

Agribusiness Development Corporation

# AG NOTES

## September 2023 Newsletter

### READY TO LEAD: Wendy Gady Named New ADC Executive Director

Where some may see challenges and obstacles in developing agriculture in our state, the new head of the State Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) sees goals and possibilities.



“ADC was created to step in as the pineapple and sugar industries moved out of Hawai‘i,” said newly selected ADC executive director **Wendy Gady**. “The ADC board is very focused on building economic development through agriculture; in bringing back jobs, businesses and growing local communities and local food.”

After an extensive candidate search by ADC’s board of directors, Gady was selected last month as the agency’s new director. She replaces James Nakatani, who passed away earlier this year.

An accomplished and visionary leader, Gady brings a wealth of experience to ADC, said the agency’s board of directors chairperson Warren Watanabe. With a proven track record of engaging with all food sustainability stakeholders, she has contributed growth and innovation in communities across the state, Watanabe said.

“We are delighted to welcome Wendy as our new executive director,” Watanabe said. “Her exceptional leadership skills, strategic insights, and focus on broad engagement across the agriculture sector make her the ideal choice to lead ADC. We have great confidence in her ability to bring a wide variety of stakeholders together to discuss concepts and ideas for building our local, sustainable food supply.”

Gady said the opportunities for the local agriculture industry to grow and thrive are plentiful.

“When Hawai‘i has 12 of the 14 microclimates in the world located across the state, we need to showcase and celebrate the fact that we are the most diverse ag state in the U.S.” Gady noted. “We owe it to our communities across Hawai‘i to create local businesses, local jobs and local economic impact by sustainably growing local food. We have a talented workforce of operators, entrepreneurs and investors who can provide food solutions.”

She is also open in meeting with various players and welcomes operators, entrepreneurs, and active stakeholders, or those exploring ag opportunities to contact her directly. She is interested and open to exploring new research, technology, and uses for ADC lands, and value-added production.



*New ADC executive director Wendy Gady visited farmers on Kaua‘i.*

## Gady Named New ADC Director

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“During my career, I’ve had the opportunity to work with staff, boards, communities, producers, entrepreneurs, and stakeholders in keeping ag land in diverse production across O’ahu,” Gady said. “I want to sit down with many ag people doing innovative work and explore ideas and strategies to begin working together,” she said. “I am inviting operators, entrepreneurs, and active stakeholders, or those exploring ag opportunities to contact me directly.”

“My philosophy has been molded from my agricultural upbringing while growing up in Iowa: ‘If you want to go fast, go alone; If you want to go far, go together.’ And that’s what I hope to achieve in networking with others in the community. We need to work together for our future.”



*Gady recently visited ADC tenants on Kaua’i to view their work.*

A graduate of Iowa Wesleyan University with a B.A. in Business and Communications, Gady also took additional Executive MBA course work in Strategic Market Planning at the University of Michigan. She has managed a wide variety of farming operations, from conventional to Certified Organic, successfully written grants, passed national audits, leased ag land to new operators across O’ahu, developed farm business plans for individual operators, performed water testing and compliance across microclimates and water systems, raised financing for a 30-million-gallon-per-year biodiesel plant (providing a community with high-paying local jobs, and shareholder wealth), run farmers markets, coordinated water management, food safety, marketing, and new product training for operators.

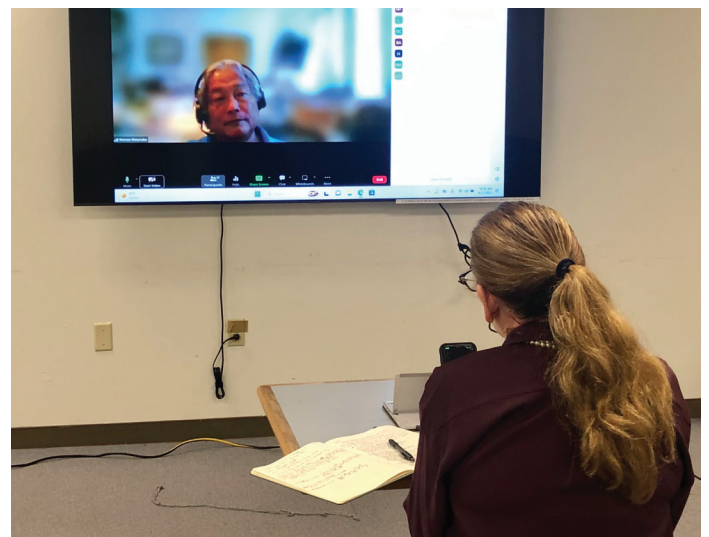
Her hands-on experience includes working with producers to gain land and water access, expanding

row and orchard crop market access, and working with groups in completing feasibility studies for expanding value added products.

Her Iowa family continues to farm both corn and beans in her hometown. Gady married into a fourth-generation O’ahu family whose roots started in rice production in Kahalu’u and grew to include running the Tom Grocery Store in Wahiawā while working in the pineapple plantations. Her entire O’ahu family believes deeply in investing in the community evidenced through their involvement in establishing the Wahiawā Wah Mun Chinese School, Pālolo Chinese Home, and the one of the first Chinese banks in Hawai’i. Combining Ms. Gady’s core values of community and innovation with ADC’s mission and asset portfolio, the organization is poised to sustainably grow our local food supply across the state.

“I’m humbled and honored at the opportunity to lead the statewide organization,” Gady said. “Our food supply from the continental United States was severely disrupted during the recent pandemic and showed our state why we need to push harder for food independence and sustainability here. ADC will be a pivotal part of our state’s effort.”

“If you look at my background, I’m a strong believer in local agriculture and the impact to communities. The ADC has a lot of potential to be a leader in the ag industry and accomplish great things for Hawai’i. Many of the parts are in place for a firm foundation, we just need to move forward together now and get things done.”



*The ADC board of directors announced Gady as their new leader on August 17.*