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State of Hawaii Office of Enterprise Technology Services

Hawaii Agriculture & Food Products Database

Project Initiation: August 2017 Project End Date: On-going

Information Communications Technology and Initiatives

Category: Information Communications Technology and Initiatives
Entry: Hawaii Agriculture & Food Products Database
Executive Summary

The Hawaii Agriculture & Food Products Database has enhanced the government-to-citizen experience for farmers, producers, ranchers, and business owners by helping to create a hub and a go-to-network where people searching for Hawaii agricultural products can find information. The Database contains the most current information because business owners are able to update their own data and inventory.

Launched in 2017, the Database overhauls a previously static and uninteresting website to what it is today – a dynamic and interactive site. The old website was not being updated regularly and the information was becoming obsolete due to understaffing caused by budget restraints at the department and no one dedicated to updating the website. The original website also wasn't keeping pace with emerging products relevant to the consumer and the current market trends, such as organic, vegan, kosher, etc. The website also had a functionality issue – it was not open for farmers to edit their own registry due to ever changing business dynamics and it was not interactive enough to enable users to run advanced searches by category/certification/location etc.

Because of those concerns, the Hawaii Department of Agriculture's Market Development Branch realized that its current website was not meeting the needs of its farmers, ranchers and businesses, along with its users and State of Hawaii citizens. They sought a new and dynamic solution, and the new Hawaii Agriculture & Food Products Database was launched.

Built using Salesforce, a customer relationship management platform, the Database connects the vendor to the State for approval and inquiry. The Database also has location mapping with GPS for businesses that opt to show their address publicly. It also alerts the user to the number of results provided from search, and tracks data from searches that the State could utilize and provide to constituents in the agricultural industry.

The Hawaii Agriculture & Food Products Database supports Governor David Ige's sustainable Hawaii Initiative, which calls for a 100% increase in local agricultural production by 2020. It also supports the Hawaii Department of Agriculture's Buy Local and Eat Local programs. While supporting all agriculture, the Database enforces laws and rules of the State.

The Hawaii Agriculture & Food Products Database can be found here:
<https://hawaiiagrproducts.hawaii.gov/s/>

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Concept

The State of Hawaii Department of Agriculture's original website that included information about local farmers and food products was developed in the 1980's. It was static and uninteresting. Most importantly, it was not being updated regularly and the information was becoming obsolete due to understaffing caused by budget restraints at the department and no one dedicated to updating the website. The original website also wasn't keeping pace with emerging products relevant to the consumer and the current market trends, such as organic, vegan, kosher, etc. The website also had a functionality issue – it was not open for farmers to edit their own registry due to ever changing business dynamics and it was not interactive enough to enable users to run advanced searches by category/certification/location etc.

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The Database was launched at the 2017 Agriculture Conference in Hawaii. Grassroots efforts to educate farmers, ranchers, producers and business owners about the new website and its benefits are currently taking place. Such efforts include:

- a registration drive at conferences, events, festivals and tradeshow
- informational briefings at commodity/agricultural association and foundation meetings
- email blasts, fliers, newsletters at the state, national and international levels
- cross-promotion with the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation
- print advertising in trade magazines

So, how can farmers, ranchers and businesses be part of the Database? They go through an online application process with the Hawaii Department of Agriculture's Market Development Branch. The application is reviewed and once it is confirmed the applicant is a Hawaii business, then they are permitted to complete a profile page.

From the State of Hawaii Department of Agriculture employee perspective, it helps with fielding inquiries about products. Employees are able to send inquiries straight to the Database for information, rather than combing through thousands of contacts to find specific farmers or products.

The website is monitored by the branch staff and security is provided by the Office of Enterprise Technology Services through its safe and secure network due to the many layers of protection in our security ecosystem.

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Significance

The Hawaii Agriculture & Food Products Database supports Governor David Ige's sustainable Hawaii Initiative, which calls for a 100% increase in local agricultural production by 2020. It also supports the Hawaii Department of Agriculture's Buy Local and Eat Local programs. While supporting all agriculture, the Database enforces laws and rules of the State.

The Database has enhanced the government-to-citizen experience for farmers, producers, ranchers, and business owners by helping to create a hub and a go-to-network where people searching for Hawaii agricultural products can find information. The Database contains the most current information because business owners are able to update their own data and inventory. This hub helps maintain a market share for the products and help constituents in the agriculture industry find new markets locally, domestically and internationally. Citizens, on the other hand, benefit from gaining new business connections and information off the database.

The Hawaii Agriculture & Food Products Database provides an interactive website that is customizable for those in the agriculture industry who are entering their business information in their profiles. It also allows for advanced searches for citizens looking for data on vendors and products.

Built using Salesforce, a customer relationship management platform, the Database connects the vendor to the State for approval and inquiry. The Database also has location mapping with GPS for businesses that opt to show their address publicly. It also alerts the user to the number of results provided from search, and tracks data from searches that the State could utilize and provide to constituents in the agricultural industry.

Some features on the Database also includes tutorial videos and pictures of products. It also includes a vetting system for farmers, ranchers and producers who want to be part of the Database. In addition to that, it has a reporting system for incorrect entries.

The Database includes cross promotion of State agricultural marketing programs and connects users to the Hawaii Department of Agriculture facebook page.

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Impact

While there are 112 farmers, ranchers and agriculture related businesses registered on the Database, there are continuous grassroots efforts to grow the number of participants. Launched in August 2017, the Database has connected Hawaii suppliers to the rest of the world. Consumers search the database looking for specific products. There are 177 different products searchable on the site.

The true value of this project comes from being the one-stop-source of information and go-to platform regarding Hawaii's agricultural businesses. The immediate benefits of this project are that it connects buyers and consumers to Hawaii's agriculture community. It supports businesses and Hawaii's economy through generating interest and connecting those in the Database with buyers, consumers and citizens. This Database also breaks down barriers and connects all members of the agricultural community throughout the Hawaiian Islands and allows for information to be shared. No longer are farmers, ranchers and businesses working in siloes, but they can see that they are part of a greater community. Through this database, citizens and buyers from around the world would be able to see what Hawaii has to offer.

The Hawaii Agriculture & Food Products Database truly transformed and modernized an aging website that was lacking in functionality, making it user friendly for both farmers and citizens.