

**Central Oahu Sustainable Communities Plan Review**  
**Agricultural Discussion Group**  
**Notes from August 7, 2008 meeting**

**Present:**

Alfredo Lee	Agribusiness Development Corporation
Daniel S. Nakasone	Wahiawa Community and Business Association
Earl Yamamoto	Hawaii Department of Agriculture
Keanu Young	Councilmember Dela Cruz office
Mark Takemoto	Dole/Castle & Cooke
Mike Austin	Syngenta
Stevie Whalen	HARC
Wayne K. Ogasawara	Mililani Ag Park, LLC
Kathy Sokugawa	DPP
Bob Stanfield	DPP
Hal Senter	DPP
John Kirkpatrick	Belt Collins
Noa Ching	Belt Collins

**Summary of first meeting:**

General Consensus is that the vision and policies of the Central Oahu SCP are still valid, and the urban growth boundaries outlined in the plan still work. Concerns noted were how to actually implement policies and vision, how to sustain Ag with rising fuel prices and slumping economy, how to deal with Gentleman's estates, and how to help Kunia Village and other similar communities' transition from plantation villages, to a more modern community while retaining their history and culture.

**Reviewing notes from first meeting:**

On Galbraith Lands. Statement that seed companies set prices is misleading; landlords do. If a seed company purchases land for a certain price, other landowners take note of the price and try to sell their land at a similar price, which is too expensive for traditional Ag farmers.

Developers and speculators aren't buying land. Speculators wouldn't sit on land and wouldn't buy it unless it was cheap. At the prices seed companies are willing to purchase land, the numbers don't add up for others.

However, speculators make inquiries and ultimately drive prices up. Most speculators want to purchase land because of the possibility of subdividing land into gentleman's estates.

Ultimately, land prices are set by the owner.

## **Agricultural Tourism Concepts**

Central Oahu SCP says nothing about agricultural tourism.

The idea of Ag tourism has been looked at by many Ag companies. Ag in Hawaii is hard to compete with other producers in the mainland and abroad on pure commodity. Ag tourism could put additional value towards local products, and give local farmers an opportunity to sell their products without competing against outside companies. Ag tourism has the potential to promote exportation of Hawaii's farm products one person at a time.

Example: Along Kamehameha Highway from Dole Plantation to Haleiwa Town. Dole was thinking to populate that stretch of land with small plots of different types of farms geared for tourists. Thinks that since the location is close to Dole Plantations, it will receive a steady amount of visitors based on Dole Plantation name. Thinks that Ag tourism has potential, but isn't sure about CO. Maybe Kunia area could be a good place for Ag tourism.

Before making any changes to the CO GP, we need to have a clear definition of what would be considered "Ag Tourism." There are several different types of Ag tourism models.

- Dole plantation – Individual tourists drive out in their own cars and do their own thing.
- People take shuttle tours through hotels or travel agencies and are bused around to different farms/attractions.
- "Localvore" practice of eating only locally grown food means that some urban dwellers visit or have ties to farms. Simplest and most traditional version of this: pick-your-own fields.

Another idea for Kunia uses education as the initial focus. A guided tour of the farm area would start with the plant laboratories where they research and grow seeds. The tour would then move onto the actual farm sites and through part of the plantation village, ending up with the final product.

Not sure people would go to see non-exotic Ag. Who would go out to see a tomato farmer on his tractor? An example an "exotic" type of farm is the lavender farm in Maui. This small farm grows lavender and makes products such as soaps, perfume, and incense. The farm generates a significant amount of its total revenue from individuals who visit the farm and end up buying one of their products made from lavender. To sell lavender alone is almost impossible since places in Europe subsidize lavender farms. But this farm is able to remain in business because of individual sales from visitors.

If you could link top hotels or restaurants to small farms, or be able for tourists to have meals onsite prepared with fresh ingredients from the farm by chefs perhaps similar to the North Shore Cattle Company.

The responsibility to set up the infrastructure for Ag tourism should be on the tourism side. The actual farmers should not have to spend much money or time on the details.

### **Issues with Ag Tourism:**

Implementing Ag tourism can become expensive since often roads, infrastructure and storefronts must be built. Besides costs, no small farmer would have the time to plan this out and get permits.

A possible “Ag tourist trap” would need multiple farms to keep people interested, which means collaboration with different types of farmers and companies, which would require a great deal of planning. Again, who has the time to do this?

Another issue with farmers is the City and County restriction on Ag lands. What type of permits or requirements would farmers need to get to open up storefronts or restaurants on their property? Not many farmers have money floating around to hire consultants to obtain these permits or the time to try and apply for them themselves.

If storefronts and restaurants are allowed on Ag lands, how much of the tourism side is acceptable before the land is not considered Ag? Example: Kualoa Ranch is considered Ag land, but they actually do very little with Ag. Tourism should not be the main goal/focus of any Ag designated land. It is a concern that Ag lands might eventually cater to mass tourism. An extreme example would be Knotts Berry Farms. We would need to have a “bright line” between what is considered Ag and what would be considered commercial.

After thinking about the challenges of Ag tourism, participants suggest that the Kunia Agricultural Park would be a great place for Ag tourism – small holdings, where tenants could work together to display crops. However, Ag Parks are governed by detailed rules that focus on agricultural production, and do not address Ag tourism.

There is a limitation of what the CO SCP review can do on the issue of Ag Tourism. This issue should definitely be noted in the review for further discussion, but some things discussed are out of the scope of the review.

### **Important Agricultural Lands (IAL)**

Introduction: State of Hawaii has long discussed (a) identifying Important Agricultural Lands; (b) protecting them from other uses; and (c) offering incentives for agricultural use. Act 215 of 2005 enjoined the Counties to create maps of IALs, using a series of criteria. The Counties have three years to produce maps, once the state funds the process and has an incentive plan. Recent bill (SB2646) provided the incentives, but no money for the mapping. Once the mapping is done, and landowners have a chance to submit their own proposals for designation of their land, the result goes to the Land Use Commission for review and acceptance.

Implications: Can't rezone IAL from Ag without 2/3 majority of City Council  
Incentives include tax credits and low-interest loans.

Definition of "Map" could be tricky – if it's a metes and bounds description, the job is very onerous.

Questions DPP wants help/input on:

1. The SCP Map as a policy, identifies all the Ag and Preservation land in Central Oahu. It was used as the starting point for the designation of Ag protected areas that was proposed under Mayor Harris. Is that area what we're talking about?
2. If land is not zoned as Ag, should it be in IAL?
3. Once land is identified as IAL, it will probably be a new overlay zoning district. Should it be subject to further zoning constraints, above and beyond that for Ag-2 land – e.g., minimum lot size of 25 acres or more?
4. State law indicates that County expectations for infrastructure on IAL should be "reduced." If this is "reduced from Urban," then existing county standards for Ag-zoned areas should suffice. OK?
5. What do landowners see as government role with regard to IAL – what further steps should be taken by City or State?

Discussion:

One messy point: since landowners have right to opt out if over 50% of their land is identified as IAL, what should be done about records that identify some parcels as "Dole" and others as "Castle & Cooke," or the like – what's "a landowner" for this purpose!

Will IAL affect Ag tourism?

- -Possible, since IAL lands have added regulations.

The point to keep in mind with new regulations and incentives: Will they actually help the farmer run his business?

Is cheap water crucial for IAL?

- It is for agriculture, other than pasturage!
- Not a problem for land served by Waiahole Ditch – big problem for any land depending on pumped water.
- There is a need for renewable energy source to drive water pumps. One possibility might be to set up hydroelectric dams at Wilson Lake. However, the water quality of the lake is not good enough. The water quality is currently at R2 and it needs to be R1 for irrigation and if it is to be used for hydro (since it would go out to sea).

Richard Ha's farm on Big Island has managed to use renewable energy sources to "go off the grid." As gas prices rise, so will electricity.

John handed out cards to ask people for comments on two points. Responses:

*Question: Should the city use the SCP map shown as a basis for identifying IAL in Central Oahu?*

*Responses:*

- Looks ok with me as City's first IAL designations.
- Yes
- Good starting point. Boundaries should be further defined.
- Some of the land is not farmable
- These boundaries meet my approval

*Question: What should be City's takeaway from this discussion -- comments, questions?*

*Responses:*

- Alternative energy sources to support ag.
- Find ways to address ag tourism and find flexibility to address case by case ways to allow more.
- Gentlemen's farm on real ag land.
- Hire an agricultural expert for DPP.
- How and when will the City move the State to appropriate the \$ and get the process completed?
- Planning is a multi-faceted process. IAL lands should be discussed in the full process of community planning. Weigh all needs before designation.
- Set standards for "gentlemen ag lots" in terms of keeping speculators out.
- Speculators/property flipping driving up perceived value of real ag land
- Support "fake farms" legislation in 2009 session.
- Utilize renewable energy to provide water to farms from Wahiawa down to the North Shore.