2nd Annual Hawai'i Food System Summit

December 14 - 15, 2023

Hawai'i is Hungry for Systemic Change.

We are unprepared for natural disasters. Our rates of household food insecurity are higher than the national average. We have grown much too dependent on imported food. We live with unacceptable levels of health inequities in the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community. Sales and land in farms in Hawaii have been trending downward for decades, and agriculture is a small and decreasing share of state GDP.

These conditions must change.

The stark reality of a highly vulnerable, inequitable, and economically underperforming food system has finally catalyzed momentum to create large-scale change in how, and in how well, Hawai'i's people eat.

We must act collectively, with a common vision and policy agenda, to transform our food system. Healthy food systems deliver nutrition, health, and safety; they are efficient enough to deliver affordable food to all and at all times, in a process that is environmentally sustainable, equitable, climate smart, and inclusive.

To get there, regional food system stakeholders need to work collaboratively toward realizing multiple shared goals. **Transforming Hawai'i's Food System Together (THFST)** came into being to help lead a participatory effort to:

- Provide analysis and knowledge products on critical food system issues, solicit stakeholder input and develop an Integrated State Food Policy Framework to inform public policy and investment.
- Convene key stakeholders through an annual Hawai'i Food System Summit, and build statewide capacity through inclusive networks to achieve collective food system change goals through time.
- Create a community-based food system for Hawai'i that is sustainable, resilient, and equitable will fortify our island home for future generations.

Laying the groundwork for transformation

Developing a shared vision for the future of food and agriculture in Hawai‘i starts by conducting research in a number of interconnected areas to understand all the moving parts, identify the pressing challenges and opportunities, and tee up all the elements for building a community-based food system in and for Hawai‘i.

"This initiative is designed to break through existing silos and unite key food system partners to craft a common way forward."

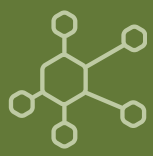
- Albie Miles, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Sustainable Community Food Systems University of Hawai‘i – West Oahu

A series of knowledge products was developed by teams of researchers, practitioners, government and community groups to provide a solid foundation for understanding Hawai‘i’s food system in a comprehensive way and prioritizing actions at the community, county, and state level.

Social Network Analysis

Food systems involve everyone within the various sectors along the chain, including production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste. In addition, our local food systems are strongly influenced by Hawai‘i’s public policies, economics, environment, history and culture. Knowing who the stakeholders are from each of these sectors, learning about how they connect, intersect and where they do not, is a valuable lens for understanding the current process and leveraging a better one.

Data derived from **1,650** individuals and organizations, connected through **3,300+** social relationships



Hawai‘i’s local food system is becoming increasingly collaborative and connected.

Food System Planning Landscape Assessment

To inform food systems planning in Hawai‘i, it is critical to understand what food systems plans and charters exist elsewhere across the country. THFST has created a toolkit that provides a centralized synthesis of 25 state- and city-level food systems plans and charters from across the United States, creating a resource to help food system transformation efforts organize their initiatives and envision change.

Food System Resilience Indicators for Hawai‘i

Hawai‘i's food system faces many challenges, from vulnerability in the imported food supply chain to disruptions from ever-increasing natural disasters. Taking a page from the fields of disaster preparedness to improve this situation, this product outlines food system resilience indicators specifically for Hawai‘i.

Integrated State Food Policy Framework
This product provides a comprehensive approach to addressing the complex and interrelated issues of food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture, rural development, and environmental sustainability and resilience. It aims to provide a framework for coordinated and inclusive action across different agri-food sectors, and to promote healthy, equitable, resilient and sustainable food systems.

Food Systems Mapping
A visual representation of how our food system works can identify key resources and leverage points for collective action. The information that is uncovered—including significant gaps in the existing system—can help to shape where public policy, investments, and action will be most effective and feasible.

The process facilitated by THFST revealed three key areas where small-scale investments could drive substantive change for Hawai'i's food system:

- Capital flows to the local food system,
- Policies for local resilience,
- Local processing, packaging, storage, and distribution.

In creating a food systems map for Hawai'i, over **250 stakeholders** reached consensus:

20-year North Star:
to drive community well-being, economic vibrancy, and ecological resilience

5-10 year Near Star:
to make local food a healthy, accessible and affordable choice for Hawai'i communities

Vulnerability Assessments 1 and 2
Hawai'i is highly dependent on food imports, has a high number of poor and food insecure households, and faces potentially devastating impacts of climate change and severe weather. To ensure the resilience of Hawai'i's food system, it is crucial to conduct Vulnerability Assessments 1 and 2 so that state-level resilience planning efforts take into consideration points of vulnerability that could threaten the current and future food system.

One Vulnerability Assessment examined the impact of sea level rise at the Port of Honolulu to evaluate the potential risks from flooding to critical food import infrastructure through 2050 and 2070.

> ***While the devastating impact of flooding is anticipated decades into the future, there is not much time for planning and rebuilding key port infrastructure and relocating commercial and emergency food storage facilities.***

A second Vulnerability Assessment examined the perceptions of key policymakers, state agency directors, as well as non-governmental and community leaders in Hawai'i around pivotal points of vulnerability to local food security. From a wide range of stakeholders, a picture emerged that is both concerning and hopeful: A dangerously vulnerable food system and a deep commitment to making systemic change.

> ***Building a stronger, more resilient, and sustainable food system—especially in times of crisis and especially for those most at risk—is based on seeing food as a driver of economic recovery and resilience building.***

Engaging Native Hawaiian Farmers

Given the multicultural diversity of Hawai'i, an important outcome of this work is to ensure that it reflects Hawai'i's unique cultural and socioeconomic context and generates increased investment opportunities for local, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food and agricultural systems. Hawai'i's network of indigenous practitioners, farmers, distributors, community leaders, and scholars has been integral to the research and planning process. Centering community engagement around these networks yields valuable knowledge of traditional and contemporary food production practices and offers insight into perceived barriers and viable solutions for advancing an equitable food resilience strategy.

> Drawing on the expertise of Native Hawaiian leaders, scholars, and practitioners leverages their collective capacity to grow and distribute fresh local food in ways that serve all community stakeholders.

Policy Analysis

The intention of integrated food policies is to bring a range of fractured policies (in agriculture, environment, economic development, public health, food security, and resilience) under one roof. An analysis of state food and agriculture policy also attempts to pinpoint any key structural obstacles that could interfere with achieving food systems-related goals for our state.

Institutional Purchasing

By building institutional capacity, it becomes possible to aggregate purchasing commitments by large food service providers for local, sustainable, and fairwage food. A wide range of considerations goes into facilitating the purchasing and procurement of locally produced food including workforce, capital, policy, land use, and public engagement.

"An easily searchable database was created to help people understand the intersection of policy, advocacy, and civic engagement, and provide a springboard for shaping the future of food systems in Hawai'i."

- Noelani Kalipi and Katie Schwind
Authors, THFST Policy Database Tool

Local organizations, including schools in Hawai‘i that adopt the Good Food Purchasing Program, are demonstrating a growing momentum in the use of institutional procurement as a lever for systems change. In order to drive permanent shifts in Hawai‘i’s food system, an emphasis on local purchasing needs to be met with a robust supply chain and leadership that supports agro-ecological values. To date, the City and County of Honolulu has adopted practices and pledged to support local farmers, ranchers, and growers through the O‘ahu Good Food Purchasing Program. Other counties are in the process of following suit.

Engaging Community Partners

From extensive community stakeholder engagement in developing strategies and proposing policy changes, a new shared understanding of Hawai‘i’s food system—its challenges and opportunities—can emerge.

To facilitate broad support and coordination among key government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community groups, it is important to disseminate findings, strategies, and plans as they emerge.

Where do we go from here?

With the knowledge and data accrued, Transforming Hawai‘i's Food System Together has already begun to galvanize support and alignment from Hawai‘i’s food system partners for the Hawai‘i Integrated Food Policy Framework and Food Systems Equity and Resilience Strategy. The collective input and design of these plans anticipates support by all key stakeholders.

Now, more than ever, there is a groundswell of support to redesign and elevate our food and agricultural system.

When local food becomes a healthy, accessible, and affordable choice for all of the people in these islands, we will have achieved a scale of transformation that changes the trajectory of Hawai‘i’s future. If we get food right, we get everything right.

Learn more. Do more.
www.transforminghawaiifoodsystem.org