



Richard Ha of Hamakua Springs Country Farms

Hawaii Needs to Pull Out the Stops To Find Sources of Alternate Energy

Fossil fuels are running out and the earth's population is growing by 70 million people a year, two parallel trends with broad implications for Hawaii, said Big Island farmer Richard Ha.

Ha, noting that most of the energy coming into the state is oil based and used for transportation, urged farmers and ag-support people attending a conference on sustaining Hawaii agriculture in Kona Sept. 23-24 to embrace alternative fuels.

But what can Hawaii do to replace oil?

From a farmer's point of view, said Ha, producing biofuel may not make economic sense. For example, say a barrel of oil costs \$200. Each barrel contains 42 gallons. At 6.8 pounds per gallon, a barrel of oil weighs 286 pounds. At \$200 for the barrel, a pound is valued at 70 cents.

A farmer may calculate that he would have to squeeze 4 pounds of nuts to produce 1 pound of oil. If it takes 4 pounds of a product to make 1 pound of oil, when oil is priced at \$200 a barrel, a farmer could expect to make no more than 18 cents a pound – not a money-making proposition.



Richard Ha

Still, all options should be considered.

"At this point we cannot afford to turn away any opportunity that comes before us – sun, wind, ocean and geothermal," said Ha, who operates Hamakua Springs Country Farms, a three-generation

diversified company that produces bananas, lettuce and hydroponic tomatoes on the slopes of Mauna Kea.

"If we don't do this for the future, we're in trouble," said Ha.

"Everything in our island lifestyle is based on energy.

Ha described how he harnesses alternative energy sources on his own farm, where 140 inches of rain fall every year.

"The rain is free and it will be for a long time," he said, citing three springs flowing through the property that are used for energy.

"All farms, big and small, need to use these alternatives to feed everybody here in state," said Ha. "We need to be positive, work together and think outside the box."

For more information on Hamakua Spring County Farm, visit www.hamakuasprings.com.