

Featured Farmer: Chuck, Lily and Pueo Boerner ONO Organic Farms, Kipahulu, Maui

Area under production: approximately 65 acres

Years farming in Hawai'i: We have been farming in Kipahulu for 41 years.

Crops grown, products/services: Volume-wise, most of our production is banana, papaya and avocado, but many crops bring income in to the farm, including: star fruit, bilimbi, star apple, cacao, pineapples, lychee, dragon fruit, longan, pohole fern, rambutan, sour sop, jackfruit, mango, tamarind, lilikoi, cinnamon, white sapote, chico sapote, guava, red and white mountain apple, breadfruit, peanut butter fruit, egg fruit, red coffee trees, durian, pink and white pommelo, chocolate persimmon, abiu, vi fruit, cherimoya, strawberry papaya, jaboticaba, surinam cherry, and many more!! Chuck also provides consultation services and farmers market in Hana seven days a week.

Number of employees and/or family members involved: Four salaried family members, one hourly full-time employee and four interns (WWOOFers).



Production System

Fertility Management: For inputs we mostly use composted manures and some NOP compliant high nutrient fertilizers like Sustane, or a locally produced rendered meat product. We also rely heavily on leaf litter from large over-story fruit trees to return organic matter to the soil.

Pest management: We use several strategies to minimize pest and disease incidence and spread. Intercropping/species diversity is key, as is sanitation. Sanitation means that we remove diseased, infested or damaged fruit, branches, leaves etc. when we see them. For several crops we pick fruit early and finish ripening in boxes to minimize chances of damage by insects, disease and birds. We mow, mulch and plant densely to control weeds.

Strategies for controlling costs: We use on-farm resources for mulching and use fertilizer as efficiently as possible.

Production planning: Because we grow perennial crops, our production schedule is fairly predictable, but we are always ready to plant to replace dead or damaged trees.

What is your marketing strategy?

Pricing: We grow the highest quality product on the market, and stand by them so we can command top tier prices for our products.

Promotion: We will sponsor events, we have roadside stands, and we offer farm tours to promote our products. We also maintain a website. Because of the unique quality of our produce and farm, we are sometimes featured in magazine and news stories.

Places you sell your products: Whole Foods, Foodland, farmers markets and roadside stands. We sell coffee, cosmetics and value-added food items online. We sell some product on-farm during tours.

Could you give us an idea of the future for you?

We will continue to develop markets for new crops, and we plan to expand the tour portion of our operation.

What does sustainability mean to you and how to you plan to ensure sustainability for your operation? Health and wealth are interconnected. Ensuring the health of our farm and family has always been our first priority, which is the foundation of the profitability that will allow us to pass the farm to our kids.

Explain how the next generation successfully integrated into the farm, how it happened or didn't happen? We have always shared profits from the farm with our children in exchange for their help on the farm, which fostered a feeling that the farm is both a source of Health and Wealth.

Challenges you expect to face in the next 5-10 years: We expect an increase in competition from other certified organic growers, so we will continue to strive for leadership in quality and diversity.

New products or services you are planning: Cacao nibs and alternative crops including coffee and tea.





ONO Organic Farms

Maui's Organic Family Farm



HOT TIP from ONO Organic Farms

Diversity is key! Diversity in crop species and varieties within species create a solid foundation for a resilient, efficient and profitable farming system.

Ono Organic Farms Website

<http://www.onofarms.com/>



Mahalo nui loa to Chuck, Lily and Pueo Boerner for this interview.

Photos: Ted Radovich

