

Hawaii Retail Grocer

SUMMER 2020

the Magazine of the Hawaii Food Industry Association

We Are Essential

How Hawaii's food industry
has risen to the challenges
of COVID-19.

Inside:

Retailers on the front lines

SNAP and WIC changes

Suppliers step up

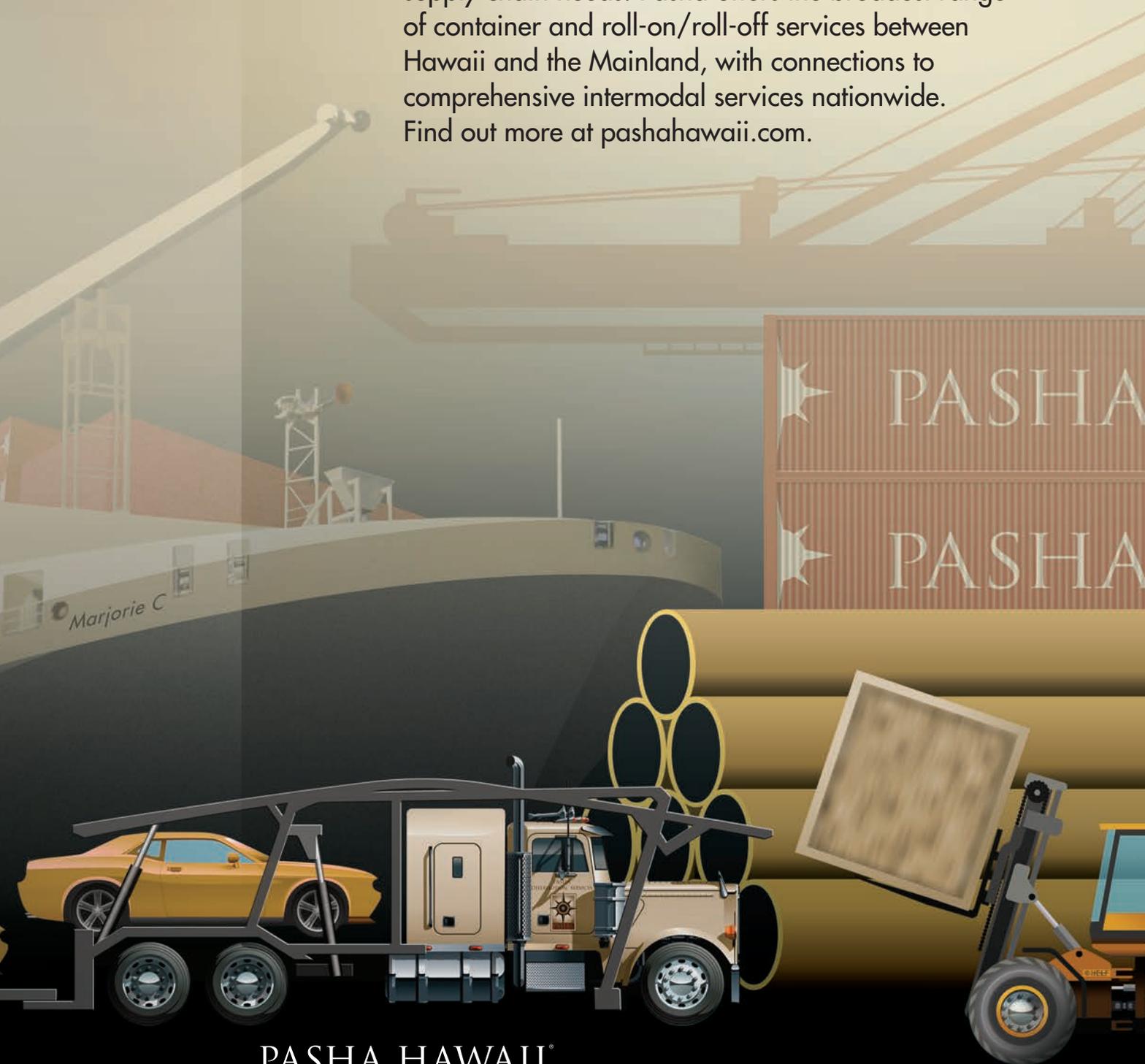
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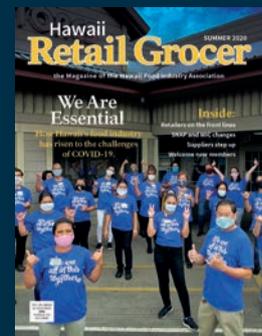
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CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Aloha HFIA Team,

Usually this time of year we're getting ready for Convention, looking over the past legislative session, and planning for the summer tourist season. Of course this year the coronavirus pandemic had other plans. HFIA has made the difficult decisions to cancel the 2020 Convention, the legislative session was halted just after crossover, and we're still waiting for a definitive plan to reopen the state to tourists. Hawaii's economy has been hit by this pandemic in ways that we could not have anticipated and that will take a long time to recover from. We have already lost local businesses, and others continue to struggle. This is one the greatest challenges we've ever faced. As each week passes the COVID-19 pandemic continues to demonstrate

how essential and how amazing our industry is.

The companies that make up this association have met each new obstacle and uncertainty of the pandemic and continue to make sure that our state gets what is needed. HFIA has been a vital source of information to the industry, providing us with updates and resources. The HFIA team has also lived up to the mission of being the voice of Hawaii's food and beverage industry, communicating with national leaders, participating in the state task force, working for our interests at the county level, and reaching out to assure the public that our supply chain is intact.

I know that as this situation improves, our businesses will continue to be there for our community, to help in the ways that we always



have and make unexpected contributions. I've been honored to serve as Chair through these times and I've humbly accepted the request to maintain continuity and stay on until 2021. I look forward to seeing you all as we digitally meet for now, and whenever we're able to get together in person again.

Aloha,
Joe Carter
*VP-GM Coca-Cola
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SNAP AND WIC CHANGES

BY HFIA

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) have both seen very large increases in users as the COVID-19 pandemic has progressed. These higher levels of users are anticipated to continue until the State’s economy can begin to recover more fully. The programs have also undergone some important changes in recent months, some related to COVID-19 and some not.

SNAP Waiver Changes Delayed

The plan to drastically limit the availability of waivers for work and training requirements has been delayed. On March 13 a Federal Judge mandated that the new rule eliminating waivers would not go forward in April. The judge specifically mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic in her ruling. It is likely

that the change will move forward once the pandemic has ended. SNAP rules limit benefits to three months for able bodied adults with no dependents. After that, recipients must be working or in training in order to continue to receive benefits. Up until recently states have been granted broad leeway to give waivers for those who don’t meet the requirements. Some reasons for waivers included living in specific areas with limited job prospects or lack of space in eligible training programs. The rule change would have made it much more difficult for states to grant waivers and forced states to adhere to the three-month rule more strictly. The delay means that for now states can continue to grant waivers for those who do not meet the work requirements but still need to access benefits after three months.

eWIC

Federal requirements mean that the WIC program must change from checks to cards by the end of this year. The rollout has already happened in many stores around the State and will continue this spring and summer. There have been some challenges of getting new systems up and running to accept the cards and manage the change. The De-

partment of Health administers WIC and has distributed material explaining the advantages for both users and vendors. Some of the advantages for retailers:

“With eWIC, the transaction results are known immediately.

- No more check rejections due to:
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 - Missing signature
 - Incorrect item purchases
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- No more delayed payment
- No more price surveys”

Another advantage is that the system rather than cashier will determine what items are eligible for WIC purchase. Stores must accept both WIC checks and eWIC cards during the transition. It will take several months to get everyone switched over to cards. DOH states the last checks will be seen in late July or early August. The last day for vendors to submit checks to Hawaii WIC for appeal is September 15, 2020. For any questions please contact Michael Ellis at michael.ellis@doh.hawaii.gov.

SNAP Online

SNAP Online is up and running in AL, IA, NE, NY, OR and WA. It has also been approved in AZ, CA, DC, FL, ID, KY, MO, NC, TX, and WV. Walmart and Amazon were approved as vendors, with some independents participating in certain states. The process for a new retailer to participate is lengthy—retailers must meet several requirements. State SNAP agencies must apply to FNS in order for any retailers in that State to participate. To encourage States to apply, NGA has created a template letter that retailers can send to their State SNAP agencies. This letter is meant to be personalized by individual retailers and sent to their State SNAP agencies if the State has not yet been approved for SNAP Online participation, as is the case for Hawaii. If you are interested in learning more about the requirements to participate please contact HFIA.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

BY LAUREN ZIRBEL

County

In addition to the many COVID-19 Related Emergency Proclamations made by County Mayors, the County Councils also took some significant legislative action this spring.

Maui

Maui Council passed Bill 52 their plastic foodware ban. The ban is similar to Honolulu's Ordinance 19-30 (Bill 40). It bans single use plastic foodware from being sold or distributed in Maui County. Foodware includes utensils, straws, cups, plates, bowls, lids, and clamshell type containers. It also requires that non-plastic single use foodware be distributed only on request or with the positive response from a customer.

The ban does not apply to pre-packaged food, which means, "food and beverages contained in plastic disposable foodware that has been filled and sealed entirely outside



PHOTO: KEN LUND/FLICKR

There is an exemption for "raw or butchered meats, poultry, seafood, unprepared produce, or eggs." This does not include poke and sashimi since it's provided for consumption

ing process moves forward we will continue to provide details in the Weekly Updates and help members with navigating the implementation process.

Honolulu

Honolulu Council is currently moving Bill 41 to provide property tax relief for those impacted by local, state, and federal emergency proclamations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill would allow businesses that have been forced to close to apply for property tax deferment. HFIA has testified in the support of the measure and noted that all Honolulu businesses have been severely negatively impacted, even those that have been allowed to stay open, and that all need relief and support from the County right now.

Kauai

A Kauai polystyrene foodware ban had passed first reading but was deferred by the Council until July due to COVID-19.

“When session does reconvene, the new economic realities will pose new challenges and shift focus for the legislature and HFIA will adjust accordingly.”

the County or in a manner intended to prevent the food or beverage from having any direct human contact, such as shelf-stable food and beverages: condiment packets, poi bags, musubi wraps, plastic film, chip bags, cookie and cracker wrappers, bread bags, meal kits, ice bags: beverage-related bottles or cartons: packaging for unprepared food: and packaging for wholesale distribution of prepared food, baked goods, and dairy products.”

without further preparation. Food providers can also apply for exemptions in cases where the change would cause financial hardship or there are not suitable alternatives available.

HFIA testified in opposition to this measure and worked to get the amendment inserted to have musubi wraps and poi bags excluded from the ban. We were also able to get the implementation date pushed to January 1, 2022. As the rule mak-

State

The Hawaii State Legislature Re-cessed on March 16, shortly after first crossover. So far, a restart date has not been set. Before the recess HFIA had made good progress on our priority bills. When session does reconvene, the new economic realities will pose new challenges and shift focus for the legislature and HFIA will adjust accordingly.

Helping Working Families

House Bill 2541 makes the state earned income tax credit refundable and permanent. Increases and amends the refundable food/excise tax credit by basing the amount of the credit on a taxpayer's Hawaii earned income and federal adjusted gross income. Increases minimum wage rate to \$11.00 per hour beginning on 1/1/2021, \$12.00 per hour beginning on 1/1/2022, \$12.50 per hour beginning on 1/1/2023, and \$13.00 per hour beginning on 1/1/2024.

HFIA has been commenting on this measure and discussing the need to keep any wage increase to a reasonable level, and implement it over a time frame that will minimize negative impacts on businesses and the economy. Our comments also note the benefits of increasing the food excise tax credit.

Leave

Senate Bill 2491 provides family leave insurance benefits and extends the period of family leave to 16 weeks for businesses that employ one or more employees who meet the hourly qualifications.

HFIA has been testifying in opposition to this measure. Our testimony explains that the recently completed Paid Family Leave Program Impact Study Report looked at 16 Weeks of Leave under a TDI model as the absolute maximum, and recommended that any program be implement-

ed over two years but preferably longer. This bill would take effect in 6 months. The Study estimated that any program would create significant costs for the state. It also lacked some information that is critical to understanding exactly how any program will impact the state and the

economy.

House Bill 2148 Extends Hawaii family leave to include care for employees' grandchildren. Defines "sibling". Amends the definition of "child" to include grandchildren.

HFIA has commented noting the
CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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problems of expanding the leave program in this way.

Tax Credits

Senate Bill 3090 establishes an agricultural productions tax credit. HFIA has been supporting this measure and emphasizing the need to support all Hawaii food production.

Training and Workforce Development and HTDC

HFIA has been supporting a number of bills that would create workforce readiness programs within the Department of Education. As always, we have also been supporting several bills to fund the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation and its pro-

grams, including the Small Business Innovation Research Program, Manufacturing Assistance Program, and Accelerator Program.

Bottles

HFIA opposes SB2720 which would prohibit state agencies from buying beverages in plastic bottles. We also oppose SB2727 which would change the exemption distance between a beverage dealer and redemption center from 2 miles to 1 mile. This would unnecessarily require many more beverage dealers to accept deposit containers in high density areas.

We have been supporting SB2750 which would remove an outdated and unnecessary law that prevents some local water bottling, as well as SB2721 to implement the auditor's recommendations for the deposit beverage container program.

Waste and Litter

HFIA has been glad to support a number of common-sense measures to promote better waste management statewide. HB2407 requires DOH to adopt rules to establish a classification system for composting facilities. SB2051 increases the maximum civil penalty for littering from \$500 to \$1,000. SB2548 appropriates funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources to create and implement a marine debris collection pilot project.

To Be Continued...

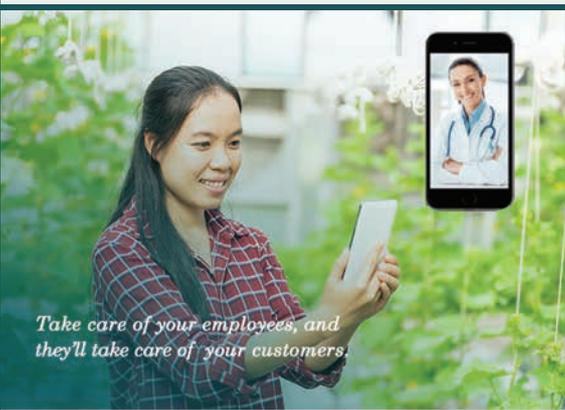
At the current time we do not know when or if the state legislative session will reconvene in 2020. If it does, it is very likely that both the form of the meetings and the topics of discussion will be altered significantly.

HFIA will provide details on all new bills and regulations in our Weekly Update emails. We also encourage all members who are interested to participate in calls with the Government Relations Committee during session.

Feel free to reach out to us at info@HawaiiFood.com with any questions.



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Remembering Herb Tamura

This Spring the HFIA Ohana said goodbye to Herb Tamura, a founding member of our association and an inspirational leader who has shaped the food industry in Hawaii. Herb began his career in the food retail industry as a kid working at his parents' store in Waianae, Tamura Shoten. Throughout his life Herb worked tirelessly to grow the family business and was dedicated to leading from the front.

He espoused values that have become even more meaningful in times like these, dedication to family, grit, hard work, valuing his employees, and giving back to the community. As a founding member of HFIA, Herb was integral in creating an association where industry leaders could learn from each other, communicate, and collaborate for mutual benefit.

Herb and Glenn have built Tamura Enterprises into a local institution, each location an integral part of the fabric of their community. Yet, Herb's influence goes far beyond his own businesses. HFIA and the work we do is a part of his legacy, as are the spirit of hard work, innovation, cooperation, and humility. We will be forever grateful for this guidance and contributions, and we will strive to live up to his example of what a leader in the food industry should be.



NGA UPDATE

BY THE NATIONAL GROCERS ASSOCIATION



Before the onset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, a trip to the grocery store was something most of us took for granted. Now, everything has changed. In the midst of a global pandemic, grocery store operators, their employees and our shoppers are all in this together, using every tool in our toolbox to keep the food supply chain humming.

During this public health crisis, the grocery industry has stepped up to the challenge, overcoming obstacle after obstacle to fulfill its mission of keeping store shelves stocked with the life-sustaining food, beverages, personal care and household products needed by 329 million Americans.

There is no manual for this, so independent grocers have had to rely on their expertise and instincts to come up with new strategies to keep the supply chain running as smoothly as possible and to protect employee and customer health and safety.

During this time, NGA is working with lawmakers on Capitol Hill and in the White House to gain support, relief or assistance that makes it easier for our members to fulfill our mission under difficult circumstances. Below is an update and outlook on critical policy issues to the supermarket industry during this time.

Federal Government COVID-19 Response

As the public health crisis continues to unfold, Congress has passed

three major pieces of legislation to provide assistance to families and the U.S. economy. On March 27, the President signed into law the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Building off of the previously passed \$8.3 billion emergency public health funding and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the CARES Act was a product of bipartisan negotiations between Republican and Democrat leadership and was intended to be a third round of federal government support. The \$2.3 trillion stimulus package provides funds to individuals, businesses, and states, among others, in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Alongside other measures, the bill includes \$500 billion for loans and assistance to companies and state and local governments, \$349 billion in low-interest small business loans, direct cash payments of as much as \$1,200 for individual taxpayers and \$500 per child, and an additional \$600 per week for those receiving unemployment benefits.

Following reports that Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), a new loan initiative included in CARES to help small businesses, had run out of money in mid-April, Congress passed the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act. More commonly known as “Phase 3.5,” the \$484 billion package provides \$321 billion additional funding for PPP – with \$60 billion set aside for loans originating from smaller lenders, an additional \$60 billion for disaster and other emergency loan programs, \$75 billion for

hospitals and other healthcare providers, and \$25 billion to fund additional COVID-19 testing.

House Democrats and the White House now say they want to launch negotiations on a fifth bill that could top more than a trillion dollars, providing states with assistance to plug revenue shortfalls, major infrastructure investments and possibly a second round of direct stimulus payments. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has vowed that nothing will move through the upper chamber before May 4, when Congress is set to return. He has also raised concerns about the mounting federal debt.

At the time of this writing, the Senate planned to return to session the week of May 4, but the House announced it would delay its return. With negotiations still ongoing for this additional relief package, various policy priorities remain on the table for what lawmakers are calling “CARES 2”. From drug pricing and pharmacy reforms, to allowing public sector employers to be eligible for the tax breaks for offering emergency paid leave, questions remain over the size and scope of this next bill. Speaker Pelosi (D-CA) has floated a ‘guaranteed income’ policy for certain individuals who make below a certain threshold. Meanwhile, Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) is focused on shielding healthcare and other businesses from liability regarding COVID-19. The White House has also weighed in on the forthcoming package, with recent statements in support of a second round of direct payments to individuals.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Recipients of SNAP will receive a temporary 40% increase in monthly benefits to provide relief from the pandemic-related economic slowdown. The boost lets families obtaining less than their maximum benefit get the greatest amount per their household size for as long as two months. The extra SNAP money comes as the spread of COVID-19 continues to push the unemployment rate to levels not seen since the Great Depression. School shutdowns are also forcing parents to provide meals for their children that would otherwise have been provided by their school. "USDA is providing a 40% increase in SNAP benefits to ensure that low-income individuals have enough food to feed themselves and their families during this national emergency," Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said in a statement.

Supporting Frontline Workers

Supermarket employees are working hard every day to ensure Americans have access to food during this unprecedented emergency. Introduced in April by Congressman Bill Huizenga (MI-02), the Helping Emergency Responders Overcome Emergency Situations (HEROES) Act will provide frontline workers with well-deserved tax relief for their commitment to serving their communities during this pandemic.

This proposal provides income tax relief for those working in a duty station that is part of DHS-designated critical infrastructure up to the first \$8,900 per month of pay, as well as payroll tax relief for these individuals up to the first \$50,000 of their income to ensure a tax benefit for workers who do not currently owe income tax.

Working each day during this emergency presents extraordinary challenges and independent grocery workers are rising to the occasion.

For more information on these issues and how you can make your voice heard in Washington, DC, visit www.grocerstakeaction.org.

MEMBER UPDATE



Hawaii energy offering discounts on lighting and appliances to help you prepare for the COVID-19 recovery period

We're all in the business of being smart with our money, and with energy being so expensive in Hawai'i, we can all benefit from smarter energy use management. In the midst of this public health and economic crisis, many businesses are using the downtime to make improvements to their lighting, refrigerators and kitchen equipment.

Hawai'i Energy, a valued member of HFIA since December 2019, is now offering significant discounts on lighting and up to \$4,800 per appliance for kitchen equipment to prepare small businesses and restaurants for the recovery period. For more information on the increased incentives, visit <https://hawaiienergy.com/for-businesses>.

Hawai'i Energy helps island families and businesses make smart energy choices and rewards energy decisions that will allow our state to reach 100% clean energy faster and cheaper.

Quick Tips to Maximize Your \$\$ Grocers are especially experiencing greater demand and managing operating costs has become even more critical. Here are some quick

tips to maximize your dollars:

- Ensuring refrigerators and freezers are closed and sealed properly
- Turning off or unplugging hot bar appliances that are not currently in use
- Setting thermostats one or two degrees higher than normal and dimming or turning off lights outside of operating hours
- When you're ready to upgrade to equipment that will reward you with longer-term energy savings, better productivity, and even improved safety Hawai'i Energy will be ready to assist you.

If your business has lighting, HVAC or ENERGY STAR appliances, or other energy efficiency upgrades scheduled or in progress, this work is considered essential and contractors are permitted to continue under the City & County of Honolulu's stay-at-home order.

The Hawai'i Energy team has taken steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community by working remotely and scaling back on programs where person-to-person interaction is necessary.



Eric Dill of
Ko'olau Distillery

PHOTO COURTESY THE HARRIS AGENCY

HFIA MEMBERS GO ABOVE AND BEYOND

BY ALEXIS CHAPMAN

More than just feeding Hawaii and providing jobs, our HFIA members have always gone above and beyond to give back to their communities. When the coronavirus pandemic hit, HFIA members did what they always do and found some extraordinary and creative ways to help.

As the need for food assistance has continued to grow, countless HFIA members have been working with foodbanks and other community organizations to help make sure that people have enough to eat. A notable contribution came from Pasha Hawaii and their sister company Hawaii Stevedores, between them they contributed \$120,000 in support of Hawaii Community Foundation's Hawaii Resilience Fund and Hawaii Foodbank. Matson Inc. pledged \$500,000 worth

of shipping services and donations to help food banks in the areas they serve, including Hawaii.

Small businesses in Hawaii have been hit awfully hard by the loss of tourist revenue, forced closures, and other measures. When the CARES Act was passed the SBA disaster loans offered some relief for small businesses, but preparing for any type of loan can be a daunting prospect, especially for already stressed small businesses with no accounting department. One of HFIA's newest members, Pacific Accounting and Business Services, created a program to offer small businesses free financial "checkups" to help them prepare for SBA loans.

Of course, some of the biggest and most urgent needs during the crisis have been for various types of health

supplies. Here again HFIA members stepped up. Eric Dill and his partners at Ko'olau Distillery had never thought of making anything besides spirits before, but in March when they heard that a distiller in Portland had been making hand sanitizer it only took them a week to decide that they could do it too. They set up a crowd funding campaign to buy bottles and other supplies and got to work. Surprisingly, one of the biggest challenges came not from production but from creating a label that gave all the legally required information for the new product. Ko'olau turned for help to another HFIA member, the Harris Agency. Eric sent the Harris Agency the specs for the labels in the evening, and by the following morning the team at Harris had supplied eight options to label the sanitizer. The finished prod-



PHOTO COURTESY PASHA HAWAII

uct made with the help of crowd funding donations has been given away to health care facilities around the state. Ko'olau is now working on a separate run of sanitizer funded by the partners. This new batch can be sold to government agencies and others who need it but can't legally take a dona-

tion. Their amazing efforts have not only helped supply some much needed hand sanitizer, they've also led to the creation of a Distillers Guild here on Oahu. By sharing information and sources for supplies, the collaboration has allowed other local distillers to start making sanitizer as well.

Another HFIA beverage member also found important ways to contribute. Coca-Cola North America and its system of local bottlers around the county, including Odom here in Hawaii, have continued to work to bring hundreds of beverages from soft drinks to bottled water to customers throughout the crisis. They've also donated hundreds of thousands of beverages, put their logistics expertise to work coordinating drop offs and delivery of essential supplies like hand sanitizer, and donated plastic for the manufacture of face shields for first responders.

So much about the COVID-19 pandemic has been unexpected and so much remains uncertain, but our amazing food and beverage community in Hawaii continues to rise to the occasion and find new ways to go above and beyond. While we don't know how this will shape our industry in the months to come one thing is clear, HFIA members' creativity, hard work, and dedication to their communities have never been more evident, or more important.

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NEW MEMBERS



Atlas Insurance Agency

URL: atlasinsurance.com

About: For Atlas Insurance Agency, Hawaii is home. It's where Atlas started in 1929 - a small, independent agency that promised world-class coverage right here in the islands. Since then, Atlas has grown into the largest and oldest insurance agency in Hawaii. Today, Atlas employs more than 120 world-class experts in business insurance, employee benefits, construction, surety, risk control and claims management.

Reason for joining: Atlas joined HFIA to help members protect their business from unforeseen risks that may impact their bottom line. Whether through providing counsel on the latest trends or navigating complex risk management programs, Atlas helps steer businesses in the right direction.



HAWAII GAS
THE CLEAN ENERGY COMPANY

Hawaii Gas

URL: www.hawaiigas.com

About: Since 1904 Hawaii Gas has been the only franchised gas utility in the State of Hawaii. Since this time, we have installed gas pipeline infrastructure, built bulk storage facilities with access to the harbor and developed a highly skilled workforce on every major island to serve the people of Hawaii. Gas is now a critical part of our fuel mix in Hawaii providing a cleaner and lower cost alternative for residential, commercial and industrial customers.



Hawaii Energy

URL: hawaiienergy.com/about

About: Hawaii Energy helps island families and businesses make smart energy

choices. We encourage and reward energy decisions that will allow our state to reach 100% clean energy faster and cheaper. To date, we have saved the people of Hawaii more than a billion dollars off their energy bills. Let Hawaii Energy be your trusted energy advisor to help save you money and protect what makes Hawaii so special.



Ka'iulani Spices LLC

URL: kaispices.com

About: Kai Spices imports organically grown whole spices, adds Hawaii-sourced sea salt and raw cane sugar along with aromatics such as garlic and ginger and blends them according to recipes Cowell has developed. All 7 blends of Ka'iulani Organic Spices are ordered as needed, roasted, ground and packaged in her cottage workshop, working in small batches so that essential oils are preserved, and true flavors emerge. This small-batch method maintains the highest level of freshness and a standard unseen and realized by larger spice companies. It is the promise of quality which founder Ka'iulani Cowell brings to every bottle of her Organic Spices sold. As Kai always says, "no flavor without the labor!" Now go and spice up your life.

Reason for joining: "The reason I wanted to join HFIA was because they do work with legislators to help pass laws that are good for the food industry. It is important to have a body of people who looks after us. When the legislature and county officials try to pass laws that are not good for the food industry, I see that HFIA goes in and helps to change it. I think it's very important to have HFIA because of that." - Kai Cowell



Long's Drug's CVS

URL: cvs.com

About: At CVS Health, we share a clear purpose: helping people on their path

to better health. Through our health services, plans and community pharmacists, we're pioneering a bold new approach to total health. Making quality care more affordable, accessible, simple and seamless, to not only help people get well, but help them stay well in body, mind and spirit.

Reason for joining: Longs Drugs decided to join HFIA because it provides our Merchant Team and Internal Business Partners a platform to connect with local businesses, stay informed with the merchant community, government laws and regulatory developments so we can better service our customers. Being connected with HFIA and its members allows us to better support, align and develop our market strategies through product innovation, retail supply chain changes and infrastructure trends while contributing and addressing emerging issues that may impact retail industry and our local communities.



Mahi Pono, LLC

URL: mahipono.com

About: Mahi Pono is a Maui farming company working to transform 41,000 acres of vacant former sugar cane land into a thriving hub of diversified agriculture. Our name, Mahi Pono, means "to farm or cultivate morally and properly". At Mahi Pono, we are committed to practicing sustainable agriculture, to growing food for local consumption, to responsible use of the natural resources entrusted to us, and to providing high quality agricultural employment for generations to come.



Maui Fruit Jewels

URL: maifruitjewels.com

About: Maui Fruit Jewels manufactures award-winning innovative confections using Hawaii-grown fruits. Husband and wife team Chris and Lin ter Horst, who started the company after moving to Maui in 2012, have been able to com-

bine their skills and background in confectionery product development, manufacturing, and international business to successfully develop three product lines - Exotic Fruit Jellies, Hawaii Fruit Paste, and Shortbread with Hawaii Fruits. In 2020 Maui Fruit Jewels is launching a new line of fruit purees processed from Hawaii-grown fruits for both the food service industry and retailers in Hawaii.



Pacific Accounting & Business Services, Inc.

URL: pacificabs.com

About: Eventually, all organizations reach a point when bookkeeping cannot be handled without adding an experienced employee to payroll. But with an additional employee comes more paperwork, training, regulation, and other

headaches. Pacific Accounting & Business Services (PABS) provides high-quality accounting, finance, and back office services to businesses across the U.S., Australia and beyond. Our team of experienced accounting professionals support small and medium sized businesses in a wide range of industries including Retail, Restaurant, Manufacturing, Non-Profit and Construction. Our clients recognize us as dependable, quality conscious partners in their business, helping them to realize their goals with our innovative solutions and operational excellence.

Reason for joining: PABS joined the HFIA to meet new organizations here on Oahu. Many owners are so busy with their businesses that their bookkeeping and finances suffer. PABS wants to help them to get their finances back in order and to offer internal controls to protect their business as well.

'Ulu Mana, Inc.

URL: ulumanahawaii.com



About: 'Ulu Mana offers unique, simple, high quality, and delicious snacks made from Hawaiian Grown 'Ulu (breadfruit). Our mission is to bring 'ulu into the spotlight as a widely recognized food source. Every 'Ulu is hand-picked from local farmers, minimally processed, and packaged by us here on Oahu to ensure we are delivering the highest quality and freshest products we can make. By utilizing this sustainable crop, we are contributing to the health of Hawaii's local farmers, community, and economy. We strive to offer unique, high quality, simple, and delicious products made from 'ulu.

Reason for joining: Ulu Mana joined HFIA to participate in special events that HFIA produces, such as the "pop up Made in Hawaii Festival," and others. Through these events we can network and make new connections with the community.

Dr. Pepper & Cream Soda

Accelerate Growth Through Flavor Innovation! DR PEPPER CREAM SODA will satisfy consumer's desires for variety while capturing additional occasions for the Dr. Pepper TM AND THE CATEGORY

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LAUNCHING IN BOTH REGULAR AND DIET

The advertisement features the Dr. Pepper & Cream Soda logo, a Diet Dr. Pepper & Cream Soda logo, and images of 12-pack boxes and individual cans for both regular and diet versions. The background is a dark red color with white and gold accents.

Rise Resiliently

Hawaii Foodbank's efforts to overcome food barriers during COVID-19

BY HAWAII FOODBANK



PHOTO COURTESY HAWAII FOODBANK

The current health crisis continues to test the resiliency of our entire Hawaii 'ohana. As COVID-19's impact on Hawaii intensifies daily, Hawaii Foodbank now faces the unprecedented challenge of providing food to those affected by the pandemic while continuing to meet the needs of one in eight Hawaii residents already struggling with hunger. At Hawaii Foodbank, we understand we must do everything we can to respond to these outcomes, as well as ensure our regular food assistance network remains intact.

Since Hawaii's statewide "stay at home" order, demand for food assistance has increased by nearly 60 percent – and that number continues to rise. On Oahu and Kauai, Hawaii Foodbank regularly distributes nearly 1.1 million pounds of food every month. With the added circumstances surrounding COVID-19, we distributed more than 1.5 million pounds of food in March and approximately 2.1 million pounds in April. In May, Hawaii Foodbank projects it will serve more than a quarter million residents on Oahu and Kauai.

Hawaii's rising unemployment rate

has resulted in many residents having little or no buffer against the sudden loss in income. As schools and other public spaces remain closed, many of the support mechanisms people usually rely on are now on hold. Restaurants and hotels have shut down across Hawaii, and some grocery stores – which ordinarily donate unsold inventory – have little to give because their shelves are bare.

With food donations drastically down, food banks nationwide are purchasing more food than ever before to meet the growing need.

In the spring, Hawaii Foodbank typically spends \$33,000 on monthly food purchases. In the first four weeks of COVID-19 response alone, we spent more than \$715,000 on emergency food and supplies. In order to continue providing food to those in need, Hawaii Foodbank projects it will purchase more than \$600,000 of food in April and nearly \$700,000 in May.

We recognize that increased capacity and innovative solutions are paramount to maintaining the flow of food to people in need. We've been working hard to pivot our operations to serve communities more efficiently while also adhering to newly established

public safety guidelines.

Throughout, we recognize the importance of not only getting our communities past COVID-19 but also emerging stronger thereafter.

To help contribute to long-term food sustainability in Hawaii, we've established innovative partnerships with Hawaii Farm Bureau and the Hawaii Longline Association. These initiatives will assist the local economy and also provide high-quality, nutritious food to hungry keiki, kūpuna and families. Hawaii Foodbank has committed to purchase \$250,000 in local produce, beef, and fish that will be distributed through our food assistance programs. The goal is to set the stage for long-lasting food security across every facet of our community.

While COVID-19 has brought on changes to how we all operate daily, it has also shone a spotlight on Hawaii's warmth and aloha. Our community inspires us to rise resiliently and continue providing safe food access to the most vulnerable members of our 'ohana – during COVID-19 and beyond.

For more information, visit www.HawaiiFoodbank.org.

A STRONG AGRICULTURE ECONOMY IS A RESILIENT ONE.

*Mahalo to Hawai'i's hard-working farmers
and food producers for sustaining our local
communities through challenging times*



*Committed to a more self-sufficient
and resilient Hawai'i*

We invest, educate and advocate in support of locally produced food, renewable energy, clean transportation, and better management of freshwater and waste

Read more about our commitment to sustainability at ulupono.com



PHOTO COURTESY KTA

Doubling up local food bucks statewide

BY JESSE COOKE AND KEITH DEMELLO

Nutrition among Hawaii families is as important as ever, as grocers and food chains grapple with the long-term impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on their operations and the tremendous disruption to the islands' food distribution network.

Programs such as DA BUX Double

Up Food Bucks provide a lifeline to local families by helping them bring home healthy local produce while supporting local farmers. The program is a pilot initiative administered by The Food Basket, Hawaii island's food bank, in partnership with the Hawaii Good Food Alliance, that leverages the federal food stamps program known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Double Up Food Bucks lit-

erally doubles the value of benefits from SNAP spent on local produce at participating retail grocers.

It's a triple-win because the program empowers low-income consumers to eat more healthy, supports local farmers with gaining new customers, and directs more local food dollars here in Hawaii. In 2018, a U.S. Department of Agriculture-funded study reported that about 50 percent of children across the nation have been on food stamps at some point by the age of 20.

"It's huge – on a lot of fronts – to the local economy and to the farmers," said Kristin Frost Albrecht, executive director of The Food Basket. "Low income households don't always have access to nutritious food, and through the DA BUX Double Up Food Bucks, many have access to locally grown nutritious food.

"It also improves food security on the island and the whole state. One local farmer added four green houses as a result of program."

Expanding statewide

The Double Up Food Bucks program is about to go statewide. Times Supermarkets has joined longstanding partner KTA Super Stores as the second major supermarket to sign onto the program to increase access to fresh, locally sourced food.

Approached prior to the coronavirus crisis, Times expedited onboarding and is working through Point-of-Sale software compatibility to ensure a seamless process for customers. Times anticipates rolling out the program in May.

"It is very important for Times to partner with The Food Basket and support a program that will both encourage SNAP beneficiaries make healthier lifestyle choices while simultaneously promoting sustainability for the local Hawaii farming industry," Chris Borden, president of Times Supermarkets. "This initiative addresses two growing concerns that our community and lawmakers here in Hawaii have been struggling with for a very long time."

Over the last two years on Hawaii Island, KTA helped pioneer the program, with the current system repre-

How to use your DA BUX Access Card

- STEP 1** Shop for qualifying Hawai'i grown fruits and vegetables at any KTA Super Stores, Times Super Markets, Big Save Markets, or Shima's Super Market. Look for the DA BUX logo on or near the price signage. Visit DABUX.org to keep up to date on participating grocery stores.
- STEP 2** At checkout, give your DA BUX Access Card and SNAP-EBT card to the cashier BEFORE swiping your SNAP-EBT card to pay.
- STEP 3** After ringing up all your items, the cashier scans your DA BUX Access Card to take 50% off qualifying produce purchases (maximum \$20 discount per transaction, per day; the discount can only be applied at the time of your qualifying purchase).
- STEP 4** Swipe your SNAP-EBT card to pay for your purchases (a minimum of 1 cent of SNAP-EBT must be used to receive discount, any other payment methods can be used to pay for the remaining balance).

Logos for KTA, Times Supermarkets, Big Save, and Shima's Super Market are shown. Contact info: Questions? Please call The Food Basket at 808-437-3044 or visit DABUX.org

senting its second iteration.

“We are both privileged and honored to have been afforded the opportunity to participate in The Food Basket’s ‘DA BUX’ (Double Up Food Bucks) program,” said Toby Taniguchi, KTA president and chief operating officer. “We are extremely happy to be able to assist The Food Basket in supporting local agriculture, while at the same time, making healthy fruits and vegetables more readily available to DA BUX participants!”

What’s next for the program?

SNAP works by providing assistance to eligible, low-income individuals and families via an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card that can be used at grocery stores, farmers’ markets, and others. The Food Basket is working with the Hawaii Department of Human Services to issue to SNAP households their own Double Up Food Bucks card, complete with a universal code for scanning, to be presented at checkout along with their EBT card. This new feature will streamline in-store processes and has the potential to reduce unnecessary physical contact involved in transactions — a positive since aspects of social distancing may become part of the new norm.

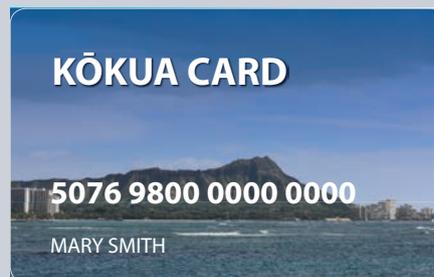
Coordinators are also hoping to expand the program to farmers’ markets. “As a food bank, we believe a

strong ag-based economy is a resilient one,” Albrecht said. “There’s a huge growing group of young farmers. Many get their start at farmers’ markets and stands, and a lot move on to selling directly to grocers.”

This year for the first time, participating sites include farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSAs), grocery stores, and mobile markets participating through the following organizations:

- Kokua Kalihi Valley Health Clinic
- Malama Kauai
- MAO Organic Farms
- Sustainable Molokai
- The Food Basket – Hawaii Island’s Food Bank
- Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center

In future years, the plan is to expand to additional markets, with a focus on serving areas of high need across all islands.



Sustaining the program

The Double Up Food Bucks program received vital funding with last year’s passage of Senate Bill 390, signed into law as Act 153 of 2019, appropriating \$50,000 per year for the next two years.

The Food Basket, which received a federal grant in support of the program, also received a commitment for two \$25,000 grants, one in 2019 and the other in 2020, provided through the Ulupono Fund at the Hawaii Community Foundation. Since then, as a result of the increased need surrounding the coronavirus crisis, an additional \$50,000 has been committed from the fund.

The Double Up Food Bucks program is still in the early implementation stages, but it is expanding

thanks to the foundational support of KTA and now expansion statewide with Times. The program could drive as much as \$4 million in additional local produce purchases in the state of Hawaii next year.

“The State of Hawaii Department of Human Services continues to serve residents throughout the COVID-19 pandemic without interruption, and we are honored to be a supporter of the Double Up Food Bucks program,” Scott Nakasone, assistant administrator of the department’s Benefit, Employment Support Services Division. “Now more than ever, it is so important to stay healthy and eat healthy, and this program helps individuals and families to have more access to fresh produce and nutritious food options.”

What can institutions do to help?

“They can buy locally grown product,” Albrecht explained. “They have amazing buying power, for instance with what we’re seeing with the Aina Pono Farm-to-School program feeding students with locally grown food. We know the more we can educate the public about local produce, such as ulu, the more we will improve health and develop tastes for local items.”

Retail grocers or statewide chains interested in this worthy program may contact the program through its website at doubleuphawaii.org.

Individuals may also directly donate to the DA BUX Double Up Food Bucks program through The Food Basket’s Good Food Fund for Everyone Fund. All monies go toward the program, providing additional nutrition. For more information, visit www.hawaiifoodbasket.org.

To learn more about Department of Human Services programs and benefits, please visit humanservices.hawaii.gov.

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Part of the Ulupono Initiative team, Jesse Cooke is vice president of investments and analytics and Keith DeMello is director of communications and community.



PHOTO COURTESY TAMURA SUPER MARKET

The Frontlines of Food

Retailers Keep Hawaii Fed During the Crisis

BY ALEXIS CHAPMAN

At HFIA we often say, “our members take great pride in feeding our state.” The job of keeping our state fed has never been more challenging, or more important. As the world has come to appreciate how essential food workers and the food industry are, food retailers have stood on the front lines. Our member retailers have had to quickly adapt to new consumer demands, new government regulations

and safety recommendations, all of which have changed multiple times in a matter of weeks. They’ve found and created imaginative solutions, and worked to create the best ways to keep Hawaii fed while keeping their employees, customers, and communities safe. As our State’s unemployment rates have climbed to the highest in the nation, with more than 1 in 3 Hawaii residents out of work, our food industry has also continued to provide jobs and proven what an

essential economic driver we are in Hawaii.

Retailers Become Safety Leaders

In the early stages of the pandemic, information on the best ways to stop the spread seemed to be coming from all sides at once, with little agreement. New recommendations and regulations were coming from Federal sources, the State, and the Counties, often with just a few hours warning. Retail-

ers have stepped up not only to ensure compliance but to set the standards for safety. During a Honolulu Council hearing for a resolution urging stores to enact strict measures to slow the spread of the virus, Council Member Ron Menor praised Foodland for taking the initiative to put a policy in place requiring masks before it was mandated by the state.

In late March and early April Times created new floor markings to help customers maintain social distancing and ended the use of reusable bags to help protect employees and customers. Many retailers like KTA took initiative early to designate special kapuna only shopping hours. Safeway created a range of “contact free” procedures for their team. Tamura Enterprises found ways to keep cashiers safer by installing shields. Throughout the crisis, all our members have shown an overwhelming willingness to do whatever they can to keep their customers and employees safe.

Gratitude

Convenience stores like 7-Eleven Hawaii play a unique role in the neighborhoods they serve, for many people these are the only food stores they can access without having to take



PHOTO COURTESY 7-ELEVEN HAWAII

public transportation. In order to retain a sense of normalcy 7-Eleven Hawaii committed to staying open 24/7 throughout the crisis. They worked with their vendor partners to overcome challenges and ensure they had enough cleaning supplies and face coverings. Through it all their actions have been guided by a great sense of gratitude. Edna Ching, Marketing Manager, explained how that sentiment moves them forward.

Opposite page: Tamura Super Market masked stocker; **Above:** 7-Eleven cashiers; **Below:** The staff at Down to Earth.

“We appreciate and value our Store Teams for being on the frontline for 7-Eleven Hawaii. They have shown great strength in their commitment to serving our customers, many of whom are like family. It is a rewarding feeling to be able to serve our



PHOTO COURTESY DOWN TO EARTH



PHOTO COURTESY KTA

Above: KTA pharmacy pick up

customers. They have expressed deep gratitude that our stores remain open for them. We also want to reciprocate that appreciation. Their continued support and trust in 7-Eleven Hawaii is what keeps us going.”

Meeting Customer Needs

When the pandemic hit, Down to Earth realized very quickly that it would require innovative and adaptive strategies. By combining new tech solutions like online ordering, with the power of their dedicated staff, they’ve helped ensure that their customers can get what

they need in the safest way possible. Alison Riggs shared a story that illustrates how Down to Earth’s essential workers have met the challenge.

“Last month, when our Down to Earth stores had just begun our personal shopper option in response to COVID-19, a kupuna customer at our Kailua store picked up some grocery and deli foods at the curbside. One bag of groceries was inadvertently missed and the kupuna customer drove home without it. One of our team members realized the error right away and decided to just jump in his car to deliver the missed bag. The customer was delighted and really blown away by the

Down to Earth team member’s quick thinking and compassion so she didn’t have to take the exposure risk of going out again.”

In it Together

In many ways the community on Molokai is like one big family. And when the coronavirus came to the island they acted like a family and took care of each other. When an employee of Friendly Market tested positive for COVID-19, owner Kit Okimoto worked to ensure that all his employees had access to testing. He also made the difficult decision to close for two weeks to sanitize and not take any chances with the spreading the virus. During that time Kit communicated and worked with his main “competitor” on Molokai, Kevin Misaki, to help make sure that Misaki’s grocery store had what they needed to provide for the community. The team at Misaki’s stepped up to the added responsibility, working double shifts to fulfill orders and Kevin himself took to the sidewalk to provide hand sanitizer to customers waiting in line. Friendly Market has reopened, and though the virus remains a concern on Molokai Kevin remarked that, “everyone is starting to feel a little better, because we’re all family, it’s nice to know that.”

Embracing Change

For Zippy’s the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every single area of their operations. They’ve moved staff around, retrained people in new jobs, closed dining rooms, started contactless delivery, adjusted the menu, implemented new cleaning procedures and mask protocols, and even offered some staple goods for sale along with meals to help customers minimize trips out of the house. Paul Yokota, President of FCH Enterprises, found that rather than fighting and fearing change they needed to be willing to try new things and keep adapting. “What’s made me hopeful is that our staff has been newly energized by all the changes we’re making at a rapid-fire pace.” Zippy’s commitment to trying new ideas has enabled them to keep serving their customers, keep employing their staff,



PHOTO COURTESY ZIPPY'S

Above: Zippy's contactless pickup

and keep being an essential economic driver in the state. Paul emphasized some things that have stayed the same, "What did not change is our commitment to using local products when viable. We have continued our purchase of thousands of pounds of local ground beef each week, bread from local providers, island blend coffee, and eggs from local farms. We still believe that the best way for our community to recover is to ensure that local companies help each other out first."

Learning from the Challenges

At the onset of the pandemic many customers feared that their local stores would close, which spurred some panic buying and hoarding. Having grocery stores designated as essential businesses helped assuage fears of closure, and our member businesses and HFIA continue to work together to assure the public that stores will not run out of essential items. As the situation moves forward businesses and consumers are adjusting to the new normal. Like all businesses Tamura Super Market had to react to the fluid situation that the pandemic created. At first they found it hard to source certain items, but by April they were able to provide consistent stocks of PPE for staff and customers. While everyone looks forward to a more open economy there is also a realization that certain aspects of the pandemic will not go away any time soon, and the knowledge that this is not the

last challenge our members will face. Charlie Gustafson, Vice President of Operations at Tamura Super Market and Vice Chair of HFIA observed, "I think some hard lessons were learned by everyone in this ongoing crisis, however, we will adapt and change for the better. I believe as a company we're coming out of this situation much more prepared to handle a future event like this."

Our member retailers have always been integral parts of their communities, and during this time they have been truly vital. Restaurants, bakeries, convenience stores, and grocers, from the smallest single outlet to our biggest member chain, these businesses and their employees have stood on the front lines of the fight to keep Hawaii fed. We have always known that our members are essential, and we know that when this virus is long gone these businesses will still be here working hard to keep their communities and our state fed, healthy, employed, connected, and strong.



Keeping the Supply Chain Strong

BY ALEXIS CHAPMAN



PHOTO COURTESY PASHA HAWAII

By most estimates Hawaii imports over 90% of the food consumed in the state. With 1.4 million residents and about 200,000 tourists at any given time, getting enough food to these remote islands to keep the state fed is a challenge in the best of times. It takes a lot of planning and very coordinated hard work. HFIA's supplier members are experts and have always made sure Hawaii has what we need, even during disasters of the past. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented obstacles. Beau Oshiro Vice President, Division Manager at C&S Wholesale Grocers explained, "When you have a hurricane or a flood it's contained here. But this pandemic is affecting everyone and everywhere, which has also changed the landscape of how we do business." The global markets that supply the world have changed quickly and dramatically in the past weeks our supplier members have adapted and continue to maintain a strong supply chain.

Keeping Shelves Stocked

Different segments of the food industry have different supply chains. Restaurants, grocery stores, and institutional food buyers like schools and hospitals buy different types of products from different places. COVID-19 hit them all in different ways that continue to change as the pandemic progresses. One of first and most drastic impacts was panic buying of certain items in early and mid-March. A supply chain that relies on shipping most goods thousands of miles by boat is not easily adapted to sudden shelf stripping, but our suppliers managed to make changes that minimized empty shelves, and meant that Hawaii consumers faced fewer supply interruptions than in some markets on the mainland. Pasha Hawaii changed scheduled and had employees working around the clock to ensure that the supply chain to and from the islands was uninterrupted. C&S Wholesale Grocers works with multiple suppliers and manufactur-

ers to bring goods to Hawaii. Making sure that goods are fairly distributed has been a top priority and C&S has worked with their partners at different ends of the supply chain to enact allotments so that everyone has a chance to get what they need.

Empty Tables

Prior the onset of the pandemic restaurants in Hawaii were reporting record sales and revenue, then overnight many were forced to close. Those that have been able to remain open, or to reopen, are only able to offer takeout and are missing vital tourist revenue. For suppliers this has meant that an important customer base virtually dried up, and it happened so fast that large amounts of food destined for restaurants was already en route when restaurants were ordered to close.

Suppliers had to adapt rapidly to survive. Y. Hata & Co., Limited created a strategy of COVID-19 Pivots, which included expanded social media presence and new initiatives. Unyong Nakata, Enterprise Director of

Marketing at Y. Hata explained some of what their COVID-19 Pivot entails, “We launched a drive-through model called ChefZone Curbside where people can drive up, order food bundles and other products, pay, and safely be on their way – all with limited or no contact. Another new program is called Superette to GO! where we deliver food bundles to neighborhoods or organizations through partnerships with Kamehameha Schools and the Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association.” Y. Hata recently launched their online store at www.chefzone.com to further provide safe and convenient solutions for food purchase.

Taking Care of Their Own

Now that the initial spike in grocery buying has subsided, drastically reduced demand is setting in for all Hawaii businesses, this necessitates a reduced work force for many companies including suppliers. At C&S

Wholesale Grocers Beau Oshiro worked to enact furloughs instead of layoffs so that as many people as possible could retain their health benefits.

At Hawaii Foodservice Alliance they realized that while their staff are still working hard many of their family members have lost jobs. Chad Buck, HFA President explained, “This typically means that there is one less paycheck to help pay the household and food bills. To help address this, we have set up weekly food giveaways for our team members. Each member can take home rice, eggs, milk, bread, elbow macaroni, and other staple

items. The goal here is to help equip each team member to provide for their family’s needs.”

Looking Ahead

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed so much about how our state does business, including the business of getting food. While the crisis may seem interminable it will eventually end, and the state will have to find a way to move forward and decide what we learn for these challenges. The companies that keep our state supplied with food and other essential items have shown remarkable fortitude and adaptability in continuing to

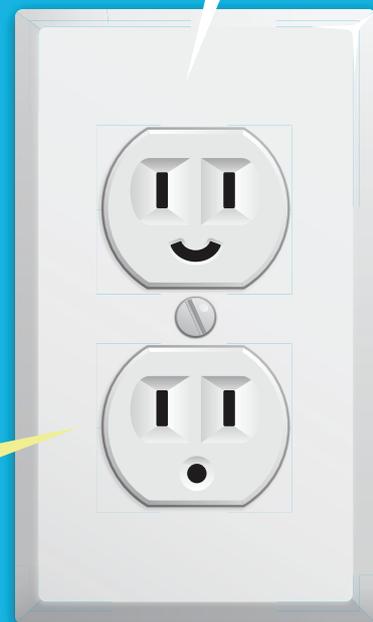
do their work throughout the pandemic. Our industry, our state, and our leaders will have the opportunity to carry the lessons from COVID-19 forward to continue to make our supply chain even stronger for whatever the future holds.



PHOTO C&S WHOLESALE GROCERS

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Farmer, non-profit alliances have taken root

Now they need our help to grow

BY JESSE COOKE AND
KEITH DEMELLO

By the end of March, as our state was beginning to truly feel the severe and direct impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, the Hawaii Department of Agriculture estimated that Hawaii farmers had already lost 50% of their market, largely because of sudden shutdowns of the hotel and restaurant industries.

Based on available data from 2017, farmers of vegetables, melons and potatoes generated \$85 million in revenue in the islands. If we assume half of those sales were to hotel and restaurant markets, those farmers are experiencing losses of \$800,000 per week.

Local cattle producers reported 2017 sales of \$34 million. Their losses could be even greater due to the majority of sales being calves exported to the U.S. Mainland, which experienced a major disruption when cattle shipments were canceled due to the pandemic.

If this crisis has taught us one thing, it's that reliance on just-in-time delivery and importing 90% of our food can lead to widespread hunger. In the case of the coronavirus pandemic, this gamble has left our state, like many other parts of the world, facing a second curve to "flatten" – that of food insecurity.

Adding to the challenge were skyrocketing unemployment rates and intensifying fears.

Starting in April, food banks and other non-profits began to experience significantly diminished funds and donations from their usual sources — not to mention other challenges unique to these times, such as having to outbid other food banks and grocers across the country due to demand for long shelf-life goods and consumer hoarding.

But despite these examples of devastating financial losses and uncertainty, it was inspiring to see

local food growers and producers throughout Hawaii step up to support struggling families.

Local farmers, ranchers, food banks, and service non-profits joined together to feed Hawaii families on an immense scale. New connections, relationships and networks were formed in response to disrupted food supply networks.

We at Ulupono Initiative have been long-time advocates for increasing local food production for Hawaii. In response to the crisis, we expedited grant support through our Ulupono Fund at the Hawaii Community Foundation to help the Hawaii Farm Bureau Foundation support our island farmers, along with non-profit organizations that purchase food from those farmers. We extend our gratitude to others who joined us in providing — and continuing to provide — critical infusions of funds to support ag production and distribu-



PHOTOS COURTESY ULUPONO INITIATIVE

tion when most needed. The result is not only helping during the crisis and recovery, but it increases long-term food security and resilience in Hawaii.

The following are just a few examples of the great work happening throughout our community.

The **Aloha Harvest** was established in 1999 to rescue quality food that's donated and deliver it free of charge to social service agencies feeding hungry people in Hawaii. It partnered in March with Chef Hui, a network of chefs and restaurant industry workers, and Pacific Gateway Center to get meals to keiki, kupuna and families in need. Farmers who rely on consistent demand from the food industry were faced with having to throw away fields of perishable produce that now have no buyers (This echoed similar instances outside of Hawaii, like milk dumping). Initially, its efforts focused on getting volunteers to glean these fields and deliver produce to recipient agencies. By April, grant support helped the organization launch the second phase consisting of buying excess produce from farmers and sending the ingredients where they'll be used to prepare meals for the hungry.

Hawaii Foodbank forged a new and, hopefully, long-lasting relationship with the Hawaii Farm Bureau. Grant funds enabled Hawaii Foodbank to expand staff resources

to manage purchasing, inventory and procurement of food products from local farmers. In a typical month, Hawaii Foodbank purchases roughly \$33,000 in food. Over a four-week period during the crisis, it made \$640,000 in purchases to keep up with spiking demand. Its first order with the Farm Bureau consisted of 5,000 pounds of local produce (bok choy, sweet potato, long beans, squash and papaya). The second order grew to 10,000 pounds (papaya, bananas, watercress, long beans, avocado, taro, orange/tangerines, sweet potato, cucumber and eggplant).

On Oahu's west side, the **Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center** likewise saw a significant increase in need during the pandemic. In response to the shutdown of schools by the Hawaii Department of Education, the center began a keiki emergency feeding program due to the urgent need in the Waianae community. The center applied grant funds toward providing freshly prepared meals to families in need. By mid-April, the health center had served 32,800 meals (20% of meals include local ingredients), distributed 23,000 pounds of local produce, and another 100,000 pounds of shelf-stable canned foods.

On Hawaii Island, **The Food Basket** experienced canceled or reduced orders for food imports with long order lead time — some

up to three weeks out. Grant support and donations helped ramp up its DA BUX Double Up Food Bucks program that doubles the value of benefits from the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) spent on local produce at participating retail grocers. By working with the Hawaii Good Food Alliance and the Hawaii Department of Human Services, the pilot program empowers low-income consumers to eat healthy food, helps local farmers sustain their operations, and promotes more local food production in Hawaii. The Food Basket distributed 500,000 pounds of food (75,000 pounds local produce) in March, which is three times the normal volume, with 70% of clients having never used a food bank before. It also formed a partnership with restaurants for the ready-to-eat frozen meals distributed at Ohana drops, including local produce to help keep both restaurants and food growers afloat. This included tens of thousands of pounds of ulu (breadfruit, steamed and frozen) matched in pounds by sweet potato (steamed and frozen).

These and more local organizations have done great work, but the immediate need remains. Farmers and non-profits are carrying a heavy load, struggling to feed those our local and state governments are unable to reach. They need our help now in response to this crisis — and to make Hawaii more resilient against the next one.

Please join us in donating to these worthy organizations.

Aloha Harvest
alohaharvest.org

Hawaii Foodbank
www.hawaiifoodbank.org

The Food Basket, Hawaii Island's Food Bank
www.hawaiifoodbasket.org

Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center
www.wcchc.com

THE LAST WORD

BY LAUREN ZIRBEL

During this time of year, I'm usually in conference committee dealing with the final versions of bills at the legislature, working long hours, looking forward to session concluding and celebrating with all of you at our annual convention at Aulani. COVID-19 made other plans for all of us.

In January, most in our industry were showing positive growth and on very solid ground. As I write this on April 26th we are in a very different position. Many of our members are struggling to survive. Especially our small local manufacturers. It's heartbreaking to see that some have

“In the meantime, we have to learn to survive in the “new normal.” Social distancing, sanitization and PPE requirements are likely here to stay until a vaccine is developed.”

already gone out of business with no plans to return. Many of our convenience stores are struggling due to lack of traffic, and any business located in a tourism area is devastated. Our large suppliers that also supplied hotels and restaurants have seen a 40-60% decrease in sales as a result of the closure of many of these businesses. Furloughs and layoffs have become the new normal. Businesses are looking for new markets to move their products as we have

lost a large portion of our business with foodservice and tourism on the ropes. We simply do not know when the economy will re-open. It's a very challenging time.

Even more troubling is the suffering of people in Hawaii. We currently have the highest unemployment in the nation at 37%. Hunger is on the rise. The Hawaii Foodbank has seen an unprecedented increase in demand. Drive-up events distributing free food sponsored by some of our members experienced long lines of people in need, reminiscent of the Great Depression. Everyone is worried about survival. There are no easy policy decisions to be made.

Through my participation in the House Select Committee on COVID-19 Economic and Financial Preparedness, we are working on a framework to reopen the economy. These plans center largely around ramping up testing, tracing, and quarantine. Virus testing relative to new case volume, serological testing, and contact tracing will inform decisions, resource allocation, and outbreak resolution. With clear guidance, expectations, and legal protection we can all move forward together.

In the meantime, we have to learn to survive in the “new normal.” Social distancing, sanitization and PPE requirements are likely here to stay until a vaccine is developed.

Like many of you, HFIA has to look at how we change and evolve to meet our member's needs in this “new normal.” We are working to inform you of the sometimes daily changes in regulations and rules relating to COVID-19 in our member update emails. We have set up a number of virtual meetings to help you communicate with government leaders, stay connected with the challenges retailers and suppliers are facing, and be informed about best practices. Our last virtual meeting with Lieutenant Governor Josh Green and Congressman Ed Case was highly successful with 60 food industry CEO's and managers calling in to share the challenges they



are facing with our government leaders. A huge MAHALO to Joe Carter, Paul Kosasa, Chris Borden, Mike Mita, Kit Okimoto and others for communicating their challenges and recommendations. We are so grateful to have government leaders that support and listen to us about the unique obstacles this crisis poses for the food industry. The call was very productive and provided a sense of community and solidarity that we are all looking for right now.

We are working with various sponsors and partners to build an online Made in Hawaii Festival Marketplace. Our goal is to provide an attractive venue we can heavily promote to draw consumers to local manufacturers who are really struggling right now. Made in Hawaii Festival's tremendous success over the years is a testament to the hard work of our team creating an exciting and compelling story that consumers are attracted to. We know that with the right messaging and media support we can provide the same service to Hawaii manufacturers online. We continue to work with our generous sponsors and partners to develop this awesome new platform. We look forward to helping our vendors survive these challenging times by drawing consumers, as we have always done, to support Made in Hawaii products.

If we all stick together, we can survive this crisis and come back stronger than ever! Sending love and aloha to you and your 'ohana. Please stay safe and well.



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