

## PROJECTS FUNDED BY RETA-H: AN UPDATE

In this section, we have tried to capture the status of the 77 business incubation projects funded by the RETA-H program. Each project was unique in how it was constructed, how it was carried out and how it evolved after RETA-H funds were expended. Some projects resulted in many different businesses (usually farms) while others were meant to establish a single business. Some projects were unsuccessful, but ten years after the program began and three years after program funding ended, 74% of the projects were still in operation. Based upon state and national statistics, the four-year survival rate for businesses is 42% in Hawai'i and 50% nationally. Of the successful projects, each resulting business is unique in its potential for future development. That potential is described below. It is hoped that these descriptions do some justice to the enormous task each success story represents and the hard work that each successful business required.

### 1. Tropical Hawaiian Products: Hamakua Papaya 12/93-7/01

This was the first project of the RETA-H program. The project period was from December to July 2001. Tropical Hawaiian Products submitted the proposal and handled the financial part of the project but the project was



implemented by a group of former sugar workers. Prior to this project, it was generally believed that papaya could not be grown commercially on the Hamakua Coast. However, the project demonstrated that papaya does grow well on Hamakua lands. After resolving some serious problems with water availability, papaya continues to be cultivated in the Hamakua District both by former RETA-H growers and others. Many growers transferred to the Puna District, once a disease-resistant variety of papaya became available and now cultivate larger acreages of papaya there.



### 2. Waiialua Sugar Company: Diversified Crops 4/94-12/96

This bio-remediation diversified agriculture project was located in Waiialua on O'ahu. The purpose of the project was to evaluate methods of re-using the discharged sewage effluent from Schofield Army Barracks by mixing it with irrigation water. This diluted effluent mixture was applied to crops such as sunn hemp, kenaf, forage grass, cacao and coffee, as well as sugar. The funding was instrumental in keeping the Waiialua Sugar Company in operation for two years while it developed new agricultural enterprises that were passed on to the Dole Company, owners of the sugarcane land. The project also assisted the military by providing a workable and affordable system of secondary effluent wastewater disposal for Schofield Barracks.

### 3. Hawai'i Haylage: Feed Production, Hamakua 5/94-4/95

This was the first of three RETA-H projects aimed at supporting cattle production on former Hamakua sugar lands. Richard Bader watched how a friend was making haylage from local "California" grass in the isolated Ka'u District on Hawai'i Island and thought it would make sense to do the same in a more central location in Hamakua. From 100 acres and substantial fertilizer input, he was able to make 7-8,000 bales of haylage per year from 15-20 tons of dry matter/acre/year (as compared to mainland alfalfa at 4-6 tons of dry matter/acre/year). California grass required no pesticide applications and grew very rapidly, even in the wettest of weather. Although the dry matter had 20% protein, the grass also held 70% water. "The haylage project showed that you can use local forages (in other words, everybody else's weeds) to make a high-quality cattle feed", says Bader. In 2000, he sold this operation to another RETA-H-funded project, Island Dairy, which now uses the haylage to support their rapidly growing milking herd.

