

Hawaii

Globally unique commodities from coffee to taro, with island-specific production challenges and strong premium markets



Hawaii ranks 39th nationally with 104 certified organic operations and 100,185 certified acres. Hawaii's organic agriculture is defined by globally unique commodities that command premium prices worldwide. With \$6.1M in OREI/ORG funding and UH CTAHR's island-specific research, Hawaii is expanding organic certification across coffee, macadamia, and taro while confronting the structural challenge of reducing the state's near-total dependence on imported food.

104 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	100,185 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$6.1M OREI / ORG FUNDING	+35% MORE WORKERS VS. CONVENTIONAL
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STATE PROFILE AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	104 (39th nationally)
Certified organic acres	100,185
OREI / ORG funding (cumulative)	\$6.1M
Worker employment vs. conventional	+35%
Split operations	29% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand organic coffee certification to capture growing premium and specialty third-wave coffee market premiums.
- Develop organic macadamia nut supply chains targeting premium confectionery and specialty retail globally.
- Build local organic food production capacity to reduce Hawaii's 85-90% dependence on imported food.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Coffee:** Hawaii is the only U.S. state producing commercial coffee.
- ▶ **Macadamia Nuts:** Big Island organic macadamia for premium specialty markets.
- ▶ **Taro:** culturally significant staple; organic taro for poi markets.
- ▶ **Tropical Fruits & Vegetables:** diverse organic tropical crops for local and export channels.

BARRIERS

- Geographic isolation drives high organic input and certification costs that compress farm-level margins.
- Limited arable land and development pressure on agricultural land constrain organic expansion.
- Biosecurity regulations on plant material restrict access to certified organic seed and planting stock.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Hawaii's organic agriculture is anchored by globally irreplaceable commodities: Kona coffee, macadamia nuts, and taro. The state's existential organic challenge is food security: reducing 85-90% import dependency through local organic production requires targeted infrastructure investment and a sustained farmer support pipeline from CTAHR and Southwest TOPP.

Resources for Farmers

Hawaii organic farmers are supported by the Hawaii Organic Farmers Association, the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, UH CTAHR Extension, and Southwest TOPP. Together they address Hawaii's unique island certification, input access, and market connectivity needs.

Hawaii Organic Farmers Assoc.

FARMER ADVOCACY & CERTIFICATION

- Hawaii's primary organic farmer advocacy and education organization
- Organic certification assistance and cost-share navigation for island farmers
- Annual Organic Farming Conference and island-based farmer networks
- Technical workshops on coffee, macadamia, taro, and tropical fruit systems

hofa.us

Hawaii Dept of Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- Hawaii Grown branding and market development for organic producers
- NRCS Hawaii: EQIP Organic Initiative programs for island farm transition
- Biosecurity compliance support for organic seed and input sourcing

hdoa.hawaii.gov

UH CTAHR Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic coffee, macadamia, taro, and tropical crop production specialists
- Island-specific soil health, pest management, and water conservation research
- Komohana Research and Extension Center: organic systems field trials on Big Island
- Farm business planning and beginning farmer programs for island operations

ctahr.hawaii.edu

Southwest TOPP (CCOF-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves AZ, CA, HI, NM, NV, TX, UT, and Pacific territories
- Paid organic mentor matching adapted to island and tropical production systems
- Workshops on organic tropical crop certification and pest management
- Market access development for organic coffee and specialty crop producers

organictransition.org/region/west-southwest

DID YOU KNOW? HAWAII

Hawaii is the only U.S. state that produces commercial coffee, and Kona coffee is one of the most recognizable and premium-priced coffee origins in the world. Organic certification adds a significant premium to already-premium Kona and Kauai coffee, making Hawaii organic coffee among the highest per-pound revenue crops in U.S. agriculture. Yet despite this commodity advantage, Hawaii imports 85-90% of its food. Expanding organic production across coffee, taro, and tropical fruits simultaneously addresses both the premium market opportunity and Hawaii's food security vulnerability.

KEY SOURCES

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