



Food+ Policy: 2024 Intentions

www.foodpluspolicy.com

Vision:

To create a food system in Hawaii that is sustainable, equitable, and nourishing through political advocacy. We envision a Hawaii where every resident has access to fresh, locally sourced, and culturally relevant food through an agricultural system that thrives in harmony with the environment.

Mission Statement:

"Our Mission is dedicated to forging a brighter future for our islands. We merge innovative education, technology, and cultural enrichment with policies promoting sustainable agriculture and equitable access to nutritious, locally sourced food. Together, we empower Hawaii's youth with the skills, knowledge, and values they need to shape a prosperous and resilient Hawaii for generations to come. We are committed to fostering community connections, preserving our unique heritage, and safeguarding our environment as we work towards a Hawaii where every individual thrives, every community is nourished, and our natural resources are conserved."

Identified Issue Areas:

1. Increase civic engagement in younger generations through empowerment and education.

Why? There are a lot of complaints about how our government is run but there is also a concerning amount of people, young and old, who do not know how our local government works nor believe that our voices matter.

Promoting empowerment and education, along with providing resources for civic engagement is essential for realizing our vision of a food system in Hawaii that is sustainable, equitable, and nourishing. It not only benefits individuals but also strengthens communities and enhances the potential for positive, sustainable change in Hawaii's education, agriculture, and food systems.

2. Increase opportunities and remove barriers for young people to engage in small farming for local consumption – as a way of life or a career.

Why? In 2017 the average age of a farmer in Hawai'i was ~60 years old, indicating that many young people today do not see farming as a good career or lifestyle option. Additionally, Hawai'i's post plantation era approach to agriculture has been primarily corporate, focusing on producers that operate at a large scale with little regard for 'āina stewardship.

The government should focus on increasing opportunities and removing barriers for young people to engage in small farming and food production for local consumption. We need to build a food system where Native Hawaiians and a diversity of people can own, access and participate in caring for 'āina, where farmers and farm workers can make a living wage with benefits, and where cooperatives and community-based organizations provide the connective tissue to facilitate exchange between many small producers and consumers.

3. Decrease dependency on imported food and agriculture goods and increase local farmers and value added products for Hawaii food resiliency

Why? Hawai'i imports 80-95% of our food, making us heavily reliant on distant sources. Situated about 2,000 miles from the mainland, we face vulnerability during disaster or import disruptions. Farmers work laborious jobs that may not allow them to advocate for themselves or get the necessary resources and education

Supporting our local farmers and their ability to produce for the community is crucial to the State's sustainability and resiliency to any disruptions in our local food system. Having updated infrastructures for producing value-added products can help increase the shelf-life of farmer produce and convenience for local consumers.

4. Incentivize and support regenerative and Native Hawaiian traditional farming and fishing practices.

Why? Conventional agriculture releases carbon and other emissions into the atmosphere, accelerates global warming, and contributes to ecosystem damage. Regenerative agriculture counters climate change by sequestering carbon in the soil and creating habitat for diverse species.

In Hawai'i, regenerative agriculture has a role to play in healing degraded 'āina from the plantation era. Native Hawaiian traditional farming, fishing and land/water management practices--which are uniquely suitable to these islands--must be part of the way forward

as a matter of practicality in facing climate change, as well as a matter of justice for Native Hawaiians.

5. Create access to healthy, culturally appropriate foods for food insecure communities and demographics.

Why? Low income families stretch their buying power by purchasing cheap, convenient, but unhealthy food items that usually contain a much higher concentration of sugar, salt and other complex preservatives that are harder for the human body to metabolize. This contributes to the development of non-communicable diseases such as cancer, obesity, allergies, high blood pressure, arthritis, diabetes and stroke.

The prevalence of non-communicable diseases in Indigenous and low income migrant families emanates from adopting western diets and being cut off from the ability to grow/harvest and eat healthy, traditional foods.

6. Provide farm to school programming--production, education & local procurement--for all learners.

Why? Our kids deserve to eat the best food. Locally sourced food tends to be more nutritious, and because processed foods are known to lack important nutrients, there are health advantages to localizing relationships between schools and producers but many keiki do not know where or how their food grows, and this is reflected in large amounts of cafeteria waste.¹

Farm to School programs enhance the health and nutrition of students and families, teach important life skills, encourage waste reduction, reduce carbon emissions, and help make better connections between food, people, and 'āina. The program also connects keiki to local producers and creates relationships that enhance childrens' understanding of the food system. By focusing our efforts to enhance the Farm to School programs while also creating partnerships that aid in regionalizing school lunch menus, keiki will have access to more culturally appropriate foods like kalo, 'ulu, and local bananas. We must ensure our keiki know what these foods are and have some type of pilina with their origin and mo'olelo.

¹ According to the Windward Zero Waste School Hui, school cafeterias generated over 35.5 tons of food waste in 2021.

7. Support policies that serve the health and wellness of the people, the environment, social equity, and economic stability of Hawaii

Why? It is not commonly recognized that food and the food system have the capacity to harbor socioeconomic inequalities. The effects of a weak food system which can range from higher rates of chronic disease to being affected by climate change is disproportionately felt with marginalized communities being affected the most.

Supporting policies that address health and wellness, environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic issues is a holistic approach to creating a better future for all. Policy support would not only improve the well-being of individuals but also contribute to a more sustainable, just, and prosperous society.