

OAHU FARM BUREAU
GUBERNATORIAL QUESTIONNAIRE
Written response due no later than August 18, 2010, COB.

SUBMITTED BY MUFI HANNEMANN

- 1. 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 its 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?**

Agriculture is a top priority for my administration. My background in working for a private agribusiness, C. Brewer, has given me a great appreciation of what farmers go through to be viable and also showed me the complexities of growing a competitive crop for a global market. The Dept. of agriculture needs to be the central focal point to ensure farmers and ranchers have the kind of support to be successful.

The Department of Agriculture has been downsized enough. If food security and sustainability are to be more than just buzzwords, the Department of Agriculture must provide the support to help farmers grow their businesses and grow more food. Agriculture is one of the 10 economic priorities of the Hannemann administration, and it is a centerpiece in revitalizing the economy. Supporting all forms of agriculture is key as larger operations can help smaller farms. A collaborative approach can be adopted today where large and small operations work together for mutual benefit, but it will take leadership and the involvement of the administration to encourage and support such an effort.

The Department of Agriculture should ensure that state lease lands are available and affordable for farmers to farm, pursue all available federal grants and funding, support research, assist with low-interest loans, support marketing and branding, and ensure that invasive species are controlled. We cannot do without an Agriculture Department and we must restore what has been lost.

- 2. Hawaii's farm and ranch businesses have ongoing 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 Hawaii farm and ranch businesses? If elected as Governor, what specific initiative(s) do you propose to stimulate the expansion of Hawaii's agricultural industry?**

My City administration was the first to provide an annual conservation planning grant to the Oahu Resource Conservation and Development Council to work with Oahu farmers, ranchers, community leaders, and school children to protect Oahu's water, soil, plants, and animals; reduced property tax rates for farm land; backed the establishment of the Waimanalo Enterprise Zone; began the "Ag in the City" event to showcase farm products and services; we were the first City administration to provide funding for the Hawaii State Farm Fair to promote ALL of Hawaii's agricultural products for ALL islands; and partnered with the Farm Bureau to introduce the weekly Honolulu Farmers Market at the Blaisdell Center.

While director of the Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, I promoted Hawaii goods and services and our regional cuisine on the mainland, Asia, and Europe; funded festivals on each island to support the agriculture, seafood, and tourism industries; and funded and led participation by local companies in national and international trade shows, among many other initiatives to stimulate the growth of island businesses.

If elected, we will push for the identification of Important Ag Lands by collaborating with landowners and encouraging them to designate some of their lands for agriculture and we will partner with the counties to get them to discuss ag lands in their communities. We will encourage the Legislature to develop more incentives for farmers to farm; work on expediting permits at the state level for infrastructure development; examine ways to use more local products in our schools, offices, prisons, and public facilities; and forge more partnerships with hotels, restaurants, and other tourism-related businesses to market farm products to both local consumers and visitors from around the world.

Hawaii should be on the cutting edge of research and development. Our land grant university, University of Hawaii, has the opportunity to attract many aspects of agricultural research to not only strengthen our local ag economy, but to be a leader in the world of research and an example of sustainable living. We will look to do more partnering with the federal government agencies like USDA-PBARC and other private research companies, and encourage private companies and new investments to do ag research in Hawaii.

3. The growth of Hawaii 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?

Defending our islands from invasive species requires the coordinated efforts of federal and state officials working hand-in-hand with local communities, farmers, and ranchers. Lawmakers passed Act 236 in 2008, which established an innovative and comprehensive biosecurity program to protect us from unwanted pests. The program integrates traditional aspects of invasive species interdiction, pre-entry clearance, port-of-entry inspection, rapid response teams, and eradication with the promotion of local agriculture to facilitate growth and sustainability. The growth of local agriculture means we can decrease our imports and reduce the threat of invasive species.

I would support joint federal-state inspection and quarantine facilities at ports on each island. Joint facilities provide workspace that is conducive to containing pests; result in shared costs savings; enable technology and information sharing; and reduce duplication of services. This inspection facility should be included in the state's master plans for airports and harbors.

Agricultural inspectors were cut during recent budget reductions and we must restore these positions immediately. But even with the restoration of these positions, we are not inspecting all the incoming cargo and at some point we will need the inspection facility and increase the number of inspectors statewide.

We should also support pest management programs that mitigate invasive species. Hawaii is the only state in the nation that is under a federal quarantine that prohibits the movement of plants and plant products to the mainland United States unless expressly permitted. Pest management programs require research on pest control strategies, outreach to farmers, and quarantine treatments for imports. The Legislature has appropriated biosecurity special funds for pest management programs that we will look to release.

4. Home rule has been apart of Hawaii's political system. What do you believe are the respective roles of the Federal, State, and County in regulating the many aspects of the agricultural industry?

The agricultural industry has always been under the purview of the federal and state governments, while counties do not have agriculture agencies. The federal and state governments have the statutory mandates and financial resources to assist agriculture. However, state and federal agencies can and should develop agriculture policies in collaboration with the counties. The counties can support agriculture by promoting agriculture through farmers markets and special events that feature ag products.

As a former Mayor, I know the importance the county plays and where they should be focusing their efforts in health and public safety (ie. Ag theft and vandalism, etc.) that also impacts farmers and ranchers.

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

We will promote the designation of Important Agricultural Lands. We must identify our best lands and put them into production for food security, to protect our environment, and to reduce food imports and the threat of invasive species. We understand that the IAL measure is not a land use bill, but an ag viability bill. We should encourage our permitting departments to expedite the processes for agricultural operations so that cost controls for farmers are more predictable.

Water has been a very contentious issue, and we know it may become even more so. But we must also recognize that if food sustainability and food security are goals, then agriculture needs water. Bringing all stakeholders to the table to see how we can share water between agricultural, domestic, cultural, and environmental uses is key to having enough water for agriculture.

We need to look at creative partnerships with private industry for new water source development, not only for agriculture but for the quality of life of all our people. We may even need to look at incentivizing some of these partnerships for their cooperation. Federal/state/counties/and private partnerships for water development is crucial to our future.