

9. Circle "C" Ranch & Hay: Feed and Beef Production, O`ahu 5/95-5/96; 11/99-10/00

This was the first business incubation RETA-H project funded outside of RETA-H's original mandate to support the Hamakua coast communities of Hawai'i Island. As sugar mills elsewhere began to close, the RETA-H program accepted proposals from the other communities affected by these closures. This project, located in Ewa Beach on O`ahu, had two goals: First, the project established a 100-acre irrigated grass-hay operation to supply hay to livestock operations such as dairies and stables. Second, the project expanded a cow-calf operation from 16 to 40 head to supply beef for the local market. The businesses are ongoing, but hay sales have slowed. The owner, Terry Cozzens, is anticipating a resurgence in sales in the near future.

10. Big Island Pork Industry Association: Integrated Crop and Swine, Ka`u 8/95-7/96; 10/97-6/98

The Hawai'i swine industry, which produces "hot pork" for a niche market, is characterized by small farms approximately 3 to 5 acres in size. This project was awarded to Dane Shibuya, representing an association of local swine producers. The project's purpose was to encourage the establishment of more integrated local swine farms, to educate more community members to produce healthy and disease-free hogs, to establish and manage integrated and profitable swine farms, to demonstrate successful methods of odor and waste control and to establish farms that meet federal and state guidelines. When his photo and story were published in an industry magazine, Shibuya became nationally recognized for his waste control system that uses macadamia husks strewn across a sloped cement floor in the pigpens. As the pigs move, the husks and any pig droppings slowly migrate toward the lower end and drop into a cement "gutter" from which it is removed as a fertile compost. The system controls odor and eliminates the mess that is usually associated with pigs. Shibuya, using additional RETA-H funds, assisted two other former sugar workers in setting up their own farms. He also implemented a summer youth employment program and educational tours to his pig farm.

11. Hawai'i Taro Growers: Upland Taro, Hamakua and Ka`u 8/95-7/96

Taro is an important traditional crop with tremendous potential for new uses. This project was designed to establish taro production on former sugar cane lands and to help preserve the rural lifestyles of former sugar communities. Following the completion of the RETA-H grant, the group received a Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) grant (Phase I and II) to develop a market for their product. Using these funds, the group's former president, Donn Kansako, has worked with another RETA-H project (Miko Foods) to develop a variety of products made from taro. The success of two other RETA-H-funded projects (Taro Dream and Maui Taro Burger) will soon require the group to increase their production substantially.

12. Ahualoa Sawmill Corporation: Sawmill Operation, Hamakua

RETA-H funds were used to move an existing sawmill and set it up in a more central location. The Project Leader and owner of this sawmill died shortly after the RETA-H funds were expended. The family took on the project and a substantial USDA Rural Development loan was obtained to continue the momentum begun by the RETA-H grant, assuming other investors would support the project. After a long series of setbacks, the business finally failed and was terminated. Presently the government owns the premises and at least three groups, including a local community group, are trying to buy the property—all of them interested in the original idea to make the area a community activity center.

13. Moaula Kei: Ka`u Coffee 4/96-4/97

Brenda Domondon is a third generation coffee producer. She agreed to establish 10 five-acre coffee farms for her participating displaced sugar workers. They found new, quicker, and less expensive means to clear and plant, making it possible to establish 12 displaced and one non-displaced sugar worker as coffee producers without extra cost. As the interest within the Ka`u community continued to grow, she applied for and received two more RETA-H grants for the same purpose. Using ingenuity, community support and plain hard work, they established 36 farms for her project and many more using private funds. The coffee farmers have since established a coffee cooperative. Although coffee prices have dropped considerably, they have been harvesting an ever-increasing amount of coffee since 1997.

