

Hawai'i's Food Producers: Fishermen and Farmers

BY HAWAI'I SEAFOOD COUNCIL

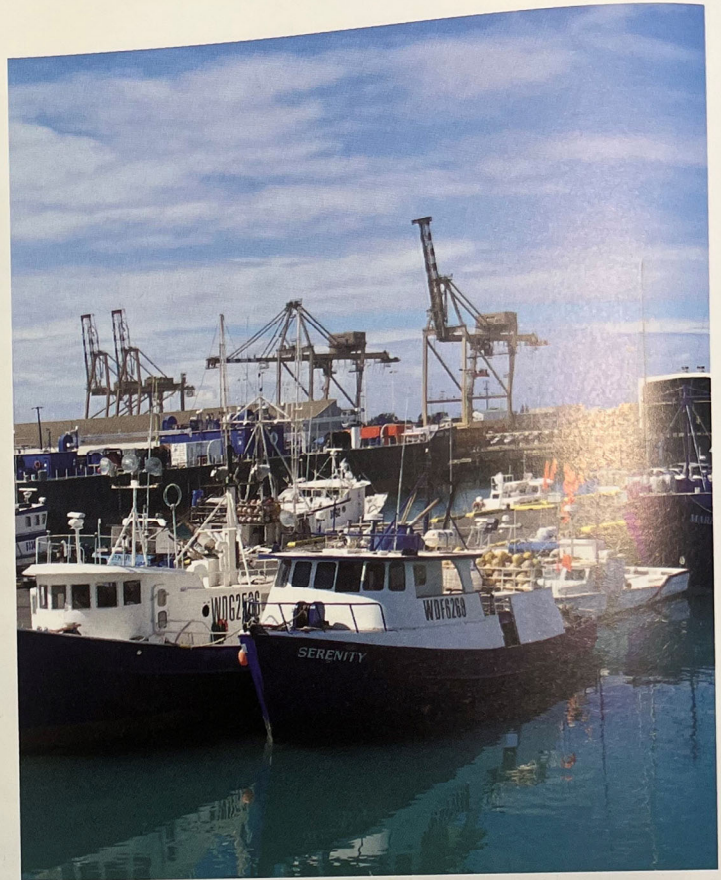
HAWAI'I'S FIRST FOOD SYSTEM WAS FISHING

Both agriculture and aquaculture took time to establish. Food self-sufficiency was not an option then, but an absolute need for survival. Together, fishing, foraging, farming and fishponds fed Hawai'i's first people. Fishing continues to be a vital island food system complementing local farm production. Today, fresh tuna (bigeye and yellowfin) caught by longliners, handliners and trollers is Hawai'i's largest-value food commodity produced in the state.

Local seafood for Hawai'i residents. Hawai'i consumers eat two to three times more seafood than the national average. Seafood delivers nutrients in a tasty package with profound benefits for brain and heart health. Fresh 'ahi sashimi and poke are "must haves" on the table for all types of gatherings in Hawai'i, from baby lū'au to celebrations of life. Hawai'i without local fish? Inconceivable.

Local seafood and Hawai'i tourism. Hawai'i seafood has been at the center-of-the-plate since the development of Hawai'i Regional Cuisine by our talented local chefs who spotlighted the diversity and quality of Hawai'i's farm and seafood products. Local seafood (wild and farm-raised) will continue to be an essential part of our visitor industry product as Hawai'i continues to excel as a food tourism destination.

Hawai'i's farmers and fishermen face similar challenges as food producers. Local food producers face a similar set of hurdles. Both are 1) dependent on the weather and longer-term climate impacts, 2) producing perishable products, 3) facing high operating costs, 4) facing stiff market competition (domestic and imports) and 5) concerned that consumers have become disconnected from food producers.



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Imported food dominates our island food supply (farm produce and fish). Imported seafood dominates the U.S. seafood supply. It is estimated that less than 10% of the total U.S. seafood supply is American. Fishing communities across the U.S. are struggling for survival.

How do we preserve local food production? The solution is to support local food producers with your food dollars at the market when you can. Just as "Buying Local" is essential for the future of Hawai'i's farmers, buying local fish, directly supports our fishermen and the future availability of Hawai'i seafood.

Get informed. Please help by reading labels (not just price) and asking questions about the origin of seafood or farm products when not clearly disclosed. Please find out more about our local fishing industry and Hawai'i seafood through the Hawai'i Seafood Council website (www.Hawaii-Seafood.org) and on social media (@Hawaii_Seafood). Visit the website for easy access to the latest content and easy registration for the unique experience of guided tours of the Honolulu Fish Auction and fishing vessels dockside at the Fishing Village at Pier 38, Honolulu Harbor. Eat Hawai'i seafood. Hawai'i fishermen and fish farmers will thank you. ●