Revitalizing, Sustaining, Strengthening

2002 IMPACT REPORT

Moving Forward

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
If diversified agriculture is to succeed in Hawai’i, fruit flies must be suppressed.

Any farmer knows that fruit flies are pesky critters. But that’s not even half the story. They are downright expensive. Not only do they inflict millions of dollars of losses, they also prevent Hawai’i farmers from exporting their produce to lucrative overseas markets because those markets don’t want to run the risk of importing the tiny marauders. If diversified agriculture is to succeed in Hawai’i, fruit flies must be suppressed. And if fruit flies are to be suppressed, all the farmers in an infested area must cooperate.

A test of such an area-wide suppression is underway. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, CTAHR (led by entomologist Ronald Mau), the Hawai’i Department of Agriculture, and local farmers are cooperating to suppress Hawai’i’s fruit fly populations. They are using techniques that are both environmentally friendly and readily manageable by farmers after the researchers have packed up and gone home.

Preliminary results are promising. Using the tactics promoted by the program, participating farmers in the Big Island’s Waimea area reduced their melon fly population to practically zero in about three months. Melon growers on O‘ahu have seen a noticeable decline in the number of flies attacking their fruit. With educational materials prepared by CTAHR, the experience gained in this study, and the will to continue cooperating, farmers will have the expertise to control fruit fly populations and increase their profits.