

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE

Newsletter of the Kona Coffee Farmers Association

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Education Workshop

Our next workshop will be on May 12th, once again at Kona Mountain Coffee in Kealahou, with thanks to Bill Dwyer.

Registration and coffee at 8, then at 8:30 Bob Smith will show how to select the new growth, what to discard and why, following on from our pruning seminar earlier in the year.



At 9:30, Merritt Walsh, Pest Survey and Response Technician, Big Island Invasive Species Committee will show samples of the Little Fire Ants, how to distinguish them from other ants, how to treat for them. These ants have caused severe problems in coffee orchards in Puerto Rico where pickers won't work the orchards because of the severe attacks. They have now been found in the Hilo area and could be transported to Kona on plant materials and soil. Know what to look for before you get a serious infestation.

This workshop is free to all farmers. Registration is requested so we can plan for refreshments, sign up with John McClure at jmclure@hawaii.rr.com 808-328

9290. But if you just decide on the day, then come and join us anyway.

Mac Nuts get Labeling Protection

A measure requiring labels on packages of macadamia nuts to specify the percentage of Hawaiian-grown macadamia nuts unanimously passed the state Legislature. The state Department of Agriculture, the Hawaii Farm Bureau, and the ILWU Local 142 supported the bill.

The law specifies that the labels may be worded "100 percent Hawaii-Grown Macadamia Nuts," "Hawaii-Grown Macadamia Nuts," "100 percent Hawaiian Macadamia Nuts," or "Hawaiian Macadamia Nuts," and shall appear on the principal display panel of the package.

The mac nut industry, like Kona coffee, is in dire danger of collapse due to imported mac nuts being added to Hawaii macnuts and the whole package bearing the name "Hawaiian".

Big business dominates the mac nut industry, and, again like Kona coffee, often seems to be all about exploiting consumers and squeezing every last penny it can out of a product in order to maximize profits, even if it means destroying an industry and the farmers that farm the product.

Big business dominates the "Kona blend" industry, and, judging by the failure of any of the legislation we asked for to protect Kona coffee to pass out of committee, it is obvious that the Kona blend processors are much more highly influential in the economic and political circles in Hawaii than those of the mac nut industry.

We are happy the mac nut industry got its protection. Now where is ours?

AgTourism Rules in Question

A lawsuit between neighbors has resulted in a ruling that has officials and farmers wondering how to guide the agtourism industry that generates in excess of \$40 million annually for the State. The ruling affects Kona Joe Coffee and states they are in violation of state and county laws that prohibit sales facilities on land zoned for farming. While the law does allow for roadside stands, a gift shop that sells promotional items such as logo mugs and T-shirts was ruled as a violation.

Many farms now offer farm tours and sell their farm produce to supplement the scant income from coffee alone. The problem comes when they expand their offerings to host large parties, tour buses, and sell non-agriculture products such as souvenirs. Many of the farms are not suitable for the traffic it brings, both in terms of facilities they offer, parking, and narrow driveways, and the impact on neighbors can be considerable.

Dr. Kent Fleming, an economist for the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, has long been a champion of agtourism opportunities for Hawaii's farmers. He recently founded the Hawaii AgTourism Association, an umbrella organization to help the industry grow responsibly.

"Farmers need clear direction sooner rather than later", said Dr. Fleming, "It's a natural overlap. It's good for the tourist industry and gives visitors bragging rights when

they go home. The real solution is to have a clear definition of ag-tourism and realize it for the sustainability of farmers here," he said. "The future is direct marketing, especially for the small farmers, to help increase profitability."



A bill was drafted in 2005 but was not acted on by the Hawaii County Council. "We're in favor of farms being able to do a range of activities," said Hawaii County Planning Director Chris Yuen, "I would expect smaller scale, farm experiences - tours, small shops - will be allowed, while non-farm related activities - weddings, thrill rides, bed-and-breakfasts - may need a special permit.

The Hawaii Agricultural Statistics Service estimated revenue from Hawaii Island farms agriculture-related tourism activities in 2003 at more than \$15 million, nearly one-half the state's agriculture tourism revenues.

Kona Girl Coffee Soda

A plan to make and market different flavors of coffee soda has captured the top prize of Chapman University's annual student business plan competition.

The four students who are creating Kona Girl Coffee Soda will receive \$5,000 cash plus \$10,000 worth of information technology consulting, said P.K. Shukla, director of the Leatherby Center for Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics, which puts on the competition. The students are Arash Sayadi, Nic Brutocao, Kim Tram and Desiree Farden.

Let's hope they are using 100% Kona in their new brew!

Specialty Coffee Market Still Growing

The Specialty Coffee Association of America, with 3,000 members the world's largest trade association, is energetically promoting specialty coffees in the restaurant trade. Its annual conference is happening this week in Long Beach.

Specialty coffees are winning a place in the upscale restaurant market with a personal table service that uses a French press, considered the best way to brew good coffee.

"Average coffee belongs to the same club as tap water and canned vegetables," said chef Jimmy Sneed, one of the conference presenters.

Specialty coffees have become a customer expectation. Sometimes called "gourmet" or "premium," specialty coffees must be exceptional beans grown in ideal conditions and then brewed to established standards.

"You've got a retail giant like Starbucks changing the mind-set of coffee drinkers," said Conrad Stroman, president of Anidaso, a roaster based in Florida.

"Specialty coffee is very similar to wine," Stroman said. "It can be paired with different foods to bring out the flavor."

The comparison with the wine is appropriate because specialty coffees have given a brew that primarily had been a morning pickmeup the cachet of fine wine. Like grapes, coffee is a product of its environment. The flavor depends on the rain, soil, how high the coffee is grown, the amount of sunshine the beans get, and the infinite care of the grower.

Statistics:

Percentage of U.S. adults who drink specialty coffees daily rose from 13 percent in 2002 to 16 percent in 2006.

Percentage of U.S. adults who drink specialty coffees occasionally rose from 59

percent in 2002 to 63 percent in 2006.

US. coffeehouses offering specialty coffees rose from 1,650 in 1991 to 23,900 in 2006.

Trademarking Origin Coffees

Starbucks says it is willing to sign a licensing, distribution and marketing agreement with the Ethiopian government, hoping to settle a dispute over trademarking the names of three coffees produced in the country.

Ethiopia wants to secure rights to the three coffee names through the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. The country so far has trademarked the name Yirgacheffe, but a final decision hasn't been made on the others.

Starbucks, which says it pays above-average prices for its beans, opposes Ethiopia's trademark efforts. Instead, the company has said it wants to help officials establish a geographic certification for the coffee bean names, as is done with Washington apples or Kona coffee.

Let's hope Ethiopia has better success in protecting its origin coffees than Kona coffee. Our origin name is debased nationwide and internationally by being used as a "style" of coffee rather than an origin coffee. And the worst offenders are right here in Hawaii, the 10% "Kona blends".

Membership

The KCFA was founded to protect and promote Kona farmers economic interests in 100% Kona coffee, to protect the Kona coffee heritage, and to seek greater legal protection of the Kona coffee name.

We are a member-driven organization and encourage member input at all times. The KCFA goals are to help all of our member farmers succeed in their farming business and enjoy participating in an organization that represents their interests

Find information and join online at www.konacoffeefarmers.org