

Growers' Panel Report for Island of Hawaii

HOWARD YAMASAKI

INFORMATION SOURCES:

C & H FARMS

HAWAII AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

HILO COFFEE MILL

ISSUES FOR CONCERN

- Coffea arabica , var. Kona typica is the predominant cultivar:
 - Planting of other cultivars, such as mokka, caturra and catuai, may change the coffee taste profile for a specific geographic origin
 - Genetically modified coffee plants may eventually eliminate the predominant gene pool through cross-pollination
 - Genetically modified crops are not favorably accepted by many individuals and by many countries
 - Importation of non-fumigated green beans from outside of the state may introduce devastating pests (borers, rust, etc.)
- Increased planting in the Kona, Hamakua, Kau and Puna districts:
 - Increased labor shortage
 - Increased labor housing shortage
 - Increased marketing problems
 - No major wet-mill or dry-mill in Hamakua or Kau
- Influx of inexperienced new growers:
 - Increased need for educational workshops (on-going through the CES, Kona Coffee Council and Kona County Farm Bureau)
 - Imperative need for updated best management practices to maintain the highest standard of quality for each geographic origin
- Lack of county and/or state agricultural water systems for many farms:
 - Droughts are becoming more frequent
 - Dependency on only rainfall is extremely risky
 - Using potable drinking water for agriculture is cost prohibitive
 - Irrigation is not practical with the average catchment system
 - Wet-mill processing is difficult with the average catchment system
- Excessive rainfall in Puna, Hamakua and upper Kau:
 - High fertilizer leaching rate requires more frequent fertilizer applications
 - Weed control is nearly impossible
- Urbanization is becoming rampant:
 - Important agricultural lands, including unique agricultural lands like the "Kona Coffee Belt", must be protected in perpetuity
 - Federal, State and County laws which do not support agriculture must be amended or repealed, or new laws must be enacted

Ka`u and Puna Districts

Hilo Coffee Mill- Kathy Patton

Puna

In the Puna district, there are over 34 separate farms with over 114 acres of planted coffee. One individual farm is a 30-acre farm and another is a 15-acre farm. The average puna farm is 2.15 acres. The most popular Varietal seems to be the semi-dwarf caturra with over half of the total acreage. Kona Typica is second among farmers in this region and there are 4 or 5 acres of mokka doing very well.

Puna has no real records for cherry harvested or available parchment. The farms are all young and reporting has been sparse. We are just beginning to get the information together for future reference. The smaller farm lends itself to handpicking and the gourmet market. Puna coffee has been well received worldwide.

Ka`u

In the Kau district, there are 45 separate farms and 450 acres of current crop planted. 6 or 7 farms have 15 or more acres. One farm has 80 acres. The average farm in Kau is 4.5 acres. This resembles the farm plan for a single-family farm. The most popular varietal is the Kona Typica with Cattura and Semi Dwarf Cattura on some farms. There is no known Mokka source. Current available parchment from the previous year is 34,000 lbs. This year's projected parchment will be 70,000 available starting in late summer to early winter. This region is also just beginning to establish reporting practices so that we can get accurate projections for future marketing goals. Coffee farming in Hawaii is difficult at best. Some people have their own market established and they seem to do well. The future of coffee will have to do with successful marketing in the near future and beyond.

Challenges

- Due to the excessive rainfall in Puna, Hamakua and the higher elevations of Ka`u, fertilizing must be done every four to six weeks. We grow in rocky volcanic terrain with absolutely nothing in the soil to begin with.
- Weed control is nearly impossible due to the abundant rainfall.
- With Kona having such a big head start and being world known, Puna, Ka`u, and Hamakua coffees are very hard to promote.

Puna District Designation Update

The Puna District Designation has been approved for amendments with the Commodity Branch. It is pending other amendments that will be bundled for approval by year end. This update is provided by Walter Mitsui of the Quality Assurance Division of the Commodity Branch, Department of Agriculture.