

Q&A: Hawaii mayors on pros and cons of GM crops on their islands

Hawaii Business magazine interviewed the three Neighbor Island Hawaii mayors on various topics including the future of agriculture and GMOs. Edited answers below

Hawaii Business: Is there a role for GMO agriculture on your islands?

Kauai's mayor, Bernard Carvalho: I believe that to be successful in creating a viable and robust agricultural economy, we must have a diverse portfolio of types of ag: seed agriculture, organic agriculture, agricultural parks, tropical flowers, community gardens, energy crops and many other types of ag. This will take a careful balancing and management of resources, but I believe it can be done and must be done.

Maui's mayor, Alan Arakawa: Our County Council is reviewing the Kauai bill. Everyone is waiting to see what happens. But almost all of the fruits and vegetables we have in Hawaii have been genetically modified. I've been a farmer most of my life, and grew up on a farm, and have done a lot of crossing of different kinds of plants because it was so expensive to buy seedlings. With fruit trees, I've grafted, for instance, the Hawaiian lemon root stock with other citrus. Almost all the Haden mangoes are grafted. We marry the things we want in a crop using GMO by putting two different kinds of genes together to create what you want.

GMO is an issue brought up both nationally and internationally, I think, because people hate the idea of big companies having the seeds and the control of an industry. It started as an anti-big-conglomerates movement rather than a science-is-bad movement. After all, every research group researching agricultural products is doing some type of genetic modifying. And look at what else we're doing: We're putting animal parts into humans. For instance, human heart valves are being replaced with pig valves. Is that bad?

Hawaii's mayor, Billy Kenoi: GMO has been very important and beneficial to our cut-flower, orchid, anthurium and nursery industry. The science research has been cutting-edge and we've seen a lot of innovation and creativity, and certainly in our papaya industry, the importance of research is well-known for maintaining, growing and protecting its viability.

Read the full original article: [Talk Story with the Neighbor Island Mayors](#)