National Agricultural Statistics Service

Hawaii Agricultural Statistics Service
Hawaii Department of Agriculture

Hawaii Taro

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Total production declines

Hawaii taro production is estimated at 6.1 million pounds for 2002, down 5 percent from 2001. The combined farm price for poi and Chinese taro increased 2 percent from 2001 to a new record-high average of 54 cents per pound in 2002. Total farm revenues declined 3 percent to $3.3 million in 2002 as the drop in production more than offset the increase in farm prices.

Poi taro production setback by a number of factors

Taro for processing totaled 5.8 million pounds in 2002, down 6 percent from the previous year. The bulk of all processed taro, and taro in general, is made into poi and yields across the State were hampered by several factors. Hardest hit was the Hanalei area of Kauai island, a major source of poi taro, where flash flooding occurred in November 2001 and again in March of 2002. While initial damage from these episodes of flooding was modest, plant growth was setback which resulted in smaller-sized corms at harvest. Another consequence of the floods was the unfortunate spreading of Apple snails *(Pomacea canaliculata)* over a wider area. A major pest of taro growers, these snails multiply rapidly and can devour significant taro foliage resulting in stunted corms. In addition, farmers were forced to spend considerable time and money to control these snails.

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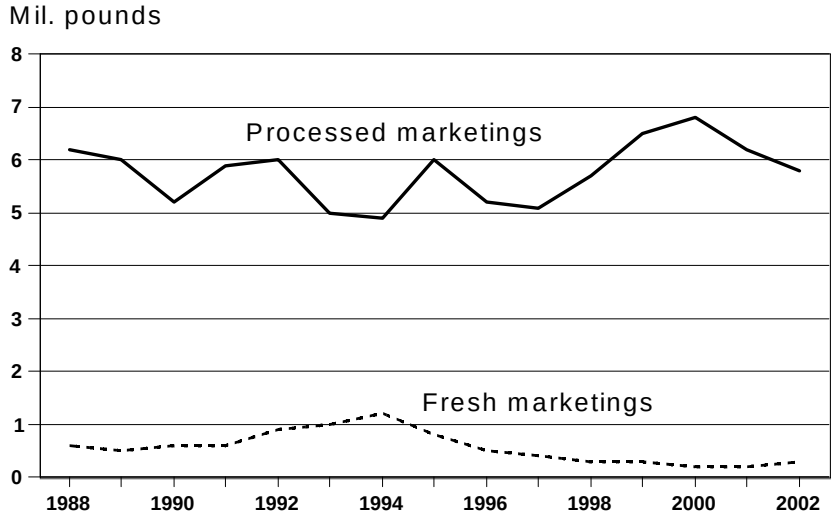
Hawaii taro marketings, by use. State of Hawaii, 1994-98



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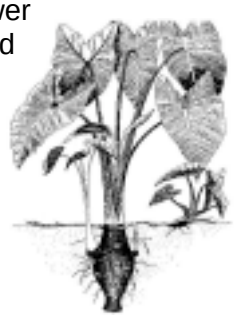
Weather conditions remained generally unfavorable for taro growers during the first quarter of 2002 as five cold fronts, two significant Kona lows, and a variety of upper and lower disturbances passed through the State. The cloudy skies, cool temperatures, and occasionally heavy showers that accompanied these weather systems fostered an increase in leaf blight. Also in 2002, taro farmers continued to battle against the Taro Pocket Rot (TPR) disease which results in pockets of diseased tissue in the corm. In a breakthrough, the Department of Plant and Environmental Protection Sciences of the University of Hawaii was able to clinically reproduce TPR for the first time in 2002.

Compounding all these problems that were hampering the supply of poi taro, farmers also saw the demand for their product decline following the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Poi sales slowed as fewer tourists visited the State and the local economy began to slowdown.❖



2002 Hawaii taro statistics

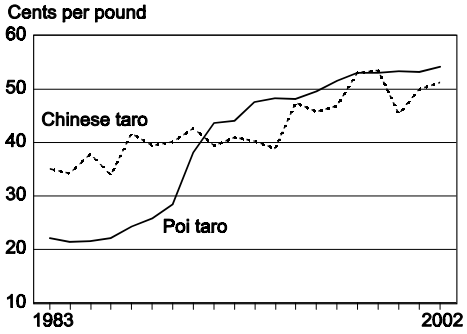
TARO: Number of farms, acreage, marketings, price, and value, by islands, 1998-2002

Year	Farms	Acreage in crop [1]			Marketings			Farm price			Value of sales
		Poi taro	Chinese taro	Total	Fresh	Processed	Total	Poi taro	Chinese taro	All	
	Number	*Acres*			*1,000 pounds*			*Cents per pound*			*$1,000*
					STATE						
1998	180	400	90	490	300	5,700	6,000	53.0	53.0	53.0	3,180
1999	190	420	80	500	300	6,500	6,800	53.0	53.5	53.0	3,604
2000	185	430	40	470	200	6,800	7,000	53.3	45.3	53.0	3,710
2001	170	420	20	440	200	6,200	6,400	53.2	50.0	53.0	3,392
2002	**150**	**400**	**30**	**430**	**300**	**5,800**	**6,100**	**54.2**	**51.2**	**54.0**	**3,294**
					HAWAII						
1998	100	90	70	160	250	850	1,100	61.0	53.0	57.0	627
1999	100	100	80	180	200	900	1,100	61.0	53.2	57.5	632
2000	85	80	40	120	200	700	900	61.6	45.3	56.2	506
2001	60	70	20	90	150	650	800	60.4	48.9	51.5	443
2002	**50**	**60**	**20**	**80**	**200**	**550**	**750**	**61.4**	**48.4**	**55.3**	**415**
					KAUAI						
1998	55	230	5	235	*	3,800	3,800	52.0	[3]	52.0	1,976
1999	65	230	*	230	*	4,300	4,300	52.0	[3]	52.0	2,236
2000	70	25	*	250	*	4,800	4,800	52.5	[3]	52.5	2,520
2001	70	250	*	250	*	4,300	4,300	52.5	[3]	52.5	2,258
2002	**65**	**250**	*****	**250**	**40**	**4,060**	**4,100**	**53.4**	**[3]**	**53.4**	**2,189**
					MAUI/MOLOKAI/OAHU [4]						
1998	25	80	15	95	50	1,050	1,100	52.4	53.5	52.5	577
1999	25	90	*	90	100	1,300	1,400	52.4	54.9	52.6	736
2000	30	100	*	100	*	1,300	1,300	52.6	[3]	52.6	684
2001	40	100	*	100	50	1,250	1,300	53.0	57.3	53.0	691
2002	**35**	**90**	**10**	**100**	**60**	**1,190**	**1,250**	**54.6**	**67.2**	**55.2**	**690**

[1] Survey conducted in November of each year. Does not include acreage used primarily for leaf production.
[2] Kauai combined with Maui, Molokai, and Oahu to avoid disclosure of individual operations.
[3] Not shown separately but accounted for in State average.
[4] Oahu combined with Maui and Molokai to avoid disclosure of individual operations.
* = Less than 5,000 pounds or 5 acres.

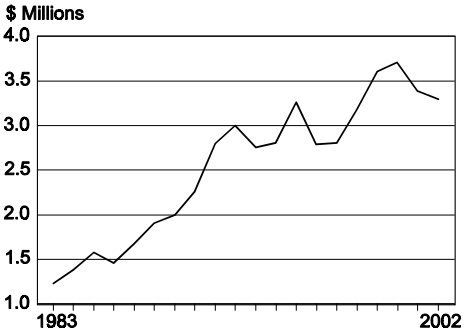
Hawaii taro trends

Farm prices



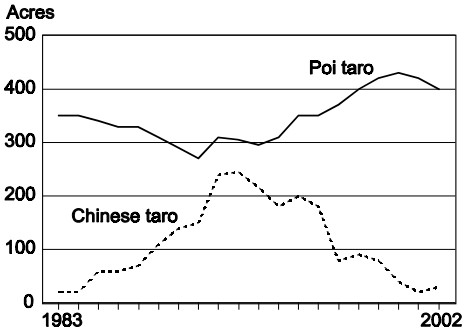
Farm prices for poi taro have shown an average growth rate of 1.3 percent over the last ten years (1993-2002). Chinese taro farm prices have grown at an average annual rate of 2.5 percent over the same 10-year period.

Farm value



Total farm revenues declined in 2002 as increases in farm prices were more than offset by a 5-percent decline in production. During the past 10 years, farm revenues have grown at an average annual rate of 1.8 percent.

Total acreage in crop



Poi taro acreage increased at an average annual rate of 3.1 percent during the most recent 10-year period. Chinese taro acreage, on the other hand, has averaged a 17.9 percent decline over the same period.

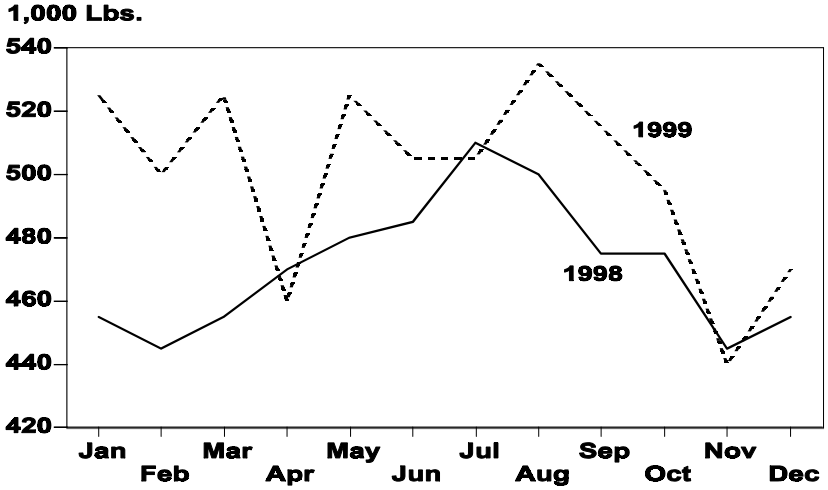
Poi taro millings

Taro millings decline 6 percent

Taro for poi millings totaled 5.7 million pounds in 2002, down 6 percent from 2001. Except on three occasions, monthly taro for poi millings were lower than year ago levels throughout 2002. Adverse weather, pests, and disease were mainly responsible for the reduced output experienced in 2002.

Despite the decline from 2001, taro for poi millings have increased at an average annual rate of 2 percent during the past ten years (1993-2002).

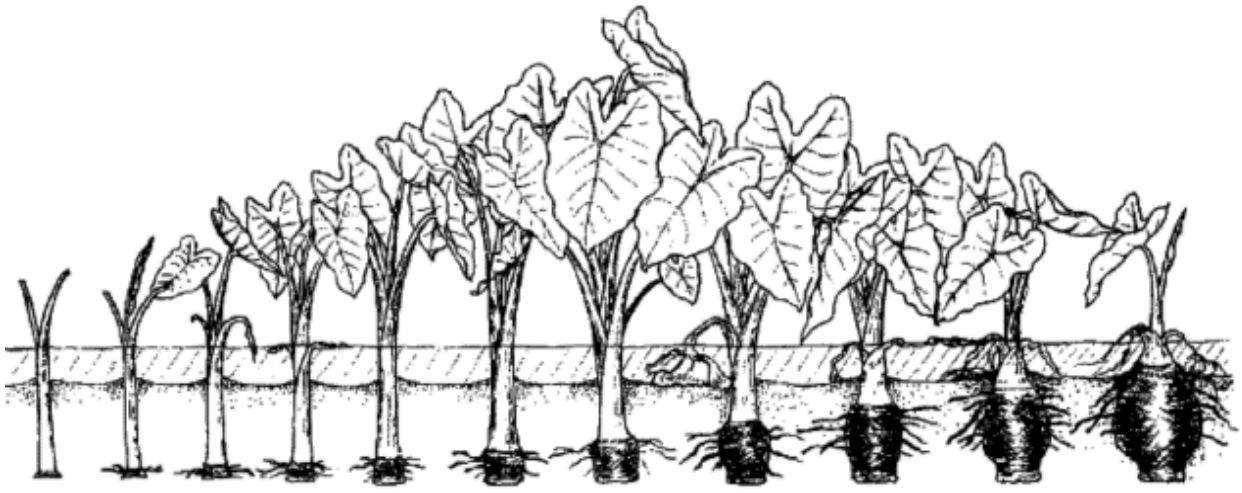
Monthly Taro Millings
State of Hawaii, 2001-02



Monthly Taro For Poi Millings: State of Hawaii, 1997-2001 average, 2001, and 2002.

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
						1,000 pounds							
5-year average	493	463	498	452	465	476	491	511	504	498	480	509	5,840
2001	525	500	525	460	525	505	505	535	515	495	440	470	6,000
2002	455	445	455	470	480	485	510	500	475	475	445	455	5,650

General Plant Growth for Wetland Taro



Root establishment stage (0 - 3 months)	**Heavy leaf growth** (3 - 5 months)	**Corm growth** (5 - 11 months)	**Harvest** (11 - 15 months)

Source: Taro, Mauka to Makai: A taro production and business guide for Hawai`i growers, James Hollyer...[et al.], College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1997.