



Agribusiness Development Corporation

Ag Notes

SEPTEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

ADC: Helping Farmers Take Root



An aerial shot of Agribusiness Development Corporation's Kekaha farmland property on Kauai.

For the past 25 years, the state Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) has been known for leasing state land to farmers to increase local food production. But there are other ways in which ADC contributes to the agricultural community.

Thanks to ADC lessee Corteva Agriscience, a 35-acre parcel on the west side of Kauai in Kekaha will be used as an incubator program to groom up-and-coming farmers. Corteva, a major member of the local corn seed industry, was looking for ways to use some leased land that wasn't scheduled for farming in the near future.

"While our company is known for raising and distributing seed corn, we also want to support the ag community in other ways," said Mark Stoutemyer of Corteva.

On Oahu, the company implemented a successful partnership at their Waialua

location, where 30 acres of ag land were donated by the organization to help incubate new farmers in the state. Some graduates of this program are now leasing lands from Corteva and launching into successful agricultural businesses supporting successful initiatives like Farm to School, Stoutemyer said.

"With that success, we were interested in duplicating this model in Kekaha on land leased from the ADC," Stoutemyer said. The goal was to find potential small farmers with a desire to expand into future leases with ADC parcels in Kekaha, but do not yet meet the minimum requirements to do so.

So far, Corteva has identified two farmer groups: one potential operation would grow wetland taro, the other vegetable crops. Stoutemyer said he hopes plans for both would be finalized in the coming months.

"We always talk about food sustainability, but it's become even more important with the current pandemic," he said.

Aiding Hawaii Island papaya farmers

Longtime farmer Orlando Manuel has faced many challenges during his 45 years in growing papaya on the Big Island. But the 2018 Kilauea eruptions were probably the most daunting to his livelihood.

The lava flows covered over many acres of prime ag land in Puna, making it impossible for growing. The lingering vog also damaged numerous papaya trees as the acidic sulfur dioxide fumes burned off much of their leaves.

"It got pretty bad," Manuel said. "We had eruptions before, but this one was bad."



To help Manuel jump start his papaya farm production, ADC provided \$7,000 in "seed" money to accelerate his planting process. The funds went

Helping Farmers Take Root Continued from pg. 1

to purchase 700 Rainbow papaya plantings raised by HARC (Hawaii Agriculture Research Center) that will hopefully speed up Manuel's next harvest.

By providing the more mature plantings ready to be put in the ground, farmers like Manuel don't need to take time to propagate the plants, according to HARC plant physiologist Maureen Fitch, Ph.D. With Rainbow papayas usually



taking about 8-9 months to mature for harvesting, Fitch said the availability of mature plantings rather than seedlings cuts down the planting cycle by between 1-3 months.

Since the Rainbow papaya plantings were raised at HARC's Kunia facility on Oahu, that meant others in the ag industry, such as Paina Hawaii LLC,



Staff of Hawaii Agriculture Research Center, including HARC plant physiologist Maureen Fitch (bottom photo), helped raise and transport papaya plantings to Hawaii Island farmers to help restart their operations.



provided help in transporting the plants over to the Big Island.

"We (HARC) approached ADC and asked them if they could help in this situation," Fitch said. "We're grateful for their assistance, as well as from others in the ag community because it means a quicker harvest for farmers like Orlando."

Meanwhile, Manuel has already begun planting the first young papaya trees on his 25-acre farm.

"Hopefully, this time things will go better," he said.



ADC In The News

ADC tenant Shin Ho of Ho Farms Hawaii was recently featured in the news to discuss the important business relationship between local farmers and restaurants during this recent economic downturn. Click on the story link below to learn more about how Ho's produce is sold and distributed at local stores and businesses, and please remember to buy locally-raised foods to support our farmers!

<https://www.kitv.com/story/42578447/diversity-and-flexibility-is-how-an-oahu-farm-is-surviving-during-the-pandemic>

Shin Ho of Ho Farms Hawaii was recently interviewed by KITV4 reporter Nicole Tam at her ADC Wahiawa parcel.