

# HAWAI'I FOOD INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

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HAWAI'I'S FEDERAL  
QUARANTINE

FINANCIAL UPDATE

HFIA CONVENTION  
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TALKING STORY WITH HFIA'S NEW CHAIR

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## HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

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(Above) Pekuna Hong and her children appreciate the bounty of sustainable foods Hawai'i's farms have to offer.





## CHAIR'S MESSAGE

### Aloha HFIA Ohana!

I want to start off by saying thank you to Kit Okimoto, my Vice Chair. Unfortunately, during my year as Chair I had to step away for a time for health reasons, Kit stepped up and took over my chair duties when I needed him. At a time when I was dealing with a lot it was so helpful to not have to worry about what would happen with HFIA, because I knew I had such a trusted colleague in place to handle things.

Truly my appreciation for HFIA and what the membership means has grown so much this year. On paper we are co-workers, associates, and even competitors, but when we face challenges we come together as friends and family. I am so grateful for all the support that our HFIA members have shown this year in so many ways. Thank you all and especially to my whole wonderful team at

C&S Wholesale Grocers and Hansen. Trisha Kishida and Rahn Ogino I don't know what I would do without you!

This experience and my time as chair has made me hopeful for the future. I know that our industry and our state face so many challenges at the moment. National and international economic upheaval can hit Hawai'i hard. But I know that we will always work together as an industry to feed the people of our state, and as an Association to support each other as we do that.

It's been an honor to serve as your chair this year. I've had so many great experiences, from opening the 30th Annual Made in Hawai'i Festival, to working with the amazing Social committee on HFIA events, following our priority legislation on things like SNAP as it moved through the legislature, and I'm so looking forward to celebrating with you all at our 2025 Convention!



Mahalo!

Maile Miyashiro  
HFIA Chairman  
Senior Director  
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From left to right: Lauren Zirbel, Derek Kurisu, Senator Tim Richards, Representative Kristin Kahaloo, Senator Gregor Ilagan, Senate President Ronald Kouchi, Alexis Chapman, Jayson Watts, Kit Okimoto.



# LEGISLATIVE TALK STORY

BY ALEXIS CHAPMAN

This year HFIA's Legislative Talk Story began after the 2025 Legislative Session had started which provided us a unique opportunity to discuss active legislation with the lawmakers in attendance. We had Derek Kurisu of KTA Super Stores once again provided his expertise as our moderator. The panel included, Senate President Donald Kouchi; Senator Tim Richards, Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and the Environment; Representative Gregor Ilagan, Chair of the House Committee on Economic Development and Technology; Representative Kristin Kahaloo, Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems; Jayson Watts, Director of Environmental Health and Safety, Mahi Pono and HFIA Secretary; and Kit Okimoto, COO, Okimoto Corp., and HFIA Vice Chair.

Derek opened the discussion talking about the importance of HFIA, the Association's role in advocating for and connecting the companies that feed Hawai'i, and the hard work our member companies do in ensuring that food is available, affordable, and safe. He then opened the floor for each panelist to talk about their food related pri-

orities and concerns for the 2025 Legislative Session.

Senate President Kouchi discussed the importance of increasing local food production and opportunities for growth such as increased local purchasing by the Department of Education (DOE). He also talked about the need for a balanced approach and understanding the full impacts for legislation, for instance how fireworks inspections could potentially impact neighbor island food deliveries.

Senator Richards began, "I look at almost every piece of legislation with an agricultural lens." He drew on his agricultural expertise to lay out some rough numbers that can help understand Hawai'i's food Systems. In the state there are about 1.4 million people, each eats 5lbs of food a day or about 1 ton of food a year. This adds up to 3 billion pounds of food a year statewide, plus about 25% for tourists. We are about 80% self-sufficient for tomatoes and cucumber. This equates to about 1% of national production of cucumbers. About 6% of the beef, 4% of the pork, and about 5% of eggs and poultry consumed in the state are grown in the

state. This means there is huge potential for growth, especially in terms of value-added production. When it comes to where to start, Senator Richards advocates for starting everywhere all at once. He believes in addressing workforce housing, farm to school, farm to table, food systems and agricultural infrastructure, agricultural water systems, agricultural crime, and more simultaneously in order to make progress.

Representative Ilagan worked with HFIA to author a measure which he introduced that would lower the General Excise Tax (GET) on groceries by half a percent. He discussed the importance of this measure in order to gather data on food taxes. He also talked about the importance of making food more affordable for families who are unable to consistently afford basic necessities, like food, even though family members are working. The acronym ALICE is often used to describe families in this situation and stands for Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed. Rep Ilagan also talked about what he is looking at and learning in his first year as Chair of a committee that includes not only economic development



but also technology. Examples included controlled environment agriculture, and the camelina plant which can be turned into aviation fuel. He also touched on one of HFIA's other legislative priorities which is fixing the permitting process in order to enable business development and growth.

Kit agreed with Rep Ilagan on the potential positive impact of removing the GET from groceries to make food more affordable. He helped draw some connections between the challenges that businesses face and how that can impact food prices. Things like minimum wage increases can obviously drive up costs, but so can insurance rate hikes. Like many of our local grocers Kit's family and his stores are deeply rooted in the communities they serve. Agricultural crimes have had tragic impacts on these communities and need to be addressed. He discussed how lack of air service to Molokai is making life more difficult for residents there where Okimoto Corp's Friendly Market is one of just two grocery stores.

Jayson thanked the lawmakers for the work they're doing to support agriculture in Hawai'i and our state's food systems. He talked specifically about the work that Senate President Kouichi has been doing to show that farm to school can work, and lead to less food waste. Jayson and Senator Richards

were both part of a delegation of Hawai'i Agricultural Leaders who visited Washington DC in 2024 to advocate for support for Hawai'i agriculture at the United States Department of Agriculture. Jayson talked about the importance of this type of Federal advocacy for our local food sector. He voiced his appreciation for Representative Ilagan in facilitating public discussion of removing the GET from groceries, which can often be a complicated and contentious topic.

Rep Kahaloa joined us immediately after voting on several pieces of agriculture legislation in the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs including some related to stopping agricultural crimes. She reiterated the importance of supporting local agriculture. She cited programs like Farm to Families and talked about biosecurity, "It's not just a Hawai'i Island issue, it's a State issue." She talked about the large volume and scope of agricultural related bills being heard this year including some related to labeling of local agricultural products like ahi and makaki tea and agriculture infrastructure.

Derek helped to facilitate some additional conversation and on several of the topics brought up by the panel. He helped draw connections between the wide range of agriculture and food topics discussed and find some commonalities, such as taking a broad

approach and working together to solve the problems that are facing our local agricultural sector, food systems, and food businesses.

The panel also fielded some questions from the audience. In response to What do we know about how much regulatory changes at the Fed level are going to impact state?" The general consensus is that the impacts would be negative but the full scope could not be known yet. Both houses were taking measures to stay as informed and prepared as possible.

On a positive note, when asked "How can HFIA continue to effectively advocate for our industry and our members?" The legislators encouraged us to continue to share industry expertise, reach out legislators, and be a voice for the industry. Senate President Kouichi in particular shared a message of endurance, and told us simply, "Don't give up, if you're factual and have quality of information keep going."

This is certainly a message we will carry as we look at the successes we've had in the 2025 legislative session, and look ahead to the future.

We'd like to thank our moderator, and all our panelists and attendees, we look forward to continuing to make progress together. 🌿

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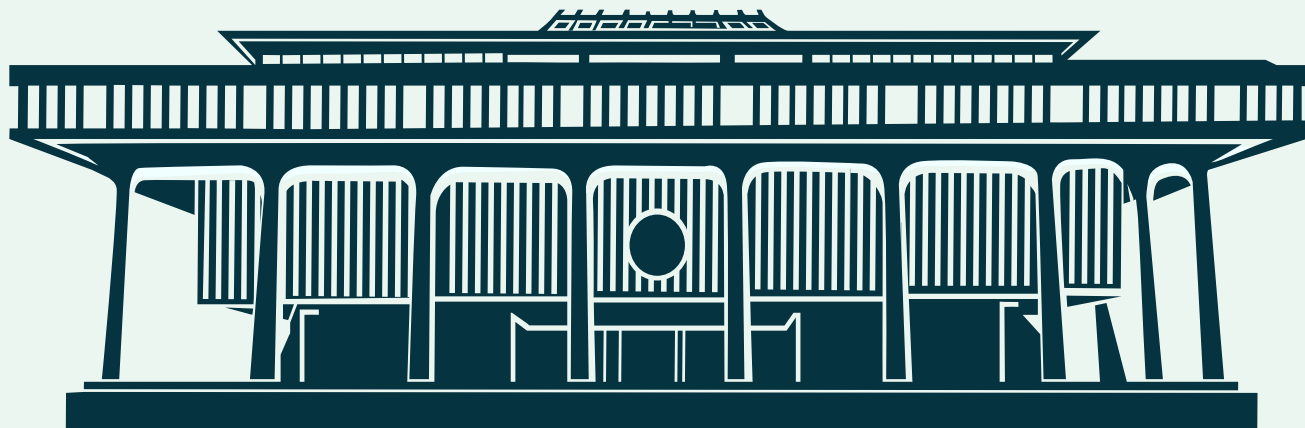


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## HFIA ADVOCATES AGAINST CHALLENGES AMID FEDERAL FUNDING CUTS

BY LAUREN ZIRBEL

**T**he 2025 Hawaii State Legislative Session has concluded.

All measures are either dead or have passed and will be sent to the Governor for signature. This session presented a number of challenges.

Due to Federal funding cuts and other economic uncertainties it was difficult to secure funding for certain programs, and the Legislature continues to be highly resistant to decreasing the tax burden on Hawaii businesses and consumers.

However, HFIA was able to successfully advocate for measures in our key areas of support.

We also provided opposition testimony and comments to help our legislators see potential negative consequences of certain bills, and several potentially damaging measures did not pass.

In addition to the measures noted below the State Budget HB300 also passed and included funding for a number of programs that HFIA supports including, Hawaii's food banks, and the Hawaii Technology Development Center (HTDC) Manufacturing Assistance program for \$1 million.

While our measures to exempt grocery sales from the General Excise Tax (GET) did not pass, we did form a new alliance with several union organizations who also championed this initiative. We look forward to working with them on this in the future and we know that their high level of legislative engagement and people power will be important to eventually making progress on this issue.

We are also pleased to report that two of our top priority bills to secure state funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Passed. With looming Federal funding cuts to SNAP we believe now more than ever it's vital to ensure that the State is supporting the program. These measures are necessary to make improvements to the administration

of SNAP and help make sure that as many eligible Hawaii residents as possible are able to access the program. SNAP is vital not just for the nutrition support it provides to food insecure families, but also as a means to bring Federal funds into Hawaii's food systems.

Another important measure that HFIA advocated for to help reduce food insecurity is SB1300 which expands free school meal coverage to students whose family income is not more than three hundred per cent of the federal poverty level.

Additional information on HFIA's priority bills is below. We also strongly encourage all members to review the full legislative tracker at the link below. If you have questions please reach out to alexis.chapman@hawaiiifood.com

### PRIORITY SUPPORT

#### Food Security and Affordability

SB690 - RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. Appropriates funds to the Department of Human Services to enhance access to and participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, including establishing additional positions.

HB1099 - MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES. Provides an emergency appropriation for fifty per cent of the penalty Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, expands free school meal coverage to students who currently qualify for reduced-price lunch.

SB1300 - RELATING TO SCHOOL MEALS. Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, expands free school meal coverage to students whose family income is not more than three hundred per cent of the federal poverty level. Appropriates funds. assessed by the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service to be reinvested in the continued development of a new eligibility system that will assist in reducing the

State's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program payment error rate, which, if successful, may result in the State not being required to pay the remaining fifty per cent of the penalty. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded.

#### Local Food Production and Business Development

HB774 - RELATING TO VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS. Establishes a food and product innovation network within the Agribusiness Development Corporation. Appropriates funds to the Department of Health to assist with implementation.

HB650 - RELATING TO SEA SALT PRODUCTS. Appropriates funds to the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism for providing education and support to local businesses regarding the United States Food and Drug Administration's guidance on colored sea salt.

#### Workforce Development

HB430 - RELATING TO INTERNSHIPS. Permits the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to enter into contracts with eligible employers or registered apprenticeship programs in the private sector to provide on-the-job training to eligible interns. Establishes a state internship and workforce development program. Requires the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to collaborate with the Department of Human Resources Development for placement of interns in state executive branch departments, agencies, and programs. Provides that the State shall be the responsible employer for purposes of workers' compensation coverage for students or recent graduates in the on-the-job-training work experience program, subject to certain limitations. Appropriates funds.

#### Permitting

SB66 - RELATING TO HOUSING. Establishes procedures and requirements for sin-





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gle-family and multi-family housing project applicants to apply for an expedited permit, including requirements for completeness of expedited permit applications, duties of licensed professionals and the counties during construction, and applications for owner-builder exemptions. Takes effect 7/1/2026. Sunsets 6/30/2031.

**HB1406 - RELATING TO GOVERNMENT PROCEDURES.** Establishes the Simplifying Permitting for Enhanced Economic Development (SPEED) Task Force to identify actions taken, challenges encountered, and legislative measures necessary to facilitate, expedite, and coordinate state and intergovernmental development permit processes. Appropriates funds.

#### **Sustainability**

**SB1186 - RELATING TO SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS.** Establishes the Statewide Interagency Food Systems Coordination Team and the Interagency Food Systems Working Group within the Agribusiness Development Corporation. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

#### **OPPOSED**

##### **Passed**

**HB1369 - RELATING TO TAXATION.** Amends and repeals certain exemptions under the general excise tax and use tax laws.

##### **Did Not Pass**

**HB202 -** To increase unemployment insurance fund payments.

**HB108 and SB976 -** To allow direct shipment of alcohol.

**HB786, SB724, and SB1067 -** to repeal exemptions for beverage dealers from the requirement to operate redemption centers.

**SB184 -** To increase the deposit container amount to 10 cents.

#### **COMMENTED**

##### **Passed**

**HB750 - RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT.** Requires the Department of Health to conduct a statewide needs assessment to determine what will be needed to reduce waste generation, increase reuse, improve recycling collection services, and expand local processing of materials through an extended producer responsibility program for packaging materials and paper products. Establishes an advisory council to review the draft needs assessment and propose recommendations throughout the assessment process. Requires the Department of Health to hold a public hearing on the draft needs assessment and complete and submit the needs assessment to the Legislature by 12/31/2027. Appropriates funds.

**HB496 - RELATING TO MĀMAKI TEA.** Prohibits the use of certain words and mislead-



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ing Hawaiian imagery, place names, and motifs on the label of a consumer package that contains or includes tea or dried leaves from the plant *Pipturus albidus*, unless 100 per cent of the tea or dried leaves were cultivated, harvested, and dried in the State. Appropriates funds for a Measurement Standards Inspector position.

#### Priority Commented Did Not Pass

**HB476 - RELATING TO CAPITAL GAINS TAX.** Amends the capital gains tax rate for individuals, estates, and trusts. Amends the alternative capital gains tax for corporations.

**HB755 - RELATING TO PAID FAMILY LEAVE.** By 1/1/2028, requires the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to establish a family and medical leave insurance program and begin collecting payroll contributions to finance payment of benefits. By 1/1/2029, requires the Department to start receiving claims and paying benefits under the program. Specifies eligibility requirements and employee protections under the program.

**SB492 - RELATING TO GENERAL EXCISE TAX.** Authorizes each county that has established a surcharge on state tax before 7/1/2015 to extend the surcharge until 12/31/2045, at the same rates, if the county does so before 1/1/2028; Provides that no county surcharge

on state tax authorized for a county that has not established a surcharge on state tax before 7/1/2015, shall be levied before 1/1/2019, or after 12/31/2045; and Repeals certain conditions on the use of surcharges received from the State for counties having a population equal to or less than 500,000 that adopt a county surcharge on state tax.

#### PRIORITY TRACKING MEASURES

HFIA did not testify on these measures, however we encourage all members to review them to be aware of any changes that may impact your business.

In addition to the priority bills listed below, measures also passed related to pharmacy, agricultural theft, biosecurity, disaster recovery, controlled substances, food hubs, restaurants, local food procurement, and wage violations.

#### Hawaii Retirement Savings Act

**SB855 - RELATING TO HAWAII RETIREMENT SAVINGS ACT.** Clarifies the definition of "covered employer" under the Hawai'i Retirement Savings Act. Requires covered employers to automatically enroll covered employees into the Hawai'i Retirement Savings Program unless the employee opts out. Repeals the limit on the total fees and expenses that can be spent for the Program each year.

#### Coffee Labeling

**HB1291 - RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.** Expands the offense of false labeling of Hawai'i-grown coffee to include roasted coffee. Imposes a mandatory minimum fine of \$7,500 for each separate offense of false labeling of Hawai'i-grown coffee.

#### Ahi Labeling


**HB534 - RELATING TO LABELING REQUIREMENTS.** Prohibits the sale of any raw processed ahi by retail establishments without a label that states the country where the ahi was landed. Effective 7/1/2026.

#### Draft Beer Definition

**HB1370 - RELATING TO TAXATION.** Amends the definition of draft beer used in liquor tax laws to mean beer in an individual container of five gallons or more. Effective 1/1/2026.


#### Cigarette Taxes

**HB441 - RELATING TO CIGARETTE TAXES.** Beginning 1/1/2026, increases the cigarette tax from 16 cents to 18 cents and amends the disposition of cigarette tax revenues by allocating the increase in the cigarette tax amount to the Hawai'i Cancer Research Special Fund, with a portion to be used exclusively for debt service of capital expenditures and building maintenance. Effective 12/31/2025. ❄️



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# THE ROAD TO A HEALTHIER AMERICA RUNS THROUGH OUR COMMUNITY GROCERY STORES

BY GREG FERRARA, PRESIDENT AND CEO, NATIONAL GROCERS ASSOCIATION

Across the country, independent grocers are stepping up to do what they have always done best: care for their communities. As public health challenges grow and access to nutritious food becomes more difficult for many Americans, community grocers are saying loud and clear that they want to be part of the solution. These locally owned businesses are uniquely positioned to help tackle food insecurity and promote better health outcomes, not through sweeping mandates, but through trusted, personal relationships with their customers and tailored responses to local needs.

Independent community grocers represented by the National Grocers Association (NGA) believe in a healthier, more equitable United States—one where every individual, regardless of income, zip code, or background, has access to affordable, nutritious food. These grocers are more than just businesses—they are neighbors, employers, and advocates. They understand the needs of the communities they serve, and they are already taking action to fill the gaps left by larger, less nimble retail chains.

With this mission in mind, NGA is guided by a set of core values that reflect the shared commitment of independent grocers nationwide:

- **No American should go hungry.**
- **Healthy food should be accessible to all.**
- **The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) lifts people out of food insecurity, strengthens local economies, and improves public health.**
- **Federal policy should support Main Street—not Wall Street.**
- Making sure **SNAP benefits are sufficient and efficient**, supporting not only nutrition but also the more than **380,000 jobs** and over \$20 billion in direct wages.
- Reducing waste, fraud, and abuse by **modernizing EBT** systems and eliminating bad actors.
- Bringing **SNAP education into retail settings**, so shoppers can learn healthy habits where they shop.

Independent grocers are calling on policymakers to support smart, practical policies that improve health outcomes and strengthen communities. Among these are common-sense reforms that would expand access to healthy food and better align nutrition programs with the real-world needs of both consumers and retailers. These include:

- Expanding access to **nutrition prescriptions** and **produce incentives** for fruits, vegetables, and dairy.
- Increasing the percentage of funding allocated to **fresh produce purchases**.
- Ensuring **program consistency** by allowing only one coordinating institution or organization per state.
- Ensuring **flexibility for SNAP** participants to meet their nutritional needs with dignity and choice.
- Expanding **Healthy Benefit Cards** within Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Grocers are already going above and beyond to help build healthier communities—often at their own expense. From stocking fresh produce in food deserts to partnering with local health initiatives, they are proving daily that independent retailers are vital allies in public health. But they cannot do it alone. They need policies that recognize their value and empower them to do even more.

The ideas outlined here are not partisan or political—they're practical. These are community-first solutions that can create real, lasting change. The road to a healthier America runs straight through our neighborhood grocery stores.

**Learn more about NGA's health and nutrition advocacy efforts at [www.nationalgrocers.org](http://www.nationalgrocers.org).** 🌱



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# TALKING STORY with

# KIT OKIMOTO

BY ALEXIS CHAPMAN

PHOTOS BY BRIAN HART OF FOOD GURUS FOR HFIA



**O**kimoto Corp. is one of Hawai'i's great family-owned independent food retailers. Their first location, The Waianae Store, has been a fixture on the Waianae Coast for over 75 years and Okimoto Corp has been a part of HFIA since its inception. As Kit Okimoto steps into the role of Chair he brings a lifetime of experience, deep community connections, and a proactive approach to facing the challenges of our industry. We had the chance to talk story with our incoming chair and hear more about the legacy of Okimoto Corp, and his vision for the future.

**Can you tell us a little about the history of Okimoto Corp and each of your stores?**

We got started back in 1949 when our grandparents David and Betty Okimoto opened The Waianae Store. David was a carpenter by trade, and he and his brothers built the original store with a bunch of scrap lumber. Nanakuli Super opened in 1973 around the time our parents Ken and Margaret and our aunties Gail and Janis started to take over, and Kyle, Kris, and I came back around the early 2000s. The Egusa family opened Friendly Market Center on Molokai in 1953, and they became part of our 'ohana in 2017.

**How long have you been involved in the business?**

I remember stocking shelves and grabbing carts since I was a little kid, probably getting in the way more than anything else, and I started getting paid when I was 13. My full time career began in 2004 after college.

**Did you and your brothers always want to be part of the family business?**



Depends on who you ask! I think Kyle and Kris intended to, but I can't say I did. I'm glad I came back though.

**What roles does everyone in the family play in the business today?**

Kyle is in charge of HR and operations, Kris handles facilities and maintenance, and I'm responsible for sales and finance. Whatever needs doing gets done, and we've all done a bit of everything over the years.

# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW HFIA CHAIR, KIT OKIMOTO



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Above: Kit and Kyle Okimoto, pictured, along with their brother Kris and mother Margaret are maintaining the legacy of family owned grocery in Hawaii, while also taking the business into the future.

PHOTOS BY BRIAN HART OF FOOD GURUS FOR HFIA

**ISLAND COUNTRY MARKETS**

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Located at the Ko Olina Station  
across from the Aulani Resort

**Congratulations**  
**KIT OKIMOTO**  
Okimoto Corp.  
HFIA Chair

**Special Thank You**  
**MAILE MIYASHIRO**  
C&S Wholesale Grocers

Phone (808) 671-2231 | islandcountrymarkets.com | f yelp

**Your stores are each very important in their communities. Can you tell us a little about these communities and how Okimoto Corp serves them?**

We're very fortunate to be in such loyal communities as many of the families in Waianae, Nanakuli, and Molokai have supported us for generations. Although each is distinct and unique, our communities share a strong sense of 'ohana and are full of Aloha. We do our best to be an integral part of that fabric and strive to provide quality groceries and general merchandise that our customers need at competitive prices in order to maintain their trust.

**What are some of the challenges of being an independent grocery in Hawaii?**

Being small can be challenging in any industry, but the thin margins in grocery compounded by Hawaii's high cost of doing business leave little room for error. Like any other company we have to be profitable to stay in business and move forward, however over the years it has become more difficult to compete with mass merchandisers and free shipping. Luckily, as an independent we've always been a little scrappy having to fight for our fair share from our suppliers, so we intend to continue to push and remain relevant.

**What do you love about it?**

The people! Our people, the people in our communities, and our industry people.

**What are some of the most significant changes you've seen in the food industry in recent years?**

Mergers and acquisitions have changed the retail landscape, as have brand acquisitions and divestitures by manufacturers. What we buy from where changes often and can be confusing; I still have a hard time remembering which Kraft cheese Kraft



Heinz owns!

**What challenges do you think are coming that the industry should be prepared for?**

GLP-1 medications are going to change consumer wants and needs in ways and on a scale that remains to be seen. Additionally, tariffs and the uncertainty around them will likely continue to disrupt our industry, or maybe not!

**What are you looking forward to in the future?**

The uncertainty and looming challenges ahead keep me up at night, but not always in a bad way. That we solve these challenges and adapt to our ever-changing environment is the key to us sticking around, and I look forward to those solutions.

**How long has Okimoto Corp been a part of HFIA?**

We've been a part of HFIA from the beginning when Dick Botti went around knocking on doors. Our grandpa and dad did their best to support Dick in whatever way they could as a small independent.

**What do you value about the Association?**

The fact that everyone has a seat at the table, including a small independent like us, says everything about the Association's commitment to support everyone. It's truly a privilege that our company has the honor of leading the Association.

**What are your plans, goals, or priorities for your time as chair?**

I'd like to make sure that all of our members value and get value from their membership. It would also be great to finally get a G.E.T. exemption for groceries and necessities! 🍷



FISH

FISH

FISH



Island Distributing, L.L.C.

A Reyes Holdings Company



Constellation  
Brands



SAZERAC



BOSTON BEER co.

MAKERS OF

SAMUEL ADAMS WIDEBODY TRULY ANDRE CHICHARD



**Cheers to the Chair  
Congratulations Kit  
and the Okimoto Ohana!**

**Mahalo for Your Business and  
Continued Support.**

**BRANDS  
YOU LOVE**





## 2025 HFIA ANNUAL SOCIAL

*Around the world with Maile Miyashiro*



**THIS YEAR OUR HFIA MEMBERS GATHERED THEIR CREWS AND SET OFF ON AN AMAZING ADVENTURE AROUND THE WORLD WITH MAILE MIYASHIRO!**

The HFIA Annual Social is always a special night to connect and celebrate our industry and Association.

We want to give a special thanks to all our Sponsors and Donors who make this event take flight!

We also want to give a big Mahalo to our amazing Social Committee whose amazing skill and hard work make this and all our HFIA events possible!

ALL PHOTOS BY ANTHONY CONSILLIO

### TITLE SPONSOR



**Coca-Cola HAWAII**  
BOTTLING OF  
A SUBSIDIARY OF THE ODOM CORPORATION

### PRESENTING SPONSORS



**HMAA**  
HAWAII MEDICAL ASSURANCE ASSOCIATION  
We're Passionate About Your Health.

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### FIRST CLASS SPONSORS



**Matson.**



**SAFEWAY**



### THANK YOU DONORS!

Aloha Shoyu | BQF | C&S Wholesale Grocers | Coca Cola Bottling of Hawaii a Subsidiary of the Odom Corp.  
Fresh Aloha Direct | Frito Lay | Hawaiian Pie Co. | Hawaii Volcanic Beverages | HMAA | Island Distributing  
King's Hawaiian | KOHA Foods | KYD | Malama Eco Products | Matson | Meadow Gold | Noh Food  
Okimoto Corp. | Pasha | Pepsi | Pint Size Hawaii | RNDC | Safeway | S&K Sales Hawaii | Tamura Super Market  
PPRM | Don Quijote | Times Supermarkets | Valley Isle Kombucha







## MEMBER NEWS



### PepsiCo to Acquire poppi

PepsiCo, Inc. announced that it has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire poppi, a fast-growing prebiotic soda brand, for \$1.95 billion, including \$300 million of anticipated cash tax benefits for a net purchase price of \$1.65 billion. The transaction also includes an additional potential earnout consideration subject to the achievement of certain performance milestones within a specified period after closing of the transaction.



### Star Pacific Trading: Nibb-its products available in the stores now

The Original Flavor of YICK LUNG® Nibb-its™ loved by generations of locals throughout Hawaii since the 1970s in savory full flavored Twists!



### Hawaiian Airlines x Mana Up Collaboration

Mana Up and Hawaiian Airlines proudly present the exclusive Hawaiian Airlines x Mana Up Collection, celebrating Hawaiian Airlines' 95th anniversary with unique products by 100% local brands.

The collection features one-of-a-kind products from Mana Up companies that are inspired by the legacy of Pualani and/or features archival Hawaiian Airlines designs. Together, our partnership helps elevate local businesses to global markets, sharing Hawaii's premium products worldwide. "Support local" means more than dollars spent!

Brands in the limited-edition collection include: AVVA, ava + oliver, Bradley & Lily, Hawaiian Rainforest Naturals, Jules + Gem, Pono Potions, Surf Shack Puzzles & Tag Aloha.



### Share a Coke Hawai'i Addition

Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, a Subsidiary of the Odom Corporation announced the launch of the Share a Coke campaign in Hawaii. The campaign now features local names so Hawaii residents can share a coke with Tiare, Kawika, Mahealani and more. 10% of the names on these limited-edition bottles are uniquely Hawaiian, celebrating local culture and community.

"We're excited to bring this iconic campaign to Hawai'i," said Joe Carter, VP and General Manager at Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii - The Odom Corporation. "Hawai'i's diversity and tight-knit communities make it the perfect place to share the magic of Coca-Cola."

## NEW MEMBERS



### HIMAKANA INC.

Our company is a general food wholesale company located in Hawaii, USA.

We have been expanding our business with honesty and trust for more than 30 years in the distribution industry in Hawaii, with the slogan "If you work hard, you can become the best."

Our Brand is Hallasan, Daeseon, and Good Day of Korea's representative liquor brands, food ingredient brand Sampyo, Taiwan's steady seller of SHAMEI ice cream, HUNYA snacks, NOTEA, and POCAS beverages were successfully launched in Hawaii. In 2022, We achieved sales of \$3 million.

As a subsidiary, we have "Rolling Colors," a distribution company that produces and distributes souvenirs and gifts in line with the tourism industry.



### ARGENT PRODUCTIVITY OPTIMIZATION SOLUTIONS

Argent is an operational and technology consulting firm with a Hawaii-based presence and staff, dedicated to helping food distributors improve bottom-line profitability by optimizing their warehouse and delivery operations.

- Labor Work Performance Efficiency
- Work Measurement Standards
- Employee performance-based incentives
- Best Practices + Process Improvement
- Warehouse layout, storage profiling, slotting and inventory space optimization
- Delivery Drivers Component Pay (Incentives)
- Analytics-driven Labor Work Performance tracking

Please contact Argent for a complimentary operational assessment.



### GENESIS SYSTEMS

#### GENESIS SYSTEMS

Headquartered in Tampa, Florida, Genesis Systems is at the forefront of technology-driven solutions for water and food security. With over 21 national and international awards, we are committed to transforming economies by tackling two of the world's most pressing challenges: water and food scarcity. Our mission is simple—deliver sustainable, high-impact solutions that empower industries, communities, and nations.

Genesis Systems' flagship products, WaterCube and FoodStar, redefine water access and sustainable agriculture. WaterCube, developed in collaboration with the Department of Defense, enables users to generate water from air at scales ranging from 10 to 10,000,000 (millions) gallons per day—affordably and sustainably. FoodStar is a fully self-powered indoor growing system that increases crop yields by up to 1,900% while reducing water usage by more than 90%. These products empower businesses and communities to control

their own water and food supply chains with resilience and efficiency.

Founded in 2017, Genesis Systems is a woman-led, veteran-owned company committed to making a tangible difference. CEO Shannon Stuckenberg shares, "We are honored to join HFIA and collaborate with fellow members in advancing sustainable water and food solutions across the Pacific. Together, we can enhance industry resilience and create new opportunities for industry growth."



#### PARADISE CITY TRADING

Paradise City Trading, with decades of experience in food service and health and beauty product supply, is thrilled to launch premium Vietnamese Coffee, Rice, and Sauce.



#### MAUI COCKTAIL KITS


Maui Cocktail Kits was founded by long-time mixologist Katy Kahele Tsark, who spent over 20 years crafting cocktails in some of Hawaii's most iconic venues on Maui and Oahu. Inspired by her love for natural ingredients and local flavors, she created a line of handcrafted infusion kits featuring dehydrated Maui-grown fruits and botanicals. Designed for effortless cocktail-making, each kit brings the flavors of Hawaii into every glass. With a commitment to quality and sustainability, Maui Cocktail Kits makes it easy to mix beautifully balanced, island-inspired drinks anywhere in the world.



*Taste the freshness of Hawai'i*

ALL NATURAL | NO ANTIBIOTICS | NO CHEMICALS

FOLLOW US   @KAUAISHRIMP 



*Serving Hawai'i with Aloha*

Agriculture rooted in providing Hawai'i with the highest quality of full-line fresh, local, and global produce, integrated & sustainable from 'Āina to your 'Ohana.



# HFI A 2025 HFI A Spring Golf Tournament

HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

## Diamond Sponsors



## Emerald Sponsors



## Gold Sponsor



This year the Annual HFI A Spring Golf Tournament was a little wet and wild, but that didn't stop our amazing sponsors and players from making it a great day for everyone!

This event is a special chance for our industry to connect and would not be possible without the support of our sponsors, tent sponsors, and prize and product donors. Thank you all!

We are also pleased to report we raised nearly \$3000 for the Hawaii Foodbank thanks to our players generous participation in our raffle!

**ALL PHOTOS BY ANTHONY CONSILLIO**



## MAHALO TENT SPONSORS, AND PRIZE AND PRODUCT DONORS!

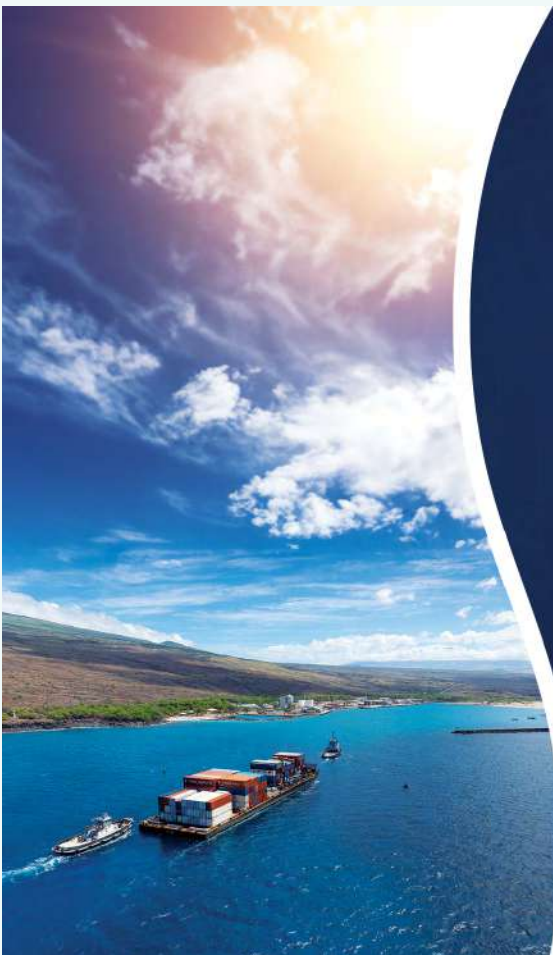
ABC Stores  
Aloha Gas  
Aloha Marine Lines  
American Savings Bank  
C&S Wholesale Grocers  
Chef Zone  
Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii  
Dole Fresh  
Aloha Direct  
Hansen Distribution

Group Hawaii  
Foodservice Alliance  
Hawaii Gas  
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Pasha  
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Pint Size Hawaii  
RNDC  
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Young Brothers





## YOUNG BROTHERS

is excited to welcome  
Hawaii Food Industry Association  
**Incoming Chairman**

# Kit Okimoto

Waianae Store, Nanakuli Store,  
and Friendly Market Center

**YOUNG  
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Celebrating 125 years of safe, reliable, and  
frequent interisland shipping services.

[www.YoungBrothersHawaii.com](http://www.YoungBrothersHawaii.com)







# TOBACCO LAW:

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Chapter 245, Hawai'i Revised Statutes



Wholesalers, dealers, and retailers of  
**electronic smoking devices and e-liquids**

## This law affects your business & business taxes

The Hawai'i State Department of Taxation requires:

### Wholesalers/Dealers to:

- ✓ Acquire a tobacco license
- ✓ File a monthly tax return
- ✓ Report monthly shipments
- ✓ Pay an excise tax of 70% of wholesale pricing

### Retailers to:

- ✓ Obtain a retailer tobacco permit (for each retail location)

For more information, visit  
<https://ag.hawaii.gov/cjd/files/2023/06/ACT-62-FAQ.pdf>



### "Tobacco product" now includes:



**Electronic Smoking Devices**  
(ESDs, e-cigs, vapes, etc.)



**E-Liquids**  
(vape juice, pods, etc.)





PHOTO COURTESY USDA.

Hawaii's agricultural leaders and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Brooke Rollins gather at the USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C., on March 24, 2025, during the second Hawaii-USDA Policy Summit. Led by Lt. Gov. Sylvia Luke, the delegation is advocating for expanded export opportunities, improved biosecurity policies tailored to the islands, and strengthened food security across Hawaii.

# HAWAI'I'S FEDERAL QUARANTINE: A CENTURY-OLD BARRIER TO AGRICULTURAL GROWTH

## Push for Quarantine Modernization Gaining Momentum

BY KEITH DEMELLO AND JESSE COOKE

**F**or the last 114 years, Hawai'i has been subject to a federal agricultural quarantine that impacts Hawai'i-based farms to the tune of \$760 million annually. That's greater than the value of Hawai'i's total agricultural sales in 2022 (which was \$673 million).

Yet, these quarantine restrictions persist and continue to negatively impact the state and its agricultural industry — despite various advances that have reduced and controlled the four species of introduced fruit flies that initially triggered the quarantine.

### ORIGINS ROOTED IN CENTURY-OLD FEARS

Dating back to 1912, territorial Hawai'i's quarantine was one of the first agricultural quarantines declared by the federal government. It has effectively barred farmers statewide from exporting a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables to the mainland due to strict

restrictions placed on the entire state.

The creation of Hawai'i's quarantine can largely be credited to traveling entomologist George Compere, who worked as a government entomologist in Western Australia and California. After finding Mediterranean fruit flies in Hawai'i, Compere stoked fears in California's fruit industry about a potential invasion. Compere cemented this frenzy through a widely reproduced paper profiling tephritid fruit flies as well as in remarks at the 1910 California state convention of fruit growers, where he pushed for a full quarantine on Hawai'i.

On June 17, 1911, California, with cooperation from steamship operators serving the California-Hawai'i route, issued an embargo on all produce from Hawai'i due to the presence of Medflies discovered in the then-territory.

Both Congress and the Secretary of the USDA followed California's lead, providing the USDA the power to implement and en-

force agricultural quarantines through the Plant Quarantine Act of 1912. The USDA subsequently invoked a full quarantine on Hawai'i as one of the first federal plant quarantines ever established.

### A BLANKET PROHIBITION WITH LIMITED EXCEPTIONS

Hawai'i's quarantine is extremely broad and explicitly entails a default ban on the export of all fresh fruits and vegetables from the entire state. Farmers who want to export must seek approval from the USDA to be on its approved commodities list.

Local farmers attempting to access this approved commodities list for a particular crop must work through the USDA, which in some cases may take years to receive approval. Even after completing this process, farmers still face potential rejection or additional mandates that add time and costs to exporting,





PHOTO COURTESY OF MAHI PONO

Mahi Pono is the largest U.S. producer of limes, but faces roadblocks to importing to the mainland.

known as “pest mitigation requirements.”

Irradiation is the most common risk mitigation process applied to Hawai‘i products and has facilitated the export of Hawai‘i-grown papayas and sweet potatoes. However, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires irradiated food to be labeled with the “radura symbol” and the words “treated with radiation.” Unsurprising to many, studies indicate this specific labeling results in adverse consumer impressions about food quality.

### TRUE COST: LOST OPPORTUNITIES

Although significant, the real cost of the federal quarantine on Hawai‘i’s agricultural sector is not the direct cost of pest mitigation efforts. The real cost is the suppression of entire industry sectors and business models from growing to scale or even forming. This opportunity cost makes up the majority of the estimated \$760 million in negative financial impact to Hawai‘i’s agricultural sector each year.

Paradoxically, these quarantine restrictions place Hawai‘i, a full U.S. state since 1959, at a competitive disadvantage compared to foreign countries and other states when exporting certain agricultural products to the mainland. This is particularly contradictory since many of these other regions present their own pest risks, as they share land borders with other countries and states and lack Hawai‘i’s natural geographic isolation.

For example, Mahi Pono, a local farming company that owns and operates approximately 41,000 acres of agricultural land in Central Maui, has struggled in trying to get its limes on the USDA’s approved commodities list.

Mahi Pono is the largest U.S. producer of limes — a significant achievement in so few years — and has been working through USDA export approvals since 2023 for its lime crop. The farm has planted 3,000 acres of limes in Central Maui and is unable to sell limes to the mainland U.S. market due to quarantine restrictions and its pending application for the approved commodities list.

Frustratingly, over this same timeframe,



PHOTO COURTESY OF MAHI PONO

Former Hawaii Lt. Governor Shan Tsutsui, Mahi Pono Chief Operating Officer, and Jayson Watts, Director of Environmental Health at Mahi Pono and Secretary-Treasurer of the Hawaii Food Industry Association, met with Jordan Bonfitto, Chief of Staff for USDA Marketing and Regulatory Programs, and Riley Pagett, Chief of Staff for USDA Trade and Foreign Agriculture Affairs, along with their leadership teams, at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C., to discuss updating and aligning federal regulations governing the movement of limes from Hawaii to the continental United States.

Mahi Pono has been able to export limes with little issue to Canada.

“Regulatory frameworks must evolve alongside science,” said Jayson Watts, Mahi Pono’s director of environmental health and safety. “Mahi Pono has worked closely with industry experts and USDA leadership to develop a proven mitigation approach for our limes, yet we remain unable to access mainland markets without resorting to expensive and quality-compromising treatments. This is despite being one of the largest lime producers in the nation.

“We were grateful for the opportunity to meet with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins in March, who pledged her support for Hawai‘i’s farmers. We remain hopeful and look forward to continuing to work with her team — in the spirit of ‘Buy Hawai‘i, Buy America’ — to reduce import reliance and ensure American-grown produce from Hawai‘i can compete fairly and fully in the national marketplace.”

According to the International Fresh Produce Association, from Aug. 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022, Mexican lime imports into the United States reached approximately 1.38 billion pounds. That equates to about 4.1 pounds of limes for every man, woman and child in the United States. Imported Mexican limes account for over 90% of U.S. market.

The lime industry has grown rapidly over the past decade, and could have been an incredible market opportunity for Hawai‘i farmers, but this opportunity continues to be suppressed by Hawai‘i’s century-old federal quarantine. Instead, the United States has allowed foreign producers to benefit from a fast growing agricultural market sector.

### A CALL FOR MODERNIZATION

Gov. Josh Green has announced plans to engage with the USDA and other federal agencies to modernize these outdated quarantine requirements. The governor’s initiative aims to establish a more balanced regulatory framework that protects against invasive species while allowing Hawai‘i’s farmers to compete fairly in mainland markets.

“Hawai‘i’s agricultural sector has been hampered by these century-old restrictions for far too long,” said Gov. Green. “Modern technology and practices now offer solutions that can protect mainland crops while allowing our farmers to access crucial markets. My administration is committed to developing a more sensible approach.”

The quarantine system appears increasingly outdated in an era of advanced pest detection and management techniques. Modern detection methods and risk-based approaches can potentially replace the current system while maintaining or improving upon necessary protections.

As Hawai‘i seeks agricultural diversification, addressing these long-standing limitations becomes increasingly urgent. After more than a century of restrictions, the time is right for a comprehensive review of Hawai‘i’s federal quarantine regulations to ensure they balance legitimate biosecurity concerns with economic needs in the 21st century.

This article previews research on Hawai‘i’s federal quarantine that will be published in an upcoming policy brief by the Hawaii Institute for Public Affairs (HIPA). ❧

**Have you been impacted by Hawai‘i’s federal quarantine? Share your story by emailing [communications@ulupono.com](mailto:communications@ulupono.com).**



## Three Buckets



## A FINANCIAL UPDATE FROM WESTPAC WEALTH PARTNERS

**R**egardless of how the markets may perform, consider making the following part of your investment philosophy:

**Diversification.** The saying “don’t put all your eggs in one basket” has some application to investing. Over time, certain asset classes may perform better than others. If your assets are mostly held in one kind of investment, you could find yourself under a bit of pressure if that asset class experiences some volatility.

Keep in mind that diversification is an approach to help manage investment risk. It does not eliminate the risk of loss if an investment sees a decline in price.

Asset allocation strategies also are used in portfolio management. When financial professionals ask you questions about your goals, time horizon, and tolerance for risk, they are getting a better idea about what asset classes may be appropriate for your situation. But like diversification, asset allocation is an approach to help manage investment risk. It does not eliminate the risk of loss if an investment sees a decline in price.

**Patience.** Impatient investors can get too focused on the day-to-day doings of the financial markets. They can be looking for short-term opportunities rather than longer-term potential. A patient investor understands

that markets fluctuate, and has built a portfolio based on their time horizon, risk tolerance, and goals. A short-term focus may add stress and anxiety to your life, and could lead to frustration with the investing process.

**"A patient investor understands that markets fluctuate, and has built a portfolio based on their time horizon, risk tolerance, and goals. A short-term focus may add stress and anxiety to your life, and could lead to frustration with the investing process."**

**Consistency.** Most people invest a little at a time, within their budget, and with regularity. They invest \$50 or \$100 or more per month in their retirement account or similar investments. They are investing on “auto-pilot” to help themselves attempt to build wealth over time.

Consistent investing does not protect against a loss in a declining market or guarantee a profit in a rising market. Consistent investing, sometimes referred to as dollar-cost averaging, is the process of investing a fixed amount of money in an in-

vestment vehicle at regular intervals, usually monthly, for an extended period of time regardless of price.

Investors should evaluate their financial ability to continue making purchases through periods of declining and rising prices. The return and principal value of stock prices will fluctuate as market conditions change. Shares, when sold, may be worth more or less than their original cost.

If you don’t have an investment strategy, consider talking to a qualified financial professional today.

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# HAWAII'S #1 LINE UP



**YOUR GO-TO DRINK,  
NOW ON-THE-GO!**



BY LAUREN ZIRBEL

Spring is always a busy time of year for HFIA. We're focusing on maximizing our impact at the Capitol, helping our members connect at Social and Golf, and planning our Annual Convention. This spring we also took on some new responsibilities.

We were invited by Senator Tim Richard's Office and the Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT) to meet to discuss the needs of Hawai'i's agriculture sector and food systems revolving around transportation. We subsequently looped in several HFIA with expertise in this area to help further the discussion. The goal of these meetings is to understand what port and other infrastructure needs are required for a robust local agriculture industry and resilient food system, and then determine best next steps in acquiring the necessary information to move these projects forward. The first meetings of this hui provided some valuable and actionable information, and we look forward to continuing this conversation and working towards positive change.

HFIA is also very pleased to be a member of the newly formed Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) Business

Emergency Operations Center (BEOC.) HFIA's participation in the BEOC will help to enable a more efficient and coordinated response by the food industry to emergencies. We hope that by being involved we can help support the vital assistance our members provide to our communities in times of need while minimizing economic losses by our members who generously respond to emergencies. As the BEOC moves forward we'll be sharing additional information and resources with members and extending invitations to members whose direct participation would be beneficial.

This spring I was happy to join the Board of the Food Basket, Hawai'i Island's food bank, in addition to my position on the board of the Hawai'i Foodbank. It has been wonderful working with the Foodbank over the past several years and getting to contribute to their incredibly important mission and I'm excited to be strengthening our connection with The Food Basket as well. The Food Basket has been the driving force behind the success of the DA BUX program. This great initiative allows SNAP users who purchase local produce to get double the purchasing power. This benefits SNAP users, local farmers, and SNAP retailers.

Regrettably food insecurity in our state



has increased in recent years to alarming levels. Nearly one in three families statewide deal with food insecurity. In certain parts of our state the rate is as high as 40%. As we face funding cuts to Federally funded food programs and other programs, Federal job cuts, and food inflation caused by tariffs that impact some ingredients and food packaging that number may increase. I'm glad to be able to provide whatever assistance I can to the Food Basket to help tackle this problem.

I also know that now more than ever the work of our association is vital. We will continue to advocate for our members and our industry, provide resources and information, and help our members stay connected so that they can continue to feed our state. ❁

## 2025 BONUS BENEFITS MEMBER DISCOUNTS AND BENEFITS

Membership with HFIA includes discounts on a variety of products and services, compliments of our partnering companies who have made these benefits available exclusively to HFIA members in good-standing. Members are invited to take advantage of these exclusive discount offers. Discount codes available through your online member profile. Take advantage today and login at [hfia.memberclicks.net/login](https://hfia.memberclicks.net/login).



### 10% OFF TRADE SHOW DISPLAYS!

JPG Hawai'i is happy to offer a 10% discount on our trade show displays as well as free shipping to all HFIA members



### WESTPAC WEALTH PARTNERS FREE VALUATION!

WestPac Wealth Partners is offering a complementary business valuation to any HFIA member company! Learn what your business is worth using the world's leading patented online business valuation service, BizEquity™



### MADE IN HAWAII FESTIVAL BENEFITS!

All HFIA Members are invited to attend Made in Hawai'i Festival Buyers Hours. HFIA Members who are Made in Hawai'i Festival vendors receive a \$100 rebate on their booth fees.



### ENJOY A 5% DISCOUNT ON COACH FLIGHTS!

Discount applied when flights are booked through the HFIA Preferred Affiliate Program. Other promotional offer made by Hawaiian Airlines are available to all HFIA members in good standing.



### EXCLUSIVE PPO HEALTH PLAN OFFER!

Through this partnership, HFIA members throughout the state can take advantage of preferred pricing with HMAA, making healthcare more affordable for businesses and employees alike.





**HFAHAWAII.COM**





FROM OUR REFRIGERATORS TO YOURS.

Three times a week, Matson delivers Hawaii's produce, dairy, and pharmaceuticals in temperature-controlled, refrigerated containers to ensure consistent top quality. It's all part of our long-standing 24/7 commitment to fulfilling the needs of our community with reliable and efficient shipping services.

For more information, call (800) 4-MATSON or visit [Matson.com](http://Matson.com)



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