

# O`ahu Farm Bureau

## 2010 Candidate Questionnaire

*\*\* NOTE: Responses due no later than August 18 to alan.takemoto@gmail.com*

**In the past, there have been proposals to eliminate or dilute the functions of the Department of Agriculture. The Department of Agriculture has taken more than it's fair share of budget cuts and employee layoffs within the past few years. If the State Budget continues to experience a downward trend, how will you respond to the fiscal constraints placed upon the Department of Agriculture? Where does agriculture fit in your administration's priorities?**

Our Department of Agriculture plays a key role in supporting our agricultural industry and improving our local economy.

I believe a diversified agriculture industry is a vital component of our state's overall economy. We must support Hawai'i farmers by providing them with the means to remain economically viable, including access to water and farm land at affordable prices.

Hawai'i imports an estimated 85 percent of its food supply, sending nearly \$2 billion out-of-state every year. If our state replaced just 10 percent of the food it imports with food grown locally, the shift would generate an estimated \$188 million in annual sales and create 2,300 jobs. We can grow more of our own food with the right land, water and agricultural policies.

As Governor, I will work closely with the Farm Bureau to support Department of Agriculture programs that address invasive species, help livestock and poultry farmers with feed costs, expand marketing programs such as the "Seal of Quality" program, expand export markets, implement Important Agricultural lands, and revise the State Water Code.

During difficult economic conditions, farmers recognize the need to increase fees to support the continuation of inspection programs so that containers with agricultural goods can move promptly out of the state.

These types of cooperative arrangements between the agricultural sector and the state have helped us to manage the most severe financial crisis in state history while ensuring we meet the core needs of the agricultural community. As Governor, I will continue to seek public-private partnerships to ensure inspections are efficient and effective.

**Hawai'i's farm and ranch businesses have on-going challenges in dealing with the natural elements and competing in a global economy. In your**

**previous leadership positions, what specific agricultural issue(s) have you addressed and what was the impact on Hawai`i farm and ranch businesses? If elected as Governor, what specific initiative(s) do you propose to stimulate the expansion of Hawai`i's agricultural industry?**

As Lt. Governor, I supported passage of legislation that allows farmers to receive state subsidies for the costs of feed for their livestock and poultry. As Governor, I will recommend the extension of this program until more feed can be locally grown.

I will also work to ensure that the Important Agricultural Lands program finally gets implemented and will take steps to identify and set aside lands if the counties do not fulfill their obligations.

In addition, I will propose legislation to place water for agriculture at the same priority level as potable water.

**The growth of Hawai`i agriculture is highly dependent on the reduction of invasive species on high-risk products being imported into the State. What specific proposal would you initiate to ensure we protect our local agricultural industry from unwanted pest and disease?**

Invasive species are a serious threat, and we must work proactively to prevent their introduction and spread. When invasive species are introduced, we must act immediately to eradicate them. We cannot take a piecemeal approach or delay our response. As Governor, I will work to implement a comprehensive bio security program.

I will support the necessary resources to fight serious invasive species, such as little fire ants, varroa mites, myconia, albezia, and other non-native species that impact farms, nurseries, and livestock. In particular, as Governor, I will coordinate inspection and eradication efforts by better cooperation among the Department of Land and Natural Resources and Department of Agriculture.

I will also work with federal officials to augment staffing at harbors and airports, such as the Maui cargo inspection facilities. Currently federal officials do a thorough job of inspecting luggage and packages leaving the islands. I will seek to provide comparable inspections for packages coming into the islands.

**Home rule has been apart of Hawai`i's political system. What do you believe is the respective roles of the Federal, State, and County in regulating the many aspects of the agricultural industry?**

As noted above, I believe we can work with federal level officials - both in the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Homeland Security - to improve and augment

use of federal resources for invasive species protection at our airports and harbors.

The state will continue to play a key role in protecting agricultural lands, overseeing the availability of water, coordinating marketing, labeling and quality control programs, and being at the forefront of invasive species prevention and control efforts. Additionally, the state can help local farmers and ranchers by providing procurement preferences for locally grown fruits, vegetables, milk and meat.

The counties have a critical role in identifying and designating important agricultural lands. Agricultural subdivisions are also a county function, and the counties need to ensure that the purpose of the agricultural subdivision is for agriculture and not "fake farms."

**Land and Water have been a very contentious issue for Hawai`i. What specific actions will you enact to ensure that land and water is available and affordable to Hawai`i's farmers and ranchers?**

To enable agriculture to survive in our state, we must ensure that farmers have access to adequate water to grow their crops and land in the midst of continued urbanization.

In addition, I will propose changes in the water code to ensure that water for agricultural uses is given the same priority as drinking water.

I believe because of its importance, water for agricultural operations should be given the same level of protection as that given to domestic consumption and the protection of fish and wildlife to achieve a proper ecological balance.

In the past, hundreds of acres of agricultural land have been converted into developments that feature few homes with minimal agricultural activity, often referred to as "fake farms." I will also propose legislation to stop the creation of "fake farms" and work with the farming community to enact this bill in 2011.

To stop the conversion of precious agricultural land, as Governor, I will work to implement Important Agricultural Lands (IAL) laws that set aside and protect acreage for farming.

That is why I support the continued use of the Legacy Lands fund to purchase key parcels necessary to protect and enhance watersheds on all islands.

Our state Constitution specifically calls for the conservation and protection of agricultural lands, promotion of diversified agriculture, and assuring agricultural self-sufficiency. Agriculture depends on water. Agriculture, and the water it needs for sustainability, is a part of building a brighter future.