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# Wahiawa Product Development Center to open this summer

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A rendering of the Wahiawa Value-Added Product Development Center, which will open this summer.  
Leeward Community College

By [Katie Helland](#) - Reporter

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Leeward Community College's \$21.6 million Wahiawa Value-Added Product Development Center will open this summer, as part of a new initiative from the University of Hawaii Community Colleges to bring farmers and entrepreneurs together. The college has not yet released its opening date.

The center spans 33,327 square feet and includes 11,900 square feet of kitchen space along with a 5,500-square-foot mezzanine and a 2,100-square-foot lanai and media kitchen, said Chris Bailey, the manager of the center. It is located at 100 California Ave. in Wahiawa, inside the former Tamura warehouse, which was gutted to make room for the new teaching facility.

“The building will house four production labs that will allow users to be able to really produce and learn to scale their products using state-of-the-art equipment, moving away from your higher-touch processes – like for someone filling a hot sauce bottle, now they have access to a bottle-filling machine,” Bailey said. “It creates all sorts of efficiencies, and really allows the user to be able to comfortably scale.”

Bailey will be working with three full-time product developers, who will help students understand how to use all the equipment.

The center was funded by state capital improvement dollars with \$20 million spent on construction and \$1.6 million on design, Bailey said. The state Department of Agriculture’s Agribusiness Development Corp. bought the property from Tamura’s in November 2013 for \$4.29 million, as [previously reported](#) by Pacific Business News. Leeward Community College is leasing the land and building from the ADC, Bailey said.

The center will include two wet production kitchens, where sauces, beverages, jams and jellies can be created. There are also two dry kitchens for putting together spice and baking mixes, he said. A separate kitchen exists where foods, with ingredients such as gluten or tree nuts, can be prepared to reduce cross contamination. There is also a hiperbaric high-pressure processing machine – the first in the state – which helps make food products safe and extends their shelf life, Bailey said.

“It’s really meant to create a harmonious flow for the users,” Bailey said. “When we talk about creating efficiencies, it’s one thing to have the equipment, but we want to make sure the flow makes sense for the user. It’s very intentional.”

Community college students taking classes, as well as business owners and entrepreneurs will have access to the space.

“We really prioritize working with our farmer and ag community,” Bailey said. “There is a great interest in learning more about value-added products from farmers. We want to be able to educate and empower that group, but also connect them to existing entrepreneurs who might be looking for a certain input.”

The program is a partnership between Leeward Community College, which provides classes, and Hawaii Ag & Culinary Alliance, which invites participants to share their products at its annual Hawaii Food & Wine Festival.

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