Because they rely on imported food, Hawaii and the other Pacific Islands face food insecurity issues. Pacific Island farmers also rely on expensive imported fertilizers with prices that continue to increase substantially. The issue is so important that participants in a 2008 Western SARE listening session in Hawaii ranked replacing imported fertilizers with local resources as the highest research, education and development priority. Local organic sources of nutrients have promise—including compost, tankage (rendered animal products), biochar and seaweeds—but more research is needed on their use.

Three SARE-funded projects on locally produced organic fertilizers are taking a step in that direction. One project evaluated quality, maturity, nitrogen-release pattern and crop growth for 10 composts through a series of lab, greenhouse and on-farm trials. It led to an increased demand for locally produced tankage and a reported increase in taro and sweet potato yields and quality when using invasive algae as a fertilizer.

The second project followed up on the promise of tankage but using it as a solution for fertigation. There was some benefit from using this recipe compared to imported liquid organic fertilizer. The third project is continuing the momentum by evaluating biochar combined with compost.

For more information on these projects, see www.sare.org/projects, and search for project numbers SW11-055, SW14-026 and SW16-021.
SARE Grants in Hawaii

SARE has awarded a total of 104 grants in Hawaii since 1988.

- 10 On-Farm Research Grants
- 26 Research & Education Grants
- 18 Professional Development Grants
- 44 Farmer/Rancher Grants
- 6 Graduate Student Grant

SARE’s Impact

- 53 percent of producers report using a new production technique after reading a SARE publication.
- 79 percent of producers said they improved soil quality through their SARE project.
- 64 percent of producers said their SARE project helped them achieve higher sales.

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For detailed information on SARE projects, go to www.SARE.org