



AG-TOURISM IN HAWAII PROCEEDINGS

**THE AG-TOURISM IN HAWAII WORKSHOP
FRIDAY, AUGUST 6, 1999
KONA, HAWAII**



AG-TOURISM IN HAWAII

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

AG-TOURISM IN HAWAII FROM FARMER TO VISITOR

**A ONE-DAY WORKSHOP ON PROFITABLY LINKING HAWAII'S
AGRICULTURE WITH THE CHANGING VISITOR MARKET**

[HTTP://WWW.AGTOURISM.ORG](http://www.agtourism.org)

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 6, 1999
KEAUHOU BEACH HOTEL
KONA, HAWAII**



**HAWAII GROWN
WORKSHOP**



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WORKSHOP SPONSORS

- College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resources (CTAHR), University of Hawaii - Manoa
- County of Hawaii (Department of Research & Development)
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- Hawaii Island Economic Development Board
- Hawaii Tourism Authority
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- Kona Outdoor Circle
- KTA Superstores
- Plan to Protect Kona
- Superior Coffee Company
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- Volcano Winery
- Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Committee Chair: Dr. Kent Fleming, CTAHR, UH-Manoa
Dr. Richard Bowen, CTAHR, UH-Manoa
John Kitchen, John Kitchen & Co., Kailua-Kona
Nancy Pisicchio, Hawaii County Councilwoman
Virginia Easton Smith, Cooperative Extension, CTAHR, UH-Manoa

Cover: *Pua Naupaka* by Dietrich Varez
Editing: Kent Fleming, Dick Bowen, John Kitchen
Production: Shelley Hoose



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AG-TOURISM IN HAWAII PREFACE



Registration

ON Friday, August 6, 1999, 165 people met at the Keauhou Beach Hotel in Kona, Hawaii to explore ways to enhance the Hawaii visitor's experience and to profitably link Hawaii's agriculture with the changing visitor market. While the capacity crowd of 165 meant that many had to be turned away, it was evidence of Hawaii's readiness to explore the opportunities ag-tourism offers.

All of those attending the Kona conference recognized the enormous potential of ag-tourism in Hawaii, and a follow-up working group meeting in Kona is scheduled for November, 1999. During this meeting, we will discuss plans for a spring festival related to ag-tourism in the "Kona Coffee Belt" as well as the formation of an island or state-wide Hawaii ag-tourism association.

Depending upon local interest from other locations in the state, another ag-tourism conference (similar to the one held in Kona but with local emphases) may be held in Hilo or another site on the Big Island, and in Kula or Hana, Maui.

If you were unable to attend but would like to be informed about the follow-up meetings in Kona or plans for another conference, please contact Kent Fleming at fleming@hawaii.edu or 808-322-9136.

The web site will also be regularly updated: <http://www.agtourism.org>.



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS



George Kahumoku

WELCOME by George Kahumoku, farmer, teacher and renowned slack-key guitarist and storyteller.

Kahumoku performed ag-related Hawaiian music and recounted the legend of Pua Naupaka.

INTRODUCTION by Dr. Kent Fleming, Extension Economist with the University of Hawaii at Manoa, College of Tropical

Agriculture and Human Resources.

Fleming provided an overview of the workshop's agenda. He noted that the morning session would cover a general overview, and the afternoon would be spent on more specific details and discussion.

Fleming emphasized the importance of audience participation. He noted that the goal of the planning group for the workshop was to provide for maximum participation, but to limit the size of the group to 150 to allow for good interaction among participants. Ultimately, the group swelled to 165 participants, while about 40 people unfortunately had to be turned away.

Ag-tourism is not a new industry. Ag-tourism has been established around the world, and is a growing sector of the visitor industry. Tourists are looking for unique and cultural activities in which to participate.

In Kona, the coffee industry has taken a lead with tourism, but there is potential for other sectors of the agricultural industry to tap into this market. For instance, in the case of tropical fruits, tourists know of pineapple, but do they know about white pineapple? There is an enormous potential to show tourists what is unique about Hawaii.



Participants study a display of tropical fruits created by photographer Ken Love.



CREATING A SUCCESSFUL AG-TOURISM FESTIVAL

KEYNOTE SPEECH

by George Rothwell

*Founder and President of the Board of Directors,
Napa Valley Mustard Festival*



George Rothwell

IN NAPA VALLEY, the spring months are traditionally a dead time, with little happening in the orchards except for weeds and blossoms. Rothwell and his wife Alice have owned an antique shop for the past 30 years in the Valley. They and their neighboring businesses had struggled economically on an annual basis during the spring months. Businesses were forced to lay off workers, take vacations and seek bank loans to carry them from January through March.

The local town's chamber of commerce formed a committee to explore alternatives to address the lack of tourism during the first quarter of each year. Rothwell volunteered to sit on the committee, and, on a drive home following a meeting, he saw the fields of Napa Valley covered with mustard blossoms. He declared the blossoms a "gift to us," but "we had not seen them."

With the mustard plants in bloom for a two-month period, there were a variety of things to plan activities around. But the local chamber of commerce committee felt a festival was too large a project, and they said, "Let's give it to Napa Valley."

Napa Valley — Napa County — thus founded the Mustard Festival. How do the Napa efforts compare with those of Kona? Napa Valley is approximately the same size as the Kona coffee belt region. But in terms of organizational structure, Hawaii at this point is already ahead of Napa Valley. This fact is evident from the significant number of "movers and shakers" present at this workshop today.

The Mustard Festival started slowly, with Rothwell going from winery to winery looking for buy-in and capital. But he realized that he was not a good salesman. He finally determined that he “only needed be smart enough to hire a smart person.” Thus he approached many public relations companies, until he found the right one to work with. From there, the public relations company was able to secure endorsements from Valley businesses, wineries and mustard companies.



The Mustard Festival is about the valley in bloom. The story is told of how Father Sierra, in the 1800's, walked the valley starting up missions and spreading his mustard seed as he walked, so that upon his return one year later he would be able to find his trail.

The mustard plant is related to the hybrids of cabbage and Brussels sprouts. Grandmothers used mustard in herbal applications. Ancient people used mustard to enhance rotten meat. The mustard we are familiar with today is a hybrid, with Dijon brand being perhaps the most famous.

The Mustard Festival is now in its seventh year. The public relations company helped to build the event by creating an umbrella organization, which hosts three activities:

The opening event that features music, food, wine and a poster art contest. A new poster is sought each year featuring the work of a new artist.

Kodak sponsors the final event, a photography contest, that showcases mustard blossoms. This event has become Kodak's largest contest.

In-between hosted events, private businesses and non-profits are encouraged to host events, making use of the press provided by the Festival Board.

Public relations packets are developed, which include brochures from the events, mustard companies and wineries. Mention on the Oprah Winfrey Show and in newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, provides enormous exposure. A worldwide mustard contest is held annually in Chicago.

As planning progressed, there was an expectation of 10% growth in visitor attraction, but within a short time the festival achieved 26% growth. The visitors came to see the beauty and enjoy the food. People in Napa Valley are now working during the first quarter. They do not take their vacations or seek loans to carry them over until the next busy season. In fact, spring has now become the busiest time of the year. The message to the community is that the Mustard Festival is very good for you and your business.



It was exciting to learn that Keauhou was once a birthing area for ali'i. With today's workshop, it may prove to be a birthing place for a new Kona festival.

QUESTIONS (Q) AND ANSWERS (A):

Q: Napa Valley is well-located, being close to the Bay Area, but Hawaii is isolated, and it is costly to get to here. Comment?

A: The largest percentage of visitors to Napa do come from the Bay Area, but publicity is widely distributed. The Chicago area receives the publicity particularly well. Chicago is cold that time of year and the photos of mustard in bloom drives them to come in shorts (although it is still cool in Napa Valley) and take photos. But the visitors already come to Kona, they just are not yet availing themselves of the ag-tourism attractions.

COMMENT: Airfare to reach Hawaii is not out of reach in cost.

COMMENT: Tax write-offs are possible for business travel. There is potential for an emerging, sustainable development movement. Money generated could stay here rather than going to foreign owners of hotels.

Q: Would a lychee festival bring the Chinese?

A: (K. Fleming) I can't comment on the Chinese visitor potential. The idea we are talking about is a spring festival. Whether it be focused on lychee or coffee blossoms or something else needs to be determined. The given is that in the spring there are lots of tourists in Hawaii coming from a range of backgrounds with a range of interests. We need to snag them and bring them to the mauka region of Kona. If successful, we will improve the local economy generally and increase the sustainability of small farms. The visitors will also have a more enjoyable visit to Hawaii. There is more visitor interest in tropical agriculture than has been acknowledged. There is a substantial interest on the part of the Japanese visitors to see both tropical agriculture and the Japanese immigrant culture of the region.

COMMENT: We need to stretch out stays of visitors.

COMMENT: (K. Fleming) Hawaii Tourism Authority's mission is three-fold: to get the visitor to come initially or more often, to spend more, and to stay longer.

COMMENT: October was traditionally a slower month than September, but the Aloha Festival has turned those numbers around.

Q: To what extent is the event focused on mustard vs. wine? Did Oprah Winfrey pick it up because it is a bizarre event?

A: Establishing the event did not come easily. Education was important (e.g., that it was not mustard vs. wine, but rather the two were complementary interests) and the promotion company did a good job. They developed a trilogy book.

French's Mustard gave cases of honey mustard for promotion. A web site was developed. The idea was different but not bizarre. Innovative ("crazy") people and new people (not already involved directly with wine) were attracted and they grasped onto the idea and took off with it.

Q: Where did the funding to pay for the promotion come from?

A: The advertising agency took a lot on its shoulder. VISA became a key sponsor, because they saw the potential for growth. Small businesses bankrolled the first efforts, and then the big guys came in. Only eleven people started the festival. This year is the first that the festival has completely broken even. A \$250,000 debt was written-off by the public relations firm.

COMMENT: Participant grew up in California and remembers the mustard fields in bloom. But with increased wine production, aren't they gone now?

RESPONSE: Napa Valley does not produce mustard for processing. The mustard is a weed ground cover in the vineyards. We are in it strictly for the beauty of the mustard blossom. Bay Area people are typically hustle and bustle types. They come to Napa Valley to slow down a bit, to absorb pastoral tranquility. Postcards of mustard flowers capture this sense and are the most popular choice.

COMMENT: What about creating fat man games, pea knuckle, prizes, sports tourism, etc.

COMMENT: (K. Fleming) We are open to anything.

Q: Would it be smart to market this ag-related festival in Oahu, as it is less expensive to travel to Kona from Oahu than from the mainland, and it has a good mix of people?

A: Yes, but if a quality event is produced, people will pay to come from Japan and the mainland.

Q: What are the number of visitors to Napa?





A: The Chamber of Commerce, the Napa Valley visitor centers, and American Express have the numbers. American Express indicated that they saw a 41% increase in spending during the first quarter. Napa Valley in the spring was starting at almost zero, so anything was an improvement.

Q: How do you shelter people from the weather and predict attendance?

A: The opening and closing events are expensive. The first one is \$85 per person, with food, wine and entertainment. The closing event is similar. The Napa exposition/fairgrounds can accommodate 20,000, and we spend \$40,000 on tents.

COMMENT: (Sheree Chase) The visitor numbers are here already, with Hawaii Volcanoes National Park recording 500,000 annually and Puuhonua National Park receiving a high number of visitors also.

COMMENT: (K. Fleming) Over 500,000 visitors go out to isolated Hana, Maui each year. But most just drive out in the morning and return in the afternoon. We need a plan to interest them, to attract them, encourage them to spend the day and perhaps to stay overnight (or longer).

COMMENT: The World Indigenous Peoples Conference is representative of what can be hosted.

COMMENT: The visitor needs direction, to be pointed to where the action is.

Q: Did the publicist come up with the ideas for the umbrella events, poster and photography contests?

A: (G. Rothwell) I came up with many ideas, but the publicists developed the look.

Q: There is a ranch on Oahu which is looking into developing one or two festivals a year. Were neighborhood problems encountered, or were there neighbors who did not want the festival to occur in Napa Valley?

A: No. Most people are now involved in the events, and the events are not held in the street, but rather where they should be.

Q: What are the numbers which attend the various taro festivals?

A: (S. Chase) The taro festival in Hana is successful. Bed and breakfasts sell out. It is a good boost to the economy.

COMMENT: The Mustard Festival is kooky. Its success must be based on humor. The tie-in to humor and fun is key.

RESPONSE: (G. Rothwell) I think people are here to have fun. (Alice Rothwell): Local news and live media coverage help to sell the event and take it over the edge to success.



COMMENT: (K. Fleming) Hawaii Tourism Authority did not list ag-tourism in its original call for grant applications. Now it is officially listed as a category of tourism.

Q: What is the number of visitors from the Bay Area vs. other areas?

A: Bay Area people want to get away briefly, and there are 5 million people in the greater Bay Area. So 60-70% of those attending are Bay Area residents, but others who fly in spend more and stay overnight. Who comes depends a lot on where the publicity goes. The Napa Valley Visitor and Conference Bureau target people to come to conferences and events in the Valley.

Q: How did it happen that the festival had to carry a 1/4 million dollar debt? What would you have done differently?

A: No, it was not necessary. A transient accommodation tax could have been used to help create the event, but during the start-up years, there was no such tax. Large sponsors, especially VISA, helped the festival to develop relatively quickly.

Q: How many sponsors did the festival have?

A: The sponsors are listed in the workshop packet. Key hotels started it rolling, and others jumped on.

COMMENT: (K. Fleming) The sponsors for this workshop included the County of Hawaii's Department of Research and Development. Projects like this develop very slowly at first, but as they build, they take on a life of their own with their own self-generated momentum.

COMMENT: (G. Rothwell): The Board of Supervisors were not all supportive of the festival. Some were "slow growth" advocates and did not want more tourism. So the County was not helpful in Napa Valley.

I am proud people are working full-time now. The Boys and Girls Club sponsored a project which yielded the highest return on any they had done in the past. Occupancy is at 91% in one hotel. One town has had to deal with rapid growth and year round activities.

COMMENT: (K. Fleming) Farms are often beautiful and contribute directly to the overall rural ambiance of a region. But the farmers largely responsible for this beauty have had a hard time extracting money from visitors who enjoy these farms' rural beauty.



Ag-tourism offers farmers opportunities to benefit financially from this product of their farm endeavors. Visitors who want these types of rural experiences provide an untapped market for the farm product. In the sense that providing ag-tourism product(s) is a form of overall farm diversification, ag-tourism enterprises can be viewed as a good risk-management tool for the small farm.



PANEL 1: FARM ATTRACTIONS

[K. Fleming noted that the principles that are being discussed today can be developed and applied anywhere in the state, despite the conference's natural focus on the Kona district.]

HOLUALOA COFFEE FARM

Desmond Twigg-Smith

Twigg-Smith shared slides of his farm, the Holualoa Coffee Farm, taken by K. Fleming. Images included the coffee tree nursery, with 5,000 trees at various stages of development.



Workshop participants

Twigg-Smith noted that he started the farm with trees, soil and a lot of work. The farm must be nice-looking for the tourist.

Tourists are allowed to walk through the area containing the pulper and see the operation of a tractor, bags being filled, the grader, and the coffee mill. Coffee is grown

under Monkey Pod trees, which reduces the quantity of harvest but also reduces inputs of labor and fertilizer. In addition, the shade trees contribute to the beauty of the coffee farm, a financially important consideration, as all the coffee is sold retail to visitors.

The coffee harvest season is just now (early August) beginning. The farm started with a small roaster and grew because tourists staying at Twigg-Smith's bed and breakfast operation



wanted to see a working coffee farm first-hand. Slowly, more equipment was added, and the farm began to mill and roast for other farmers.

Coffee production and ag-tourism are not always completely compatible. Ag-tourism can have high capital demands, competing with pure production needs. Often it takes awhile for the commercial farmer to throw serious money at the more ag-tourism related facilities. Furthermore, there are possibly difficult crossings of visitor and worker paths. During the busy season, farm laborers are coming and going and there is much dust and activity throughout the farm.

This coffee farm is located on the old Makai Ranch, giving it more history which can be shared with visitors.

Visitors can come into the area where the coffee is being packaged. There is a retail center added along one wall. Visitors show up and want to find “a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.” Thus, we provide local honey, logo coffee cups and magnets, and other things not made or manufactured by The Holualoa Coffee Farm. In addition to seeing, tasting and buying coffee, visitors want to spend money for gifts and souvenirs, and we provide an interesting opportunity for them to do so.

The twelve-acre farm was a lot of work to bring it to the level it is at today. It had been completely overgrown with cane grass, which was very dense, from the former feed lot and cattle operation that was located on the site.

Visitors are interested in more than just coffee. It is amazing how many tourists have not seen banana trees before. Various other scattered tropical fruit trees are growing, and visitors love to see them and to ask about them.

Q: What do you do with the coffee pulp? Are there potential uses?

A: Some farmers make wine with the pulp. It also makes an excellent mulch, as long as it is not piled too high around the trees, because it can kill trees.

Q: Do you have liability insurance for the tours?

A: Our farm carries a bunch of insurance, including vehicle, product for sale, and facilities. There was no additional charge for liability coverage for tours.

Q: How much do you charge for tours? Are any permits required?

A: There is no charge for the tours. Our hope is that tourists will buy products on-site or order by mail. Christmas is very busy for us. No permits are required on agriculturally-zoned land.

Q: What percentage of your sales are e-mail?

A: It is hard to say what percentage of sales are e-mail vs. mail order. Periodic mailings are sent out, with the intention to keep building the list of customers. The “Custom Coffee” package which is mailed out is a good project, but it takes years to get it going. (This package is like a subscription to various coffees, each mailed at periodic intervals.)



Q: Are reservations required to take the tour? What are your hours and price?

A: We are open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and sometimes on the weekends during the Christmas season. No reservations are required. Activity levels at the farm vary, depending on what is going on. Some visitors walk through the self-guided parts on their own. Others go with a guide.

Q: Is access an issue on leasehold parcels and across leasehold roads?

A: The Holualoa Coffee Farm has good access.

COMMENT: (Robert Lindsey of Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate) On the issue of access, KSBE understands that the lessee is running a business, and they are required to carry a minimum \$1 million dollar liability insurance policy, so it is no problem. There are bed and breakfast operations on KSBE lands, which are encouraged ag-related activities.

Q: Are there problems with operating a bed and breakfast on the same parcel as the farm? Are there problems with special use permits from the County?

A: The Holualoa Coffee Farm obtained the first special use permit for a bed and breakfast from the County. Twigg-Smith is not operating his bed and breakfast operation any longer. He tired of the public, and escaped to the farm. He now enjoys having the tourists visit on the farm.

Bed and breakfasts are a natural with a coffee farm. The visitor gets to experience the mauka Kona area.



LION'S GATE B & B COFFEE FARM

Diane Shriner

Shriner spoke on the topic "Farm Bed and Breakfasts." Shriner's bed and breakfast has been in operation for over two years, on ten acres of leased KSBE lands. They raise coffee and macadamia nuts. With the prices of both commodities down this year, the bed and breakfast operation allows them to do sustainable farming.

Shriner, who works full-time at the bed and breakfast operation, says it is not easy, but it is enjoyable. "There are Sundays when someone is lounging on your sofa reading the newspaper," she noted. But having visitors is nice, particularly at breakfast. You have world-wide travelers, who provide an experience and level of learning that is great.

The Bed and Breakfast Association has about 50 members, seven of whom are in South Kona and one in Kau. Most raise coffee and macadamia nuts. When operating a bed and breakfast on agriculturally-zoned land, one must get a Special Use Permit from the County. It is a lot of paper work. You must go before the Planning Commission and notify all neighbors. Before starting to plan a new operation, it would be good to talk with other bed and breakfast operators and stay at a b&b.

At the farm, tours are given in a gas-powered golf cart. They are taken all over the ten acres. We show them the fruit trees and then serve the fruit for breakfast. Visitors remark, "No wonder Kona coffee costs so much."

We operate a small retail operation. It is not fancy, but it augments the income and stimulates mail orders. We only began the farm tours nine months ago.

A bed and breakfast farm is not for everyone, but it is a great experience.

Q: What is the occupancy rate?

A: Bed and breakfast occupancies are going up. Many are by way of referrals, without paying a commission. The bed and breakfast offers a less expensive range of accommodations.

Q: Are there partnerships between farmers and bed and breakfast operators?

A: I am not involved in any, but it would be a good idea, because referrals can go both ways.

Q: Is it mostly independent travelers who stay at bed and breakfasts?

A: Yes, b&b's cater primarily to the independent traveler. From our experience, many are "computer" people, escaping briefly from California's Silicon Valley. The average guest is interested in you and your place. They are not hotel-oriented.

Q: Do you have a lot of repeat guests and referrals?

A: Both, repeat guests and referrals are extremely important. Exposure on the Internet has helped stimulate business the most. Word-of-mouth takes time. The first repeat guest was a great experience for us.

Q: Do you provide for handicap access?

A: Federal law requires operations with six or more bedrooms to provide handicap access. The County requires access with five or more bedrooms. Our operations is less than five rooms, so we are not handicap accessible. Most b&b's seem to become profitable at about five units.

COMMENTS: K. Fleming noted that the UK and Ireland, both of which have strong bed and breakfast traditions, there are also many "self-catering" operations, cottages on farms where people can stay for a while and cook their own meals. Are there any of these here?

Monty Richards commented that his farm cottage is licensed as a bed and breakfast, but he has yet to exercise the license. He is looking into the "self-catering" idea.





PANEL 2: CULTURAL ATTRAC- TIONS

THE UCHIDA HISTORICAL COFFEE FARM

Sherry Chase

Chase, Curator of the Uchida Historical Coffee Farm, began working for the Kona Historical Society seven years ago. The Historical Society is the owner and operator of the Uchida Coffee Farm. The site is on the National Register of Historic Sites,

and it is managed and run as a living history project, featuring a turn of the century Kona coffee farm.



Uchida Historical Farm

The house was built in 1925 and the kudiba, or wet mill, was constructed in 1926. The project interprets the everyday life of farmers between 1920 and 1930. Three generations of the Uchida family grew up on the farm.

Today, the hoshidana and mill have been restored.

When the Historical Society took over the farm, it had not been in operation for ten years. The project has been developed as a working farm, with seven acres under cultivation. It is typical of the farms from 1900 to 1940, with a mix of coffee, fruit and macadamia nuts.

Tours of the farm revolve around the coffee season and its activities. The gardens have been restored, with the small plots scattered throughout the farm, as was typical in early 1900's. Beans, sweet potatoes, cucumber and other produce has been planted. The visitors are constantly "wowing" about the sights, sounds and smells of the farm.



There is a well-trained staff with a high level of commitment to the project. Costumed guides stay with the visitors throughout the tour. They perform the daily activities, both work and play. There are also two donkeys on the farm.

The living history program is brought to the visitor through the use of buildings, artifacts and some lectures. The guides demonstrate how work was done, allowing visitors to pick coffee or to hoe if they want to. The guides also incorporate their own personal family history into their presentations. This feature is important to the visitors.

Immersion programs and schools frequently visit the farm. The students are able to sample traditional foods and experience the smells and sounds of the farm of yesterday.

There is a kudo, or open-hearth, where food is prepared. Visitors are treated in the old-style, as they would have been received according to old Japanese style protocol. They are served traditional foods and refreshment.

Tours by independent travelers are limited to ten or 12 participants so that the guides can interact with the visitors. Tourists want to work on the farm and talk story, one-on-one, with the guides. They do not want to feel a part of the herd. The farm tries to accommodate children in independent tours, with age-appropriate experiences, such as observing new-born chicks.



The Uchida Farm tour

The farm is also fortunate to have the involvement of the community. Long-time local residents demonstrate basket-making and other crafts, are reviving old tool-repair techniques, and talk story about old times with staff and visitors. The project is important in that it recognizes seniors and preserves the agricultural history of the area's ranching and coffee operations. Seniors, such as Yoshitaka Takashiba, come out and bring their exotic fruit and demonstrate its preparation.

At the site, the mauka area has been developed to provide for safe access for vehicles and pedestrians. Modern stairs have been installed, and the visitor steps down into a reasonable facsimile of



the 1920-1930's environment. Grass areas allow for the group to spread out. Maximum group size is 15 to 20, which is broken into two ten-person groups, each with a tour guide. Again, the guides incorporate as much hands-on activity as possible. Participation is especially important for the children. Old traditional games have been revived. Another activity popular with children is washing clothes with a wash tub and wash board.

A small simple sales cart is available. The farm is not in the sales business, but there is a desire to market the products which are produced on the farm. Everything sold from the cart (except for the T-shirts) is produced on the farm. Generally people spend about \$15, the same as it costs to take the tour. Coffee and fresh tropical fruits are also served.

Q: What is the cost of the tour?

A: Graduated scales include the current introductory rate of \$15 for visitors, \$12.50 for individuals in groups and \$7 for Kona residents. The grand opening will be held on November 1, and the price will go up at that time. Tours are scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Other days are available, but at a flat rate.

Q: What kind of liability insurance does the farm carry?

A: Uncertain of the details.

Q: Is the staff paid?

A: The 15 to 20 staff are all in paid positions. Plus, there is a dedicated group of cultural advisors.

People in ag-tourism need to be aware of the cultural history of their area and should be a resource for the visitor. The Kona Historical Society's mission is to collect, preserve and disseminate the history of the area.

Millie Kim, Director of Pulama ia Kona Preservation Council and consultant for the establishment of the Holualoa-Honaunau Heritage Corridor, defined a heritage corridor as a roadway with significant cultural or historic sites along its length. The federal government has provided ISTE A funding through the Highway Administration to provide for roadside enhancement of scenic and cultural resources.

Infrastructure is government's responsibility, and visitors need roads, rest stops and restrooms. There is a convergence of federal funds and visitor trends of eco-tourism and ag-tourism, with sustainable economic development as the third link.

Only the Big Island has a heritage corridor, that being the Hamakua-Hilo Heritage Corridor. With the pending closure of the

sugar companies in East Hawaii, a plan was developed by the Hilo Main Street Program in 1993 to address the economic impact. The plan recognized Highway 19 which runs through the entire area as the vehicle to link the individual communities with their multicultural aspects. Hamakua - Hilo is similar to the Kona coffee belt.



In Hamakua, four towns developed cultural heritage plans around water flumes, plantation managers' homes, and other unique features. They ranked the sites for priority.

A lot of tourists traverse Highway 19. The independent tourists were targeted to be enticed to pull over and spend some time. A drive guide was developed to show tourists the sites, restrooms and where to buy drinks.

The Laupahoehoe Train Station sprang out of this effort. The State Department of Transportation provided the signage to identify points of interest.

Visitors are looking for more to do. Residents, some of three generations, want to keep the history alive, preserve sites and buildings, and maintain the identity of their individual communities.

The visitor center is a place for the visitor to pick up secondary collateral material. It can also become a place to access local jams and jellies; thereby, assisting in the conversion of former sugar cane land into diversified agricultural farms.

The visitor is looking for higher levels of interaction with local residents.

The Pulama ia Kona Preservation Council is looking to convert the Old Mamalahoa Highway, which was the original road that circled the island, into a heritage corridor. They are working with county, state and federal agencies.

Holualoa is intact as representative of former coffee towns compared with other areas, which have experienced sprawl. The current project encompasses a five-mile section, with 40 identified historical sites.

The infrastructure along the Mamalahoa Highway consists of a narrow and winding road, with a mix of resident and visitor traffic that can cause problems. The Hamakua-Hilo guide contains warnings to visitors to pull over and allow other cars to pass.

Pulama ia Kona Preservation Council has identified the need to widen the shoulders, create pull-off areas and provide signage along the Mamalahoa Highway. There are old coffee benches along the route, where farmers used to stack their bags to be picked up by mill employees. These are the types of features that are to be preserved.



Copies of the Holualoa-Honaunau plan are available through M. Kim or S. Chase.

VISITOR STATISTICS

VISITOR counts are key to making assessments. Businesses need to work with the state. The number of repeat visitors is key to increasing bed and breakfast stays.

OVERALL VISITOR PROFILE:

VISITOR demand no longer exceeds expectation (worldwide). In 1998 for the first time, the growing number of “repeat visitors” tops “first time” visitors

- Repeat: 59% (up 5%)
- First Time: 41% (down 6%)

BIG ISLAND

- Of the 1.2 million total visitors in 1998, 70% arrive and depart from the Kona Airport.
- Of those visiting the Big Island, 61% are repeat visitors to the state (732,000).
- Of the 61% repeat visitors, 38% are repeat visitors to the Big Island (300,000).
- Of the 38% repeat visitors to the Big Island, 40% are visiting for the 5+ time (110,000).

TRAVEL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA 1997 DATA:

- Historic and cultural travelers spend more, take longer trips and participate in more activities.
- Repeat visitors tend to stay at smaller hotels, vacation rentals, and bed and breakfasts.
- Repeat visitors tend to participate in farm tours, bird watching, nature hikes, kayaking, historical tours, and cultural events.

The larger number of these types of travelers is the result of aging baby boomers, also the primary cause of the phenomenal growth of the cruise ship industry.

These visitors are relatively more interested in the environment and culture.

AG-TOURISM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Nancy Pisicchio, Hawaii County Councilwoman



COUNCILWOMAN Pisicchio, macadamia nut farmer and founder of the Plan to Protect Kona, has a strong interest in agriculture and community-based development. Pisicchio noted that time brings change. Sixty years ago the mauka areas of Kona were thriving communities, but deterioration of mauka business has come with the development of urban makai areas and resorts. More people live in the mauka areas, but spend their money in the makai business areas. We cannot change people's buying habits, so we need to find a means to bring more money into the mauka areas.



Nancy Pisicchio

We need to start deciding what “progress” is. We cannot stop change, but to have real progress, we must determine our goals.

It was recently predicted that agriculture was doomed, and Waikiki does not have the prestige it had previously. Is it in our best interest to promote monoculture and mass tourism? We are moving from a high volume, low profit economy. With the collapse of sugar, we are seeing growth in diversified agriculture. KTA Super Stores' Mountain Apple brand is a good example of the diversity of products capable of being produced here.

Why are we getting more tourism and diversified agriculture? More people around the world are living in urban and suburban atmospheres; thus, when they travel, they want to get away from suburbia.

We need to find more ways to export produce out of the state, and local farmers are finding new markets under their noses. More diversified products are being produced, and there are more direct and Internet sales occurring.

Diversified markets and tourism offer unique opportunities to niche market. We do not have to give up our culture and environment to gain economically. The cost of urban sprawl is a strong reason to preserve agricultural land. Residential development costs government more in infrastructure (\$11) vs. agricultural land (\$.31).



"Cows don't go to school." is slogan used by the American Farmland trust.

What is ag-tourism? It is simply tourists attracted to agricultural activities.

If we compare Kona to the Napa Valley of 30 years ago, it took Napa that long to build itself up as a tourism destination. Kona still needs to decide if it wants this. The Heritage Corridor Plan is a way to begin the development of the necessary infrastructure.

We need to find new markets, balance our diets and address other competition in town. Ag-tourism could be the key, with pick-your-own operations and bed-and-breakfast establishments. The question is, how to focus on this?

Government provides the tools or the recipe of how to develop the image and infrastructure for community preservation. Local government has to be a partner to facilitate reaching the set goals. Partnering with local, state and national government, and community organizations is key.

Ag-tourism provides opportunities for niche marketing and a recipe for sustainable development. A balance of environmental protection, economic development, and the community's way of life. Ask the question, is this economic activity sustainable?

Government supplies the pots and pans. The community contributes the ingredients.



PANEL 3: HAWAII GROWN NICHE MARKETING

COMPETING ON QUALITY

Cynthia Brocksen, Pele Plantations

1998 Kona Coffee Cupping Contest winner & recipient of the TOPS Coffee Retailing Award

IN 1992, THE BROCKSENS started their business and sent out their first brochure about their product. From the beginning, they focused on the niche of coffee aficionados, the coffee gourmets who love Hawaii.

It is impossible to develop a niche without a good quality product. Gus Brocksen [Cynthia's husband], produces a quality, quality, quality product. But it doesn't work to produce and sell number one coffee, unless the customers order again.

Pele Plantation offers estate coffee selected from four farms. This offers the customer a choice of products. Each estate's product is processed separately, and the label carries the name of Pele Plantations plus the name of the grower and the location of the farm.

You must educate consumers. They need to know that with estate coffees, you can expect subsequent purchases to be similar from year to year. You must also educate estate workers as to what quality is; i.e., what is ripe, and to give the product careful handling all the way through the process. If care in processing is taken, the marketing is easy.



Start your marketing efforts with the development of a brochure. Pele Plantations has done a number of brochures over the years, such as its Valentine's Day promotion. The brochures capture the coffee and palm trees to visually position Kona coffee within a beautiful environment. The latest brochure sends the message "Real Kona Coffee, Real People."

Pele Plantations does a pre-holiday season mailing. Each year, new products are added to the offerings of gift baskets.

Previously, we advertised in Coffee Journal which is no longer being published. It was a classy magazine found next to the gourmet magazines at bookstores, such as Borders. Because they target a niche market only, we are looking for a magazine to replace the Journal, but have yet to find the one.

The gourmet market totals 20% of our business. Repeat customers continue to purchase our product and more sales are coming in from word-of-mouth. Our presence on the web has been growing, with 20% of sales. We hired a webmaster on the mainland to keep our site current. We check the web daily for new orders.

Farm tours of Pele Plantations are promoted via the Kona Coast Timeshare Program. We go down and set up a display table during the weekly dinner function to sign people up. We offer tours on Thursday at 10:00 a.m. or by appointment.

When taking the visitors on the tour, we try to make their visit memorable. We go through a planting of 1,000 coffee trees, placing baskets on the visitors and saving some trees for them to harvest from. The tourist receives information about the seasons of the coffee, and they view the sheep. Later, they watch the coffee that they picked being roasted. The visitors love this portion of the tour.

THE FARMER-CHEF CONNECTION



Roy Honda

Roy Honda, farmer of vine-ripened tomatoes and macadamia nuts and Kona Farm Bureau President

HONDA'S interest in marketing tomatoes sprung from a 1995 "Hawaii-Grown" Conference which was sponsored by UH-Manoa, the Farm Bureau, and the Department of Agriculture. At the conference, he noted the emphasis on the farmer-chef connection, on developing a strategic alliance to benefit both farmers and chefs. Honda creates something unique for a niche market. His tomato seeds cost ten times normal seeds, and he works as hard.

When marketing your product, consider consistency in supply, consistency in product and consistency in service. If these principles are applied, you will develop a long-lasting relationship with the chef. You should not be ashamed to raise your prices, if you can accomplish those three principles.



Ag-tourism benefits the mid-western farmer who comes to visit during the winter months. They visit with local farmers and can use it as a tax write-off.

Clean up an area of your farm and send out brochures to visitor destination kiosks to entice the tourists to come and visit your farm.

Michael Pusche

commercial baker of banana bread in Kona, utilizes local product; bananas, eggs and honey.

MARKETING IN A NICHE will be different for each farmer, Pusche noted, but the commonalities include quality, service by being there, and focus on your product.

Government provides the infrastructure; i.e., roads, restrooms, landscaping. Niche marketing requires the farmer to stay focused, find out what it is that sells your product, and find out about the market. If it is going to happen, it is up to us to make it so, not government.

The main challenge is in the marketing and being sure people know it is there. We all must come together. Water in our rural communities is held in catchment tanks, and it either comes from the sky, or we must purchase it. If we shoot a hole in our water tank, we will lose all of our water, at a price. Similarly, if you buy a product from the mainland that is also made here in Hawaii, it's at a price to our local economy.



Michael Pusche

Peter Merriman

Chef of Merriman's Restaurant in Waimea and Hula Grill in Lahaina

THE WAITER IN A RESTAURANT has a big influence in the tourist's decision-making process. For example, Merriman's offers a \$9.00 pot of coffee. It is a premium product, and the tourist is told so. This is indicative of what should be done throughout the industry. We need to offer quality products.

The tourist indirectly is exposed to the farm, without ever going there, through the dining experience. The notations on the menu of



the farm name, location, etc. and the relationship that the waiter shares with the visitor are important.

You can compare farming to the recording industry. If you play music, you only reach so many people, but if you make a CD, you reach that many more. Similarly, only so many people can actually reach your farm.

You need to understand who your market is. Dining in Hawaii has transitioned. The Pacific Regional Cuisine has pushed quality. Agriculture does not need to be excluded from the marketing of the tourist experience.

We are willing to pay \$20 a flat for local strawberries vs. mainland product at \$12, because we want to support local farmers. We want local farmers to be driving a new truck, so they will be back next year.



*Peter Merriman
and Kent Fleming*

Farmers should talk with waiters, as they are the final contact with the tourists. Tourists are looking for something exotic, but not too far out on a limb, because they are still in America and do not expect anything too exotic.

The best thing farmers can do is to get their name onto the menu. With the name in place, the waiter can talk to the tourists about your farm.

NICHE-MARKETING TO CHEFS

Harvey Sacarob, organic lettuce farmer from Hookena

SACAROB raises baby lettuce. He focuses on quality and consistency in service. His product is genetically unique, with the seed imported from Holland.

Ten years ago, some of Hawaii's chefs who were focusing on regional cuisine came up to his farm to see his trials and successes. They wanted product to support the local economy and a fresher product than they could obtain from the mainland. The chefs suggested he grow baby lettuce, but they said he had to provide a consistent supply.

The farmer-chef relationship is a two-way street; thus, the chefs provided site visits to the restaurants. He was able to see the walk-in coolers, what was being purchased, and prices paid were discussed. They helped him to determine what business practices to implement.

Sacarob started working directly with the chefs and doing demo shows. The chefs came out and toured his farm. They were early pioneers in this area and have subsequently provided opportunities for new farmers.



Fresh food is picked in the morning and on the tourist's plate in the evening.

Q: What is community based agriculture?

A: It is creating a demand for a product on a regular basis; i.e., Merriman's Restaurant. I can look at a field and say, "That's all sold." The seeds, it is all sold, as long as there is a demand for the product and they will support you. They want you to be successful.

I practice organic methods of farming, because it is long-term and sustainable. Also, one day we will be gone and the market will be gone, but the land will be here.

Q: Why do you use seed from Holland?

A: The individual site location and climate calls for a variety that works well under various conditions. We tried hundreds of varieties. The Dutch have done a good job in developing varieties. They have the best color. Their seed allows me to have the best product and be able to deliver on a consistent basis.

Q: How do you feel about genetic engineering?

A: (P. Merriman) Until it is proven to be wrong, I am in favor of it. We have to feed the masses.

A: (H. Sacarob) Mankind has been selectively taking seed over eons for the best characteristics. Genetic engineering, an extension of this selection process, creates uniformity in size, etc.

Q: How can I get the information you have?

A: Work with the Cooperative Extension Service. Tap into other resources that are available, such as on the Internet. Researchers are there to do the work and, along with extension, to present it to you, the industry. We have more resources available than 10 years ago.



BREAKOUT SESSIONS

DURING the afternoon, participants attended break-out sessions. Each person could attend two of three sessions: (a) “Coffee Cupping,” presented by Cathy Cavaletto, (b) planning a spring ag-tourism festival, and (c) developing and operating an ag-related visitor attraction.



Cathy Cavaletto leading the coffee cupping.

SESSION A: COFFEE CUPPING

with Cathy Cavaletto

THE COFFEE CUPPING workshop was a very abbreviated version of Cavaletto’s popular two-day seminar held occasionally on the UH-Manoa campus. Even though this workshop was short, participants gained a better understanding of what characteristics are of

concern to the more sophisticated coffee drinkers.

The motivating idea behind this presentation is that those involved in Kona ag-tourism of any sort should be as familiar with coffee as those in Napa Valley are regarding wine. As this session was a demonstration, detailed notes were not taken.

SESSION B: FESTIVAL PLANNING

Facilitator: Kent Fleming

After a brief review of the idea, the following questions and comments were raised and discussed:



WHY HOLD A FESTIVAL IN THE SPRING?

- January, February, March was the general time frame discussed. It is a high period for tourism (January 15 - March 15)
- Try to attract tourist to the mauka areas.
- Kona Coffee Festival Council tried to do an event in the Spring, but there was “nothing happening” at that time of year -- same problem Napa faced.
- Fall is a busy time for coffee growers -- some say too busy for a festival.
- Want to complement (not compete with) the current Kona Coffee Festival.
- Would like to see other crops - complement the coffee crop attraction
- Kona Coffee Hawaii Spring Blossom Festival, following idea of the Mustard Festival.
- Spring has the least amount of ripe fruits.
- Kona coffee farmers held a blossom festival annually, until World War II -- could pick up on this tradition.

DEVELOPING A MAP

- Develop a map (English/Japanese) with sites to visit.
- One of the best ways to market an area is to develop a map - it brings people together - everyone loves maps.
- Series of maps



- Maps help people to belong to the area, draws people, brings in sponsorships
- How visitors can get to a location.



MaryAnn B. Maigret, cartographer

- Envision an artistic, non-commercial map, one that the tourist pays \$10 as a take home; something that captures the spirit and actual geography of the area
- Who is the user? How will it get used? What is the purpose?
- In this case, educated users would be targeted.
- What is appropriate for content?
- Individual businesses sometimes want a site map.
- Include in a book with pullout map and details about companies; i.e., Bay View Farms.

THEMES AND ELEMENTS FOR THE FESTIVAL

- Festival - Ag-tourism focus on blossom.
- Blossoming time is generally unpredictable but one can make any crop bloom at anytime of year, by forcing with fertilizer, water, etc. so could plan for a particular site.
- Come to Kona to see blossom festival and also see coffee - the hook.
- Photo contest, kick-off event, field trips and come back together.
- Other plants; i.e., awa tasting and other native Hawaiian plants.
- Festival focus on other crops in addition to coffee.
- Include other community groups in Kona to do activities.
- Agri-photo contest including all plants.
- Photos are important, but not overall focus of festival; i.e., include avocados - varietal differences.

Breakout Sessions

- March important due to high number of visitors; Japanese school vacations.
- Have many creative, talented people in the community; e.g., cartographer, photographers. Community has hosted visitors from Japan for years.
- Other photographers in Hawaii can be called in as resources.
- Music - folk, jazz, Hawaiian might be a part of the festival.
- Largest Internet presence is in Hawaii - could be a source of information on the festival.
- Visitors are thrilled to be on a farm.
- Time of year is very important - when we are gearing down - the visitor/farmer from the mainland is gearing up for spring planting.
- Need incentives for hotels (high occupancy rates in the spring) and others to participate.
- Find a way to play on existing strong hook; i.e., coffee.



GENERAL IDEAS

- Who are our partners, who are we targeting?
- Train tracks still exist - transportation via traditional mule trail, hiking trails, bikes, alternative transportation - large buses will generally not work for small farms.
- Every festival has a theme - need to build in theme - continuity = history, renewal = future economically.
- Blossom trail - people go look for different blossoms; highlight the diversity of the topography both mauka and makai.
- Hawaiian harvest - fruiting, blossoms
- Need to respect the November block - Kona Coffee Festival.
- Are you aiming at people/tourists who are already enticed here - or a different group of visitors?



- The January - March visitor is different from the April - October visitor
- “Agri” narrows the customer base - “Blossoms” may not be seen by an urban visitor. Got to sneak agriculture into their experience. Everyone wants to go back to the farm. Agri is corporate. Farm is chickens. The English call it farm tourism.
- Think about something that celebrates the big picture; teach the visitor where to go; get tourists under one tent and those interested in agriculture would be directed to the farms.
- Tourists like to go to a central area to get oriented and then hub out; i.e., Konawaena High School.
- Indigenous people, ahuupuaha.
- There is not a long-range plan for the area; this may be the start of a plan.
- Artist focus.
- Amy Greenwell Ethnobotanical Gardens has good programs, good location.
- In April - October more Europeans visit. They like to hike, kayak. They have made an investment in time and money to get here.
- In December - March the Waikoloa hotels are filled with group incentive packages.
- FIT (Free Independent Traveler) number peak in September.
- Napa Valley is an adult community - eating and drinking - nearby communities have amusement parks.
- How to bring kids into, see, involvement so that they may develop an interest in an agricultural career.
- Consider TREE Center to involve young people. TREE Center may be willing to do programs for youth.
- TREE could be one of many partners to put on the festival.
- Fruit, nuts and bolts.

- Higher quality of life and sustainable life - baby boomer trend and FIT - Need the thread to wrap everything together.
- Smaller event works well under an umbrella - than if done alone as a single event. Use the press of the umbrella for free.
- Huluhuli chicken - the visitor does not know what it is; must educate.
- Spring is dead period - no activities; it has not been exploited.
- Get National Parks participation.
- Need to provide update on planning or decision-making on the festivals planning prior to future meetings.
- agtourism.org is the website. It will have posted conference notes, including a festival breakout session.
- What is in it for me?
- How many dollars?
- What are we going to get out of it?
- Include aquaculture, Kona Farmers Alliance and other groups.
- Races and run events tied to the festival.
- Don't rush to develop the theme.
- Hawaii has an incredible variety of foods.
- Food related events tie in - Cuisines of the Sun
- Other events going on - use as a foundation to determine what it is going on and who is involved.
- Start up and then evolve into a bigger event.
- Mustard Festival always umbrella other activities. Started the festival with six weeks, then went to seven weeks and then nine weeks. Host the start event (big), middle and a wrap-up event.
- Start small, do a good event.
- Get the word out for planning of the festival.





- Tasting is important.
- Get summary, check calendars, target date for the event to further planning, who will be players.
- Work group established; get information out to those who signed up at break out session.
- Target early October to have information up on the website.
- Agri-forestry fascinates the tourist - different overstories and understories.
- “Back to Nature”

FESTIVAL BREAK-OUT SIGN-IN SHEET

Stephanie Amick, *pookela@hialoha.net*
 Jill Wagner, *hoti@ultraconnect.com*
 Nita Isherwood, *nitabnb@kona.net*
 Barbara Lee, *barbaral@nelha.org*
 Marcia Sakai, *msakai@sob.uhh.hawaii.edu*
 MaryAnn B. Maigretkcarto@aloha.net
 Chuck Clarke, *biig@interpac.net*
 Ma'ata Tukuafu, *maata@hiinfo.net*
 Daniel Thielant, *maata@hiinfo.net*
 Ann C. Peterson, *path@aloha.net*
 Rodney Haraguch, 826-6202
 Peter R. Underwood, 323-2239
 Charlotte Nakamura, *nakamurac@auax.ctahr.hawaii.edu*
 H. Michael Harrington, *dean@ctahr.hawaii.edu*
 Ken Leonhardt, *leonhard@hawaii.edu*
 Jay Deputy, *deputy@hawaii.edu*
 Kathryn Gibson, *modern@hialoha.net*
 Charlotte Vick, *cvick@starrtech.com*
 Stephen Heineck, *eshein@aloha.net*
 [name not found], *www.konawinemarket.com*
 Bryce Decker, *deckerbands@compuserve.com*
 Sotero Agoot, *kpfc@gte.net*
 Bob Yap, *boby@ucc-hawaii.com*
 John McGuire, *colsat@ilhawaii.com*
 Barbara Lamm, 328-8461
 Diane Ley, *bifb@aloha.net*

BREAK-OUT SESSION C: MARKETING STRATEGIES AND RUNNING A FARM VISITOR ATTRACTION



Facilitators: Dick Bowen and John Kitchen

Resource person: Desmond Twigg-Smith

NOTE: Due to the reduction in time allowed for these two sessions, they were merged into one. A sizeable number of participants, around 15-20, indicated that they were either already operating a visitor attraction or were considering doing so. The session was unstructured to allow for participants to define the issues important to them. A wide-ranging and energetic discussion ensued. The topics below that summarize the session were selected by the facilitators after reviewing the session notes.

PART 1. IMPLEMENTING YOUR CREATIVE NICHE MARKETING IDEAS

QUESTIONS were raised concerning the need to compete with other destination areas around the world. One person asked who/where is the ag-tourism market (termed the “lost demographic”), and suggested that we need to get information on this market to know better how to attract them. For tourists who do come to our destination areas, there is the further question of how can businesses in rural areas attract visitors to these sites.

It was recognized that most of the tourists at this time stay in traditional hotels and resorts and will continue to do so. Will ag-tourism compete with or complement traditional tourism? Some see ag-tourism as a set of alternative attractions that will bring more people to Hawaii or will help keep them here longer. Some see these ag-tourism visitors continuing to stay in hotels. However, others see ag-tourism as an alternative to “Waikiki” or “box” tourism; ag-tourism will bring in a different type of “alternative tourists” who may not wish to stay in the traditional vacation resort hotel.

There were a number of suggestions on how to market ag-tourism activities to the visitor. One suggestion was to link the development of bed and breakfasts (b&b's), historic sites, and tropical agriculture to provide a unique experience. One person said that attracting the tourists required “hooks”, e.g. coffee. Another urged the use of the heritage corridor program to connect the island.



Other potential marketing strategies mentioned were:

- “gardening/farming = happiness.”
- “permaculture.”
- “ag-tourism as a teaching tool: learn how to farm profitably in a tropical region.”

SUGGESTIONS for ag-tourism businesses were made.

“Niche marketing” was emphasized. “Become a niche market. Get together, find a niche and get it to the shelves.” It was suggested that such a business should suit and utilize the community and local products. Whatever the strategy, providing a high quality experience is important.”

PART 2. STARTING & OPERATING A FARM VISITOR ATTRACTION

Some participants came to gather information on setting up and running an ag-tourism business. Here are some of the questions and answers.

Q: How do you start a bed and breakfast operation?

A: “We went before a county planning committee to get a zoning change. We used a consultant. However the major obstacle was time, not money.”

Q: How to reach customers?

A: “Flyers at hotels.”

“Brochure rack card service.”

“You have to know amount of people you can handle. You don’t want to over advertise to the point where you’re overloaded with people. You always have to be planning and balancing.”

“Visitors need to know location and how to access a site. Need directions and signs.”

“Appearance is important.”

“Need to utilize the web. Develop a site, e.g. hawaii-grown.com

Q: Does advertising increase incidents of theft?

A: “You have to be there on the farm; have dogs, fencing, ‘attack plants’ bordering the place.”

“Theft will always happen. People are going to know about your place anyway so advertising probably won’t increase theft much if the farm looks like it’s populated and protected.”

Q: Where can a business get help?

A: A number of people in the audience consult on web site development or have such experience. Becky Winters (956-1814) has an information packet available from the University of Hawaii at Hilo Small Business Development Center



Q: How does one get financing?

A: Commercial banks, State of Hawaii agricultural or rural development loans, USDA loans, and government-guaranteed bank loans, were mentioned. Each case will have different possible sources for loans. A track record of five years and a business plan are needed to get bank loans. In addition you need to work with your banker. For agricultural loans from the state, you need some track record. One businessperson cautioned not to let money hold you back, that there are ways to get funding. Each “need to work with banks”

GOVERNMENT REGULATION AND SUPPORT

THREE types of government regulations impacting ag-tourism operations were mentioned: land use, commercial permitting, and health regulations. County zoning ordinances list the types of activities that are allowed on lands zoned for agriculture. Ag-tourism activities are often not listed as allowable activities, and therefore special use permits must be obtained. Bed and breakfast operations and camping were two types of land uses where participants were unsure of existing government regulations.

Two sentiments were expressed that potentially conflict: the need to protect agricultural lands and the need to revise land use laws to allow for ag-tourism land uses without the need for special permits. Conflict can arise over differing perceptions of what are acceptable land uses and business activities for agriculturally-zoned lands.

Sales of a farm’s own output is allowed. Sales of products from off the farm require a commercial permit. Most regulations deal with health. If you’re selling prepared food, you need to have a certified kitchen. However, bed and breakfasts usually do not have certified kitchens. The b&b situation apparently is a gray area because government reserves the right to regulate.

One suggestion to deal with the myriad of regulations potentially facing an ag-tourism operator is to have government establish a one-stop office that would deal with all of these ag-tourism regulatory issues.

A number of participants believed that the state should facilitate the start up of bed and breakfast operations. The state should recognize b&b’s as another way to increase a small farm’s sustainabil-



ity and to support communities during recession. Government needs to be open to many alternative land uses, such as b&bs, hostels, and retreats. Support for the “economy-conscious” traveler was also advocated. Ag-tourism provides visitors with alternatives to the typically more expensive hotels and resorts.

Specific ways of advocating for more government support included:

- send this report to the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA)
- speak up to the HTA
- use Diane Quitiquit, the Big Island’s representative on the HTA (and current Chairperson)
- letters to the editor

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

COMMUNITY support was recognized as essential to the development of ag-tourism. Community support is needed to get government support for b&bs and ag-tourism operations. One participant called government support “the oiling of the squeaky wheel.” Collaboration with community boards was suggested.

Established ag-tourism operations need to be sensitive to neighbor relations by being considerate. One example of sensitivity was setting the hours of operation to minimize neighbor complaints.

Community-based organizations can also be instrumental in promoting new ag-tourism activities. One such organization is the Puna-based Na Po`e Hoa `Aina (contact John Olson and Ginny Astem: 965-9869). This group has compiled a directory of products available in Puna and is looking for land for people to lease for farming and valued-added activities.

INCLUDE NATIVE HAWAIIAN CULTURE

THE INVOLVEMENT of native Hawaiian groups in ag-tourism was advocated and considered an important cultural tie. We need an attitude of including, not offending, native Hawaiians. Some specific recommendations:

- getting advice from and partnering with native Hawaiian groups
- the Kohala area has some activities in this area of cooperation
- the Hawaiian Civic Club is opening a lo`i. Do something with them.

PROMOTING AG-TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

THERE WAS BROAD interest in forming an organization to move ag-tourism along. This organization could be for the Big

Island or could be state-wide. One person thought we needed both an umbrella organization and a community-based organization. One person stated that we should “go from this (brain storming) to forming an association.” Questions were raised as to how to structure the organization and who would manage it. A co-op or an association were proposed as organizational alternatives. One person suggested having monthly meetings and paying someone to do the organizing. It was noted that the organization would need money to get going and keep going. Co-op or association dues could provide some base funding.



The Kona Farmers' Alliance (contact Yano Hall, 328-2147) which meets at 6:30 p.m. on the last Thursday of each month, was proposed as an entity that might be the organizer. Another resource mentioned was the Rocky Mountain Institute (. They have an economic renewal program which has produced a workbook.

Cooperatives were proposed for promoting products and to compete, by bargaining collectively for better freight rates, insurance, etc. It was proposed that a co-op for ag-tourism be formed, after which government could be brought into the picture. Reference was made to a USDA-funded study in New England on the feasibility of coops for agricultural tourism. The study concluded that co-ops can perform some of the tasks required but not all.

Several participants discussed the need for grants to carry out projects. One source is the EPA Sustainable Development Challenge grants program. Communities. It was suggested that someone search the internet for grants available.

In addition to organizing to promote and coordinate the development of ag-tourism, some specific suggestions were made. One was to develop a farm and ranch tourism development handout emphasizing the importance of design. Another need for cooperation is to link up operations that do not have highway frontage.

The Internet was recognized as an important resource for:

- organizing
- communicating with each other in planning
- promoting the industry
- dealing with government
- interacting with the local community
- accessing informational resources
- serving as a clearing house (for tourists too)

It was suggested that we use the web site developed for this conference to keep in touch.

