
[Hawaii: Eucalyptus plantations arriving](#)

Amid strong local opposition, eucalyptus plantations are coming to Hawaii.

Following a move by Bishop Estate, a huge local landowner, to lease 6400 hectares of ex-sugar lands on the Big Island of Hawai'i to a subsidiary of Prudential Insurance company for eucalyptus pulpwood plantations, the state and county of Hawaii are preparing to offer a rental agreement to Oji Paper/Marubeni on an additional 4150 hectares of public land.

Oji/Marubeni are also seeking private land leases on the Big Island and elsewhere. Some 10,000 hectares of state lands, in addition, may soon be taken out of cattle grazing and put into pulp timber.

The eucalyptus would be chipped on the island and shipped to Japan as a raw material for paper production, joining a flow of wood chips to Oji from countries as far-flung as Chile, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Viet Nam, and Fiji.

State officials have denied any interest in eventually also bringing a pulp mill to the island. But local critics of the plantations, more than 2000 of whom have expressed concerns about Prudential's aerial spraying of herbicides and large-scale field burning, remain unconvinced.

A local non-government organization called Friends of Hamakua, in conjunction with local farmers and community organizations, is in the midst of formulating an alternative land-use plan for the 4150 hectares on the verge of being leased to Oji/Marubeni.

Hamakua County Councilman Dominic Yagong suggests that, instead of turning to tree monoculture, the county lease its lands to 144 landless members of a local agricultural co-op as a way of tapping the diversified potential of these "prime agricultural lands".

Such a move, he claims, would provide far more jobs than would giving over public lands to the pulp industry for 55 years.

A decision on the state and county lands is expected in the next month or two.

Source: Larry Lohmann, August 1997.

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