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East Oahu farmers face big decision about the fate of their existence

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By Duane Shimogawa [bio](#) | [email](#)

HAWAII KAI (KHNH) - It's the last large piece of undeveloped land in East Oahu and farmers have been working to prevent its development for the last five years.

The farmers face a big decision come next year involving the fate of their existence there.

In just seven months, the farmer's lease rent will be re-negotiated and the outcome will likely determine the future of this lush, productive region.

Glenn Nii is the president of the Kamilo Nui Farmers Cooperative. He's also one of 12 farmers here. From truck farming to nurseries, the nearly 90 acres of ag land is tucked away, behind a residential subdivision.

On Saturday, about 500 people got their first peek of this valley.


Organizers hope this first annual "Farm Day" will help to emphasize the value of farms in this area and throughout the state.

The farmers of Kamilo Nui are part of a cooperative. Under the terms of the 1970 agreement with the owner, Kamehameha Schools, all of the farmers are automatically members of the co-op.

"Farm awareness of East Oahu, we'd like to get this aina thing going with sustainability of East Oahu, so there's a lot of people in East Oahu that don't know we're back here yet," Nii said.

Many of the farmers are near retirement age. Their 60-year leases are up in 2025, but rental re-

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Glenn Nii



Governor Linda Lingle



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year.

"We don't know where we are going to be yet, and if it's too high feasibility, it could tell us whether we stay or move on," Nii said. "Some of us will just retire, some will have to move."

He says a developer planned to build homes in this valley before and it may happen again, if the rent is raised too high.

Governor Linda Lingle says she supports the farmers here, but also feels Kamehameha Schools is sensitive to this issue.

"For us in Hawaii, agriculture is what sustains our lifestyle having locally grown produce, but it's also about a lifestyle for the people who want to live a more rural way of life," she said.

According to Nii, Kamehameha Schools has said they want to keep the land as it is, but the burning question is how much they'll charge the farmers.



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If rent is raised why not just exchange the fruits of the farmers labor with the school? I am sure the school system can use the fruits and vegetables to not only provide healthier choices but also to teach the children about this great profession.

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