Seeds of Change

A new Land Assets Division plan calls for Kamehameha Schools to migrate from passive land management to active agricultural engagement and stewardship

You may be seeing a lot more local produce in your favorite supermarket – everything from Puna papaya to Waialua asparagus to Honoka’a sweet potato – thanks to a new agricultural plan that has been completed by Kamehameha Schools. Completed in October 2009, Kamehameha’s Land Assets Division (LAD) has developed a long-range Strategic Agricultural Plan that could increase the market share of locally grown produce from 45 percent to 65 percent, bringing Hawai’i a step closer to self-sufficiency.

Other potential community benefits of the plan include a boost in the grass-fed beef industry; the resurrection of local dairies; an increase in renewable energy projects and the creation of an estimated 4,600 new jobs in rural areas.

The plan also calls for Kamehameha to upgrade water irrigation systems and to develop an active, collaborative relationship with farmers working KS lands and industry leaders.

The agricultural plan was prepared to provide a framework, vision and strategy for optimal management of KS agricultural lands statewide. The plan includes 10 major goals (see sidebar on page 9) and 21 accompanying specific strategies. The plan covers a 20-30 year time frame, with updates scheduled every five years.

“The Strategic Agricultural Plan is a business case for investment in Kamehameha Schools land and human resources, not just to improve financial returns, but to fundamentally revitalize agriculture in Hawai’i.”

– Neil Hannahs ‘69
Director, Land Assets Division

Of those 88,000 acres, 71,000 acres are in use with 850 leases currently issued to agricultural tenants. The LAD team has developed a plan that focuses their division on every facet of agriculture, including renewable energy, water resources, forestry, pasture management, cultural resources and land legacy education.

“This is a homegrown plan. We did have consultants, but our continued on page 8

Above, Hawai’i island farmers Erik and Bill Beach ‘68 are growing a Hawaiian variety of sweet potato called melemele. Below left, Erik Beach works the fields located in Honoka’a.
SEEDS OF CHANGE

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team really drove it,” Hannahs said. “The identification of goals, the application to our lands – it all came from within our dedicated LAD team.”

Historically, Kamehameha has taken a more passive role in land stewardship, letting those with expertise and passion, such as Hawai’i’s farmers, work the land and grow their businesses. “We now know that in order for farming to work in the long-term, we need to invest in our lands to make them productive for our mission, eliminating any notion that the lands are a burden of ownership due to the cost of maintaining them,” Hannahs said.

To do so, Kamehameha Schools expects to invest more than $22 million during the 20-30 year lifespan of the plan on capital improvements including land clearing and preparation, the development of agricultural processing facilities; and irrigation system upgrades, repairs and expansions. Under the leadership of Kamehameha regional asset manager Ka’eo Duarte and water re-use Kamehameha regional asset manager Ka’eo Duarte and water reuse

Kamehameha regional asset manager Ka’eo Duarte and water resources engineer Linola Lindsey, LAD has already begun working to rethink and revitalize 100-year-old plantation water systems, as well as design/build new systems to serve the diversified needs of this era while honoring the needs of this era while honoring systems to serve the diversified as well as design/build new old plantation water systems, LAD has already begun working on the Hawai’i island through Honokaia on the east side of Kamehameha Schools’ agricultural processing facilities; and irrigation system upgrades, repairs and expansions. Under the leadership of LAD team.”

The company currently grows sweet potato and dry-land taro and recently started supplying KTA stores and T. Kaneshiro Store with their Hawaiian variety of sweet potato called melemele. Through last fall and winter, the company ‘ohana produced 1,000 to 2,000 pounds of sweet potato each week and said their long-term goal is to double this production. Bill Beach, who will soon add watermelon to his repertoire, said he is all for Kamehameha’s new approach in supporting its farmers. “I’m still digesting the plan but my initial reaction is joy that is evolving into what feels like pride. The intention is awesome. It’s a game changer, the effects of which will be felt for generations.” —Bill Beach ’68, Honoka’a farmer

A key component of the agricultural plan is the dedicated farmers who are committed to cultivating the land. A challenging occupation, farmers deal with fluctuating market prices, spells of drought, threats from rodents and insects, not to mention long hours of working in the sun. Yet, there are many who continue to make farming their labor of love. In 2000, Bill Beach ’68 acquired 10 acres of land in Honokaia on the east side of the Hawa’i’s island through Kamehameha Schools’ agricultural leasehold program. Beach’s company “The Happy Hawaiian” includes himself; his wife Lori who does the administrative work and marketing, son Erik and Erik’s wife Jonelle.

“Ultimately, Kamehameha’s

Tom Menezes (left) of Hawaiian Pineapple Company is just beginning to market chocolate made from the fruit of the cacao plant (above).
The Kamehameha Schools land portfolio includes 181,375 acres of agricultural land and 176,895 acres of conservation land on the islands of Hawai’i, Maui, Moloka’i, O’ahu and Kaua’i.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Acres</th>
<th>Agricultural</th>
<th>Conservation</th>
<th>Genealogy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hawai’i</td>
<td>293,065</td>
<td>160,935</td>
<td>132,130</td>
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<td>Kaua’i</td>
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<td>1,215</td>
<td>9,640</td>
<td>Kona, Ke’elikōlani</td>
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<td>Maui</td>
<td>2,465</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1,265</td>
<td>Ke’elikōlani, Kama’malu</td>
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<tr>
<td>O’ahu</td>
<td>46,985</td>
<td>14,755</td>
<td>32,230</td>
<td>Pa’ikī, Konia, Kamehameha V, Keku’anao’a, Keku’iaawa, Ke’elikōlani, Kama’malu, Leleiohoku</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moloka’i</td>
<td>4,900</td>
<td>3,270</td>
<td>1,630</td>
<td>Kamehameha V, Leleiohoku</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In October of 2009, he secured his manufacturer/processors-confectionary permit and has begun chocolate distribution to a few restaurants on Hawai’i island.

“The hope is that KS’ agricultural plan will be good for Menezes, good for Kamehameha Schools, and good for everyone who likes chocolate as well.”

“The plan focuses on the future of agriculture, there is an important part of it that honors the past. The plan sets aside land to restore and revitalize traditional Hawaiian agricultural practices.”

“As Hawaiians, we draw a lineage to these lands—these lands which nourish and support us,” Hannahs said.

“We know that the ‘āina was here first and we were here second. Therefore the land and its resources are our elder sibling and we must respect and care for it as such.”

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