

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

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Island Princess wins farming award in Puna

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Island Princess has been recognized with an Outstanding Farmer Award by the Puna Soil and Water Conservation District.

The award was in recognition of work the company has done on rehabilitating a neglected orchard, bringing thousands of abandoned trees back into production, and for efforts to protect the orchard and neighboring lands from soil erosion.

Island Princess has been aggressively expanding its macadamia orchard operations. Since 2002 it has reinvested \$2 million in a new nursery, equipment upgrades and replanting macadamia trees on its 1,030-acre farm in Keaau.

The company plans to plant another 45,000 trees in the next three years, expanding current acreage under cultivation by 500 acres. Island Princess has one of the three largest macadamia orchards in the state.

"We are reinvesting in our orchard base due to projections for increased product demand over the next few years," Island Princess President Michael Purdy said. "A lot of companies are cutting back or not replanting to replace dead trees but we have been replacing dead trees routinely and, last year, created a large nursery to grow our own trees."

Purdy said the company recently decided to increase planting from 3,000 new trees per year to 15,000.

There has been a decline in macadamia nut acreage in the state, with many growers taking out their macadamia orchards in favor of coffee and exotic fruits or simply abandoning farms.