……DEMAND!

✔ WEEKLY 2-3 CALLS PER WEEK DEMANDING PRODUCT

✔ FARMER’S MARKETS CONTINUE TO GROW

✔ SUCCESS OF CO-PRODUCERS TOWN, DOWNTOWN, ALAN WONG’S

✔ WHOLEFOODS

FARM SALES

Product of Waianae Coast Redevelopment Corporation 2009
MA'O's OPPORTUNITIES

WITH DEMAND COMES INCREASED PRODUCTION

- SALES: 93% INCREASE FROM LAST YEAR FARMING EXACTLY SAME SQUARE FOOTAGE
- PER ACRE INCOME >$100K AND ROOM TO IMPROVE
- INCREASED MECHANIZATION (e.g. BED SHAPING), IMPROVED ORGANIC TECHNIQUES (e.g. WEED BURNING)
- ABLE TO RECRUIT LARGER NUMBER OF INTERNS: WE NOW EMPLOY THE YOUNGEST FARMERS IN THE STATE WHILE SENDING THE LARGEST NUMBERS OF YOUNG ADULTS FROM OUR COMMUNITY TO COLLEGE (26).
MA'O's OPPORTUNITIES

LABOR

✓ 26 COLLEGE YOUTH AS NEW FARM CO-MANAGERS, over 100 APPLY EACH YEAR

✓ 40+ HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GAINING TECHNIQUES, SKILLS, EXPERIENCE

✓ 500+ INTERMEDIATE AGED YOUTH IMMERSED IN THE ORGANIC CULTURE
MA'O: Social ENTERPRISE

* 24-ACRE CERTIFIED ORGANIC GROWER FRUITS AND VEGETABLES
* 5-ACRES LEASED FROM CHURCH
* 19-ACRES PURCHASED VIA GRANTS/SOCIAL INVESTORS
* NON-PROFIT WCRC OWNS 100% OF THE FARM
* ENTERPRISE PROVIDES YOUTH WITH UNIQUE AND PERTINENT EXPERIENCES IN A COMMUNITY WITH HIGH POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND LOW BUSINESS OWNERSHIP
YLT (Youth Leadership Training) Program

Recruit young adults from our community to work on farm: 20 hours a week, MWF 7am-12pm

EXCHANGE FOR SWEAT EQUITY: FULL TUITION WAIVER TO LCC, $500.00 MONTH STIPEND

THEIR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO MAINTAIN THE FARM, TEACH OTHERS, IMPROVE THE COMMUNITY

SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO CREATE NEW LEADERS/NEW FARMERS
PLAN, AND EMPOWER EMPLOYEES
CREATE BRANDABLE PRODUCTS
SHOOT FOR PREMIUM QUALITY
Leverage Success to Develop Political Capital
MEET YOUR CUSTOMER
CO-PRODUCE
WORK [AND HAVE SOME FUN]!
FARM + COLLEGE + KULEANA = LEADERS
Mahalo nui!

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No panic, go organic!!!