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## Food Security in Hawai‘i

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According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life” (2009, 8). Food insecurity can take many different forms. This essay explores three broad concerns for Hawai‘i: overall food supply, disasters, and poverty. Each of these broad categories covers a variety of specific issues. For example, overall food supply is about food quantity and quality now and in the future, under various contingencies. It would include consideration of agriculture, processing, transport, infant feeding, nutrition-related health problems, genetically modified organisms, and related issues, under various long-term economic and climate scenarios. Disaster refers not only to tsunamis and earthquakes but also to economic collapse, terrorism, food supply crises, and other kinds of emergencies. Poverty refers to the difficulties in obtaining adequate food by various categories of low-income individuals, and also the status of the economy as a whole. Thus, food security must be recognized as multidimensional, raising a broad variety of concerns for which policies and planning are needed. In addition, Hawai‘i must learn to differentiate food security, self-sufficiency, and resilience, which are related but are not the same.

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## OVERALL FOOD SUPPLY

Before contact, Hawai'i was self-sufficient in terms of food, by necessity, not by choice. There were periodic famines (*wi*), usually due to disruptive events such as epidemics and warfare (Schmitt 1970). After contact, Hawai'i became involved in exporting, sometimes with serious consequences: "Because the chiefs and commoners in large numbers went out cutting and carrying sandalwood, famine was experienced from Hawaii to Kauai . . . . The people were forced to eat herbs and fern trunks, because there was no food to be had. When Kamehameha saw that the country was in the grip of a severe famine, he ordered the chiefs and commoners not to devote all their time to cutting sandalwood (Kuykendall, qtd. in Schmitt, 1970, 113)." If the efforts used to harvest sandalwood had instead been devoted to harvesting or raising food, the famine could have been averted.

Hawai'i later devoted much of its land to producing and exporting food products. In the 1860s a new variety of rice was introduced, rapidly replacing taro. In 1862 Hawai'i exported more than 100,000 pounds of milled rice to California and more than 800,000 pounds of rice grown in paddies (Haraguchi 1987). Much of this production was by Chinese and Japanese immigrant laborers. Later, sugar and pineapple became the dominant export crops. Hawai'i was for a time a major exporter of food products, based on its sugar and pineapple production.

Much of Hawai'i's food production for local consumption has now been displaced by imported foods. This has raised alarm in many quarters. In 2012 in the Hawai'i State House's self-sufficiency bill, HB2703 HD2, said Hawai'i is dangerously dependent on imported food:

As the most geographically isolated state in the country, Hawaii imports approximately ninety-two percent of its food, according to the United States Department of Agriculture. Currently, Hawaii has a supply of fresh produce for no more than ten days. Ninety percent of the beef, sixty-seven percent of the fresh vegetables, sixty-five percent of the fresh fruits, and eighty percent of all milk purchased in the State are imported. The legislature further finds that Hawaii's reliance on out-of-state sources of food places residents directly at risk of food shortages in the event of natural disasters, economic disruption, and other external factors beyond the State's control. (Hawai'i State Legislature 2012)

Most analysts agree that Hawai'i currently imports 85 percent or more of its food from the US mainland and from other countries (Leung and Loke 2008; Page et al. 2007). Some analyses focus specifically on imports and local production of fresh fruits and vegetables (Lee and Bittenbender 2007; Southichack 2007).

The self-sufficiency bill (Hawai'i State Legislature 2012) raised the import-replacement argument: "The legislature further finds that each food product imported to Hawaii is a lost opportunity for local economic growth. The legislature notes that according to the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, an increase in the production and sale of Hawaii-grown agricultural commodities would contribute to significant job creation. The research shows that replacing ten percent of current food imports will create a total of two thousand three hundred jobs." However, this analysis favors the producers' perspective and does not give sufficient attention to the consumers' perspective. Increasing purchases of locally produced foods would benefit local farmers, but it could also mean that consumers have to pay higher prices. The main reason Hawai'i imports much of its food is that it cannot produce the food as cheaply as it can import it.

Many people believe that the long-distance transportation of food to Hawai'i leads to high economic and environmental costs. However, there has been no broad study of these impacts. Ocean transport is relatively cheap, in terms of unit cost per mile. Its environmental impacts may be comparable to that of ground-based transport. Food prices in Hawai'i's stores may not relate as much to transport costs as to the fact that the retailers face less competition in Hawai'i than they do on the mainland and thus can charge higher prices. Higher real estate and utility costs also have to be considered.

Oceanic transport costs are not as high as many people assume. Hawai'i was once a major exporter of sugar and pineapple. Australia and New Zealand currently are major exporters of dairy products to much of the world. It is true that the Jones Act, which requires that shipping between US ports must be done on US-flagged ships (Maritime Trade Act of 1920 §27), increases transport costs, but quantitative estimates of the Jones Act's impact on food prices are not available.

Food security in Hawai'i is often understood in terms of possible interruptions to food imports, but there are other possible threats as well. For example, such things as local climate change, bee mites, and disruptions in water supply could threaten Hawai'i's agriculture. Local economic weaknesses of vari-

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ous kinds can lead to sharp reductions in local food production, as we have seen in dairy and meat production.

There are also dangers that can arise at the consumer end of the food system. Hawai'i has been fortunate so far in not having had any major food safety incidents, but there are safety risks. Hawai'i relies mainly on the federal government to ensure food safety.

Many people are concerned about the impacts of genetic modification of food products, especially the economic impacts at the primary production end and the health impacts at the consumption end. A large portion of Hawai'i's agricultural land is devoted to research on seeds for genetically modified products (Conrow 2009).

#### Expand Food Production?

While there is potential for increasing food production in local farms, there are huge challenges from competing uses of the land. First, some forces take land out of agriculture, such as encroaching housing developments and golf courses. Second, much of the agricultural land is used to produce crops other than food, such as seeds, biofuels, and ornamentals. Third, where there is food production, much of it is not basic food. Items such as coffee, macadamia nuts, and herbs will not be needed when food supplies are short. Fourth, some of the food that is produced is exported from the state. Fifth, it can be difficult for local farmers to compete with producers elsewhere who face lower land and labor costs.

In some cases the promotion of agriculture is mainly about protecting the livelihoods of small farmers, not about the products they deliver. For example, in the struggle to preserve the small farms in Kamilo Nui Valley in Hawai'i Kai, its defenders have not claimed this valley has been making an important contribution to the state's food supply. It is important as the basis for the livelihood of the farmers who work the land there. Similarly, while the front page of the local newspaper may headline "Blight Threatens Basil" (Nakaso 2011), that evokes little concern about Hawai'i's basic food supply. The objectives of ensuring food security and protecting farmers' livelihoods are both important, but they should not be confused with one another.

Hawai'i's supply of land is limited, but its supply of ocean is not. However, food production in the ocean is difficult. Natural marine fisheries around the islands have never been highly productive because of the great depth of nearshore

waters and the absence of nutrient upwelling associated with continental shelves. The reef fisheries have been severely depleted, so the great majority of fish consumption in Hawai'i is based on imports. There are attempts to revive traditional aquaculture methods, but they do not produce large volumes. Modern commercial aquaculture in Hawai'i has a checkered business record, with highly publicized ambitious startups often followed by quiet shutdowns. Some of the operations are owned and operated by businesses based outside Hawai'i and produce primarily for export, thus contributing little to the local food supply. There is evolving interest in aquaponics as an environmentally friendly method of combining aquaculture and farming.

Hawai'i's farm revenue (final crop output) set a record of \$642 million in 1980 but it has decreased over the years, and was \$633 million in 2012 (USDA 2014). With the steady decline of large-scale plantation agriculture, especially sugar and pineapple, average farm size declined to 149 acres in 2007. However, it then rose to 161 acres in 2012, primarily because of the increased share of land used for seed production. About 92 percent of Hawaii's farms are less than 100 acres. In 2012, 58.4 percent of the farms had annual sales of under \$10,000. The net farm income in 2012 was estimated at \$329,964 (USDA 2014), which means the 7,000 farms had an average income of \$47,138. The income levels for small farms were much lower than this average (Gomes 2011; USDA 2014). Much of the farm revenue is for nonfood products such as seeds and ornamentals and for exports. Hawai'i's farm revenue attributable to food consumed within the state is about \$400 million per year. Hawai'i's total food imports are roughly \$2 billion per year. On this basis, Hawai'i farms produce roughly 20 percent of the state's food supply, in terms of monetary value. Probably about 80 percent of the imports are from the US mainland. A substantial share of the food produced and consumed in Hawai'i goes to military families and tourists. Perhaps that share should be excluded from calculations about the degree to which local agriculture contributes to local food self-sufficiency.

Some local food production operations are owned by outsiders. Their products may be sold and consumed locally, but if the profits go elsewhere, and control of these operations also is based elsewhere, it is not clear that these operations really contribute to local self-sufficiency. Many of Hawai'i's agriculture workers have been immigrants, and that pattern is likely to continue in the future. The significance of this for Hawaii's self-sufficiency should be given some thought.

As in other high-income places, most of Hawai'i's food money goes to processors, not farmers, and most of this goes to processors outside Hawai'i. Only

about 7,300 people work in food processing in Hawai'i (Yonan 2011). There are efforts to expand local food processing (Hawai'i Food Manufacturers Association 2011). There are opportunities to expand the food processing sector, but the potential is limited because Hawai'i's processors must work with high costs and small volumes and compete with large-scale processors based elsewhere.

While it is true that Hawaii's physical environment could support production of a wide variety of food items, the high land and labor costs make increasing production difficult. Moreover, Hawai'i could not produce the wide variety of products it now imports. Full self-sufficiency would be impractical, and getting close to full self-sufficiency would require radical changes in diet and lifestyle. Some people would welcome those changes, and others would not.

Many people outside Hawai'i call for localizing food production everywhere, but the arguments for localization may be overstated (Dean 2007; Singer and Mason 2007; Desrochers and Shimizu 2008; DeWeert 2009; McWilliams 2007; Roberts 2009). In Hawai'i, pushing food self-sufficiency too far or in the wrong way could increase costs to consumers, and it could reduce local food security by creating overdependence on one source. If it is not managed well, it could lead to the depletion of local resources. Increasing self-sufficiency could be advantageous to certain groups in the state, such as farmers, while being disadvantageous to others, such as the nonfarming poor.

There is a great deal of enthusiasm for increasing local food self-sufficiency, in the state government and in the community (see, for example, <http://hawaiihomegrown.net>). However, there is a need for discussion about how far and how fast it should go. The degree of self-sufficiency is not something that should be maximized. It should be optimized, taking a broad variety of issues into consideration.

It would be good for Hawai'i to have the *capacity* to be food self-sufficient in case it was suddenly isolated from the rest of the world. But if Hawai'i pushes for *actual* self-sufficiency long before it is needed, its people would forgo the benefits that come with trade. It would be a bit like moving the family into the basement now because a storm is likely to come in the next few years. Preparing is one thing; doing it is something else.

## Resiliency

According to the 2012 food self-sufficiency bill, "increasing local production will ensure that Hawaii's food sources will be more resilient to global supply

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disruptions, better able to cope with increasing global demand and shortages of commodities such as oil, and better prepared to deal with potential global food scarcities” (Hawai‘i State Legislature 2012). That needs to be explained, and its limits should be appreciated.

Worldwatch defines resilience as

the ability of natural or human systems to survive in the face of great change . . . . To be resilient, a system must be able to adapt to changing circumstances and develop new ways to thrive. In ecological terms, resilience has been used to describe the ability of natural systems to return to equilibrium after adapting to changes. In climate change, resilience can also convey the capacity and ability of society to make necessary adaptations to a changing world—and not necessarily structures that will carry forward the status quo. In this perspective, resilience affords an opportunity to make systemic changes during adaptation, such as addressing social inequalities. (2009, 203)

On this basis, resilience in a food system would mean being able to choose from a variety of alternative food sources and being ready to jump from one to another in an agile way with changing conditions. Resiliency is different from self-sufficiency. Food security, in the sense of ensuring access to food under all conditions, comes mainly from resiliency, not self-sufficiency.

Hawai‘i should have a variety of food sources available so that if one fails or weakens, it would be possible to shift to other sources. Hawai‘i already does that on a regular basis for fresh produce, with wholesalers jumping around to different sources opportunistically. Increasing Hawaii’s capacity to produce its own food would increase its resilience to the extent that it added another source of food. However, if it displaced other sources, the result could be decreased resilience.

Hawai‘i should not pursue food self-sufficiency to the extent that it allows its contacts with other sources of food to wither away. Just as Hawai‘i should not be overly dependent on imports, it should not be overly dependent on its own production.

## DISASTERS

Hawai‘i has had a long run of good fortune, but it is not immune from disasters. Given its huge dependence on imports, the state has to be especially

concerned about possible disruptions in transport to the islands. In 1949, when it was still a territory of the United States, Hawai'i suffered through a shipping strike, and questions arose about what the US government would do to help (*Time* 1949). Hawai'i is now a US state, but it is still not clear what help the US government would offer if Hawai'i, and possibly the US government itself, encountered some sort of extreme situation.

*Disaster* is defined by the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction as "a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources" (UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction 2006). Resilience can be understood as the capacity to make adaptations to the existing food system in response to changes in the physical or economic environment. In dealing with slow and permanent changes, it is about creating a new kind of "normal." In disaster planning, however, the concern is to find ways to prepare for quick changes, especially unanticipated quick changes. Usually disaster planning is based on the hope that the impact will be of short duration and that it will be possible to return to the same basic food system that existed before the disaster. In extreme disasters that system may need to be reconfigured with great urgency.

Hawai'i has not yet had major problems with its overall food supply, but there is a need for concern because Hawai'i imports so much of its food. Disruptions to that delivery system could be disastrous, especially if the disruption is sudden and Hawai'i is unprepared.

## Production

Preserving and expanding Hawai'i's farm acreage alone would not be enough to ensure future food security. If there were a sudden cutoff in imported food, we would need a rapid switchover from production of nonfoods and nutritionally unimportant foods (e.g., coffee, macadamia nuts, herbs) to basic foods to ensure that everyone is well nourished. Plans should be made well in advance to facilitate such a conversion if and when it should become necessary. Historical wartime mobilizations suggest the possibilities for rapidly increasing local production of basic food.

In extreme emergencies, national and local governments might not be able to cope. Thus, some people focus on household and local food production, taking measures that are independent of government initiatives. For many

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people this is an ideological issue, based on the premise that even in good times, families and local communities ought to depend mainly on foods that they themselves produce. Some survivalists take this to an extreme, and many others do these things in a more limited way.

### Storing Food

To deal with emergencies, it is important to work not only on food production but also on food storage, at the state level, in communities, and in households. Household food storage is increasingly important because the major food sellers no longer maintain large warehouses. The just-in-time delivery system has sharply reduced the merchants' need for warehouses, so if shipping to the state were to be suddenly cut off, the supply of food would last no more than a few days. Many people store nonperishables and water supplies in their basements or closets. Many groceries now sell specially designed emergency food supplies to be stored at home.

Historically, many places have identified particular famine foods. Sweet potatoes are especially good for this purpose and could be grown in many places that are otherwise unused, such as forests and meadows (Kristof 2010). In Hawai'i, 'ulu (breadfruit) played an important role in protection against disasters. Hawai'i should prepare for many different kinds of contingencies. The state could be deeply affected by disasters locally, as well as by disasters elsewhere if they interrupt the flow of food to Hawai'i. For example, if bees stopped pollinating in Hawai'i, its agriculture system could weaken or even collapse. It would then have to import more food. If the bees quit working in some places outside Hawai'i, it could import from other places. If the bees quit everywhere, everyone would be in trouble.

Hawai'i should be concerned not only about actual shortages but also about anticipated shortages. If rumors build up about a possible shipping interruptions, there could be a run on food stores. There is no evident governmental plan for dealing with hoarding before, during, or after disaster events.

At the global level, speculation in food commodities can be viewed as another form of hoarding, one that could result in increased food insecurity for many people. The great global land grab, in which rich countries are gaining control over poor countries' agricultural resources to ensure their own future food security, is another form of hoarding at the global level (Center for Human Rights and Global Justice 2010). Hawai'i is not immune from such forces. To illustrate, if Hawaii's regular sources of rice suddenly diverted their produc-

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tion to other buyers, Hawai'i would be in serious trouble. The state is not likely to restore Waikiki to rice production. In prolonged emergencies there might be a need for food rationing of some sort. In extreme situations there might be a need for martial law, as there was in the 1940s (Bennett 1942).

As indicated above, the United Nations defines disasters as situations that are beyond the coping abilities of any particular place. This means that in disaster planning we must go beyond strengthening the capacities of individuals, families, and communities. There is a need to work out systems for assistance among different places. This could mean systems of support from one *ahupua'a*, or land division, to another, one island to another, or the entire state of Hawai'i to the United States, other nations, or the global community as a whole.

Despite Hawai'i's vulnerabilities, these relations have not been worked out with the clarity and foresight that is needed. If Hawai'i had a big problem with its food supply, it might be able to get help from the outside, but there are huge uncertainties. Where would the aid come from, on what terms? Some people might assume that the US government would come to Hawai'i's assistance under various contingencies, but we don't know for sure. How long would the US government help? In what ways? Are there commitments in writing? What if the entire United States faces an emergency and becomes unable to come to Hawaii's assistance? Where else could Hawai'i direct its appeals for help?

Ideas on how to approach these issues are suggested by the Model Intra-state Mutual Aid Legislation, available through the Hawai'i State Civil Defense website (<http://www.scd.hawaii.gov/nims.html>). Much work remains to be done on this. The State Civil Defense system focuses on hazards such as tsunamis and earthquakes but does not give attention to such things as shipping interruptions or disruptions in the state's agriculture.

Attention should be given to the food-related dimensions of disasters such as tsunamis and earthquakes. In all disasters, food-related problems begin to show up as soon as the warnings begin, with runs on stores. Any sort of prolonged disaster would raise serious concerns about food. There are also possibilities for food-centered disasters that have nothing to do with tsunamis and earthquakes.

Plans should be made for dealing with food crises regardless of the cause of the disruption. The benefits would far outweigh the costs. However, there is currently no clear mandate for any agency of state government to undertake this work.

## POVERTY

Poverty-based food insecurity occurs in high-income as well as low-income countries. A great deal could be learned from the way it is addressed in other high-income countries (e.g., Sydney Food 2007). In many countries the problem of food security for the poor is given little attention, but it occurs in some degree everywhere.

The US federal government has been undertaking regular studies of food insecurity, focusing on the type that is associated with poverty (USDA 2010). Adapting the USDA's methods, the Hawai'i Department of Health in 2001 went into the issues much more deeply. It concluded that "food insecurity was prevalent in Hawai'i: one in six (16.4%) households and 1 in 5 (19.2%) individuals experienced either being at risk of hunger or experiencing hunger in 1999–2000. The poor, children, single adult households, and Pacific Islanders were particularly vulnerable (Hawai'i Department of Health 2001)."

The map in figure 2.1 indicates the geographical distribution of food insecurity. In Waimanalo, Wai'anae, Puna, Ka'a'wa, and Moloka'i, in 2001 more than 30 percent of the people lived in households that were not sure how they would get their food. Because of the high cost of living, many people who are not officially poor suffer from food insecurity (Hawai'i Department of Health 2001). The official poverty rate in Hawai'i hovers around 10 percent. Among the different ethnic groups, Native Hawaiians have the lowest average family income (Kana'iaupuni et al. 2005). The impact is clear in the distribution of food insecurity in Hawai'i.

Another study on poverty-related food insecurity in Hawai'i (Giles et al. 2002) used the USDA framework for assessing food insecurity, but went further by sketching out a proposed Community Food Security Plan. It emphasized the need for action by the state legislature and described several bills that were submitted to the legislature, but they were not passed.

According to USDA estimates, averaging for the years 2007–2009, 11.4 percent of Hawaii's households had low or very low food security, compared with 13.5 percent for the United States as a whole; 3.9 percent of households in Hawai'i had very low food security, compared with 5.2 percent in the United States as a whole (USDA 2010). Thus, Hawai'i has done relatively well. Nevertheless, poverty-based food insecurity is a persistent issue in the state, and as indicated above, the prevalence is higher among particular groups.

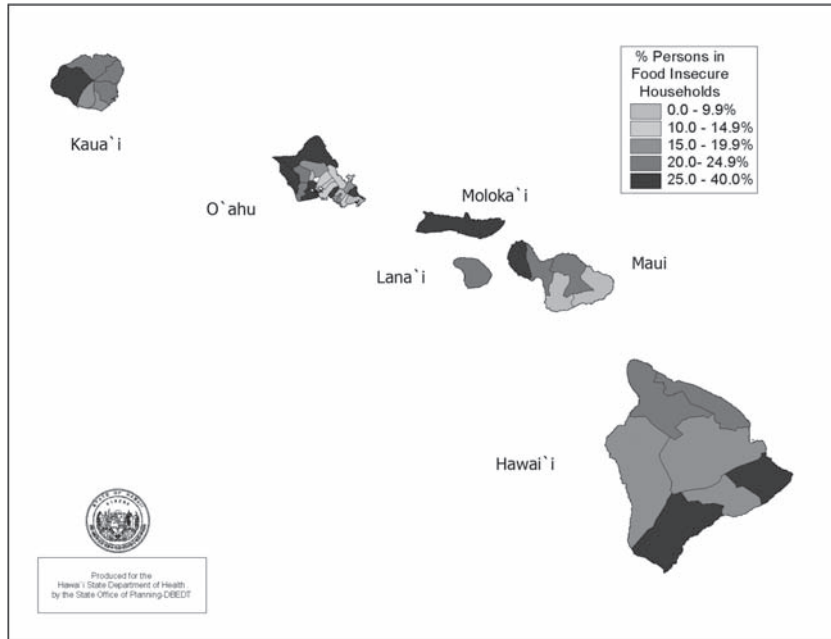


FIGURE 2.1. Percentage of individuals residing in food-insecure households (Baker et al. 2003).

The USDA has had to take into account the extraordinarily high price of food in only two states. “For residents in Alaska and Hawaii, the Thrifty Food Plan costs were adjusted upward by 19 percent and 63 percent, respectively, to reflect the higher cost of the Thrifty Food Plan in those States” (USDA 2010b, 57n3). Higher food prices mean greater food insecurity for much of the state’s population, not just the very poor.

The Hawai’i Foodbank describes itself as “the only nonprofit 501(c)3 agency in the state of Hawaii that collects, warehouses and distributes mass quantities of both perishable and non-perishable food to 250 member agencies as well as food banks on the Big Island, Maui and Kauai” (2010). In one year the Hawai’i Foodbank, through its cooperating agencies, served 183,500 different people in the state, including more than 55,000 children and more than 11,000 seniors. According to the Foodbank (2010):

- 79 percent of client households served are food insecure, meaning they do not always know where they will find their next meal.

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- 43 percent of these client households are experiencing food insecurity with hunger, meaning they are sometimes completely without a source of food.
- 83 percent of client households with children served are also food insecure.
- Of the 183,500 people the Hawai'i Foodbank network serves:
  - 79 percent of households have incomes below the federal poverty line.
  - The average monthly income for client households is \$850.
  - 42 percent of households have one or more adults who are working.

Each year the Foodbank organizes large-scale campaigns to collect nonperishable food products from many different donors. It then provides food at little or no cost to such agencies as Aloha Harvest, the Institute for Human Services, Salvation Army, Waikiki Health Center, River of Life Mission, Kau Kau Wagon, Harbor House, and many church pantries so that they can respond to food insecurity and related problems. The programs that hand out food to the needy do a good job of tiding people over, but many unmet needs remain.

The Foodbank periodically raises the alarm about widespread hunger in the state when it conducts its food collection drives, but historically the state government has said very little about the issue. This may leave people uncertain as to whether it is really a serious problem in Hawai'i.

The state government administers the hundreds of millions of dollars that come into the state each year for federally funded nutrition programs such as school meals, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP; formerly Food Stamps), and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, commonly known as WIC. However, apart from that, the state has not addressed the problem of poverty-based food insecurity. It has taken little notice of the data on food insecurity in Hawai'i that are provided each year by the US Department of Agriculture. The Hawai'i Department of Health used to include food-security questions in its annual health survey, but it no longer does, and it has not updated its 2001 study on *Hunger and Food Insecurity in Hawai'i*.

Poverty-based food insecurity in Hawai'i is not high by global standards, but it exists, and it contradicts the image the state tries to portray of the quality of life in the islands. Hawai'i does not provide a strong safety net for all of its people. State officials may feel that the coverage by federally funded programs such as SNAP and WIC, together with the work of the nongovernmental organizations, is enough to meet the needs. However, there is a need to

determine whether that is so and to consider what should be done for those who fall through the cracks.

The state's inattention to poverty-based food security issue may be partly due to the fear that dealing with it could be costly. However, many helpful things could be done at low cost. The state could do more to pursue federal grants for community nutrition, such as those available through the US Department of Agriculture. The state's modest support for the local nongovernmental groups working on the issue, such as the Hawai'i Foodbank, seems to have yielded considerable benefits for a very small investment.

Many people who are eligible for SNAP and WIC do not take advantage of their services. The state, working together with interested nongovernmental organizations, could encourage more eligible people to apply. Hawaii's legislature could learn from the ways in which other states invest a small amount of resources to help their people take full advantage of federal programs (e.g., Illinois General Assembly 2004).

There are other opportunities to draw in benefits for the poor, even if they are not specifically food oriented. For example, it has been estimated that as many as 34,000 taxpayers in Hawai'i may not be applying for the Earned Income Tax Credit to which they are entitled. The Family and Individual Self-Sufficiency Program at the Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development offers help along these lines, but more could be done (Tanna 2010).

When the state is going through a difficult time economically and cutting back on public services, it should be giving more attention to the food security issue, not less. This does not necessarily mean that the state has to provide more direct services. It should monitor the issue and call for help where it is needed.

The challenge is not to feed people but to see to it that they live under conditions in which they can provide for themselves. Dignity comes from providing for yourself and your family, not from standing in a soup-kitchen line. All able-bodied people should have decent opportunities to take care of themselves. Regardless of whether we draw on federal resources or charitable giving or local farmer's markets, the state government should take the responsibility to ensure that no one in the state remains food insecure.

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## FOOD POLICY BODIES

It is not only poverty-related food security that the state has ignored. Until recently, the state government in Hawai'i has given little attention to the security of the overall food supply, and it has not done disaster planning related to possible food crises. Whether we are concerned with sudden-onset disasters or the threats to the food supply that come with slow climate change and increasing energy costs, there are compelling reason for serious planning. Hawai'i's food system should be designed to be as resilient as possible so that it is prepared to deal with all sorts of changes in conditions. Ensuring good nutrition for all segments of the population under all conditions is a challenge that requires sustained attention.

In 2002 and early 2003, with prodding from interested citizens, the state legislature asked the Office of Planning in the Hawai'i Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism to convene a Food Security Task Force, to examine the best ways to ensure food security for Hawai'i's people. As a result of that group's work, in 2003 the legislature considered bills to create a permanent state Food Security Council. As stated in the conclusion of the task force's report:

Hawai'i has no State, county or local food policy council to coordinate or oversee food security activities. Without State policies, objectives, or goals to guide State actions, no organization can effectively coordinate assistance programs, conduct ongoing monitoring, or spearhead integrated planning programs. With an adequate State match (funds, personnel), on an on-going basis, the State could leverage available federal dollars for food security coordination, food stamp outreach and education, and farmers markets initiatives, which can then be used to enhance food security and put food dollars into the pockets of the needy, local farmers and food retailers thereby spurring our economy from the ground up. (2003, 14)

The idea was that the council, including both government officials and private citizens, would envision a food-secure Hawai'i and then try to figure out how to get there. The council would bring together all concerned parties to formulate a coherent strategy for identifying and addressing the issues. However, the legislature did not approve the proposal.

Given the persistent need to strengthen Hawai'i's food security, interested individuals and organizations gathered together in November 2010 to estab-

lish a nongovernmental, community-based Hawaii Food Policy Council (HFPC; Lukens 2010). As explained at its website (<http://www.hawaiifoodpolicycouncil.org/>) and its Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/HawaiiFPC>) the HFPC's primary role is to provide a forum for exploring the major food security issues confronting the state. Without the engagement of the state government, the HFPC's capacities would be very limited. There is a need for an interagency unit in the state government that would have primary responsibility for ensuring food security for all parts of the state's population under all conditions. This unit could work together with the community-based HFPC and serve as a major channel through which the government would hear the concerns of the people. Hawaii's government and people need to act together to strengthen the local food system, and address the full range of food security issues that confront it.

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