

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE

Newsletter of the Kona Coffee Farmers Association

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Hawaii Farmers Union Group Starts

Contributed by Colehour Bondera

The Hawaii chapter of the national organization the Farmers Union is in formation, and I have become involved since there really is NOT a State level organization which looks out for all (especially for us small-scale) farmers on an equal basis and seeks to ensure that we are listened to at the legislative and broader community levels. A farmer in Honoka'a has initiated the organization of the State chapter.

National Farmers Union (NFU) was founded in 1902 in Point, Texas, to help the family farmer address profitability issues and monopolistic practices. NFU has been working since 1902 to protect and enhance the economic well-being and quality of life for family farmers, ranchers and rural communities through advocating grassroots-driven policy positions adopted by its membership.

Overall, the NFU sees cooperation, education, and legislation as the appropriate foci. You can see the website for your own reflection, at www.nfu.org. The Hawaii group has a website at www.hawaiifarmersunion.org.

Look forward to educational and community efforts of the local Farmers Union efforts, including possible collaboration in the future with KCFA.

Do support the efforts you read about if you can!

Coffee Revenue Down 13 Percent!

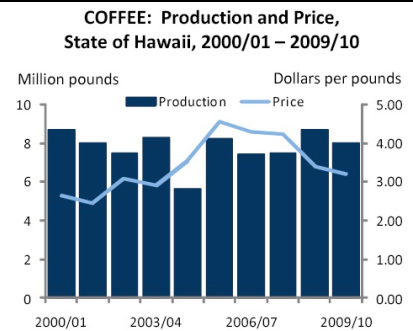
Extracted from the National Agricultural Statistics Service March 2010 Report

The latest report from NASS no longer breaks down the coffee statistics by Hawaii Island and all-other-regions as it has done in the past. The figures are now given for State-wide production only.

However one trend is very clear, the price that farmers receive has steadily trended downwards since 2005, when the price per pound by NASS measurements was \$4.55, while farmers' costs have trended upwards.

More proof that the big processors, with their tight control over the cherry price they pay, and the big blenders who are devaluing the Kona coffee name with their Kona coffee knock-offs, are no friend to the Kona coffee FARMER.....?

The total farm revenue for coffee is estimated at \$25.6 million (parchment equivalent basis) for the 2009/10 season, 13 percent lower than last season's revised estimate of \$29.6 million. This decrease in revenue was the result of a 6 percent drop in the average farm price coupled with an 8 percent decrease in production. Farm price averaged \$3.20 per pound (parchment equivalent basis) for the 2009/10 season, down 6 percent from last year's average price of \$3.40 per pound.



See the full report at nass.usda.gov/hi

Know Your Farmer

Contributed by Colehour Bondera

The USDA Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, Kathleen Merrigan, led a Food Systems Roundtable discussion on April 6 at the University of Hawaii Agricultural Sciences Building in Honolulu. About 25 people were invited to this discussion, and Kathleen focused on the latest USDA initiative – Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF2).

Overall there was a sense that local and direct food is a highlight of the present administration in Washington, DC, and Kathleen wanted to hear about how things could be smoother for Hawaii. Besides listening to input from participants, including comments from myself on issues on truth in labeling and Hawaii Department of Agriculture looking out for Industry issues prior to farmer needs, Kathleen presented some comments about local and regional USDA grants, and suggested also that since every family needs a farmer, that there is a lot of potential for the present Hawaiian movement seeking importation of less food, and more production here. I was able with that issue to comment on how Hawaii is the only coffee-producing area in the world where coffee is also imported!

This round table discussion was followed by a public forum on the KYF2 Initiative that had over 60 attendees. Between these sessions I had some chance to discuss with aides to Kathleen about how misleading labeling, which is consumer fraud, can and should be dealt with not only at the local and State levels, but at the Federal level as well, and that the USDA would like to help ensure that Kona coffee is truly what the label suggests!

Kona Mocha Cookies Stand Proud

Contributed by Dexter Washburn

On a recent trip to the mainland, Alaska Airlines, following their usual practice, distributed individually wrapped cookies. The cookies were identified as “Kona Mocha Chocolate Chip” from Cougar Mountain Baking Company, of Seattle, Washington. Bruce Corker, our observant KCFA president, carefully saved the wrapper with its contact information and shortly after arriving at his destination called Cougar Mountain. He spoke with founder, president and CEO David Saulnier and asked. “Is your Kona Mocha cookie made with 100% Kona coffee?” David Saulnier replied that he had no idea, but he would find out and call right back. When he called back he reported the cookies were made with a “Kona Blend”.

Bruce recognized the teaching moment. At the conclusion of the lesson David Saulnier asked where he could get some 100% Kona coffee in Seattle. “Why, right from the farmer.” Bruce’s next call was to me as he was aware that I had shipped 1800 pounds of green coffee to Seattle and still had a supply on hand. I called David Saulnier. Virginia and I paid a visit to the home of Cougar Mountain Gourmet Cookies where an introductory exchange of gourmet cookies for gourmet coffee was made. We took back an order for Hawaiian Hawk 100% Kona Coffee suitable for flavoring cookies.

What was particularly impressive about David Saulnier and his wonderful cookie factory was his absolute dedication to using only the best ingredients in Cougar Mountain cookies. Once he learned the difference between a “Kona Blend” and the real thing there was no question what David Saulnier would do. It was a matter of integrity and ethics - if you call it “Kona” it has to be 100% Kona.

Editors note:

The KCFA applauds Cougar Mountain – they are a shining

example to other companies in the food and beverage industry. Take note Jack In The Box, your glaring lack of integrity is smearing your reputation.

Education

KCFA’s Coffee Talk generally functions as a “talk story”, and has been well attended, and well received. Typically, the sessions are held the first Wednesday of each month from 3:30-5:00pm at Yano Hall in Captain Cook. KCFA has worked hard to ensure that all community members are aware of these sessions and that with zero fee for attending, nor a required membership, people can gain from the educational efforts that KCFA and the community can make available!

On April 7th, a total of 31 people attended the session entitled Coffee Taxes. Thanks are due to the three panelists that Colehour Bondera introduced; Larry Ford, Gus Brocksen, and Mike Katz. The participants asked many questions, and were able to get answers from the range of backgrounds that the panelists offer. It became clear by the end of the Coffee Talk that a future session on subjects of Liability, Workers Comp and Insurance would be welcome, and the Education Committee will work with these suggestions that came from this lively discussion!

On May 5th, Marylou Moss coordinated a Coffee Talk with 33 people present - themed around the Cinco de Mayo - many thanks to extra efforts from those who put out that energy. Overall the session dealt with how to best facilitate the well being of coffee trees and of coffee farms. Specifically, Bob Smith presented his experience and thoughts regarding twig borer, with emphasis on the fact that the County and State do not seem to think that action is necessary. Bob suggested that KCFA strive (through grants, or even donations) to pursue this large-scale problem independently, or better yet in collaboration with other entities that see this problem as it truly is. Bob mentioned that over a

third of coffee trees on many farms have been affected.

Una Greenaway of the Kona Farm Bureau then presented about the fire ant. Besides addressing the general concept and discussing what should be done to protect, Una pointed out that there is an HDoA contracted specialist on fire ants who is researching and working with people to control this pest.

Finally, Hazel Beck and Nancy Miller shared about the Small Business Administration and how they could help coffee farmers. The focus was on formulating a Business Plan, the first (and required) step for seeking any funding support, including all loans.

Contact Colehour Bondera for the upcoming Coffee Talk subjects – colemel@kanalanifarm.org or 640-1643

Neil Abercrombie Talk Story

Contributed by Colehour Bondera

The Aloha Theater hosted a public meeting on March 23 with panelists talking about fire ant, and education issues, and about 30 attendees. I submitted a question about how truth in labeling for Kona coffee can become a more serious issue for the State if Neil wins the Governor race. His response was that if elected he will work more to ensure that farmers are heard and that consumers in Hawaii are not mislead with labeling which is deceptive even if legal.

Join Now or Renew Your Membership

New Members go to our link at konacoffeefarmers.org/join.asp

Current Members: Renew online at konacoffeefarmers.org/welcome.asp and log in, or to renew by mail send your check payable to KCFA to Deb Sims at PO Box 832, Honaunau, HI 96726-0832.

Your membership will be confirmed by email or phone.

Any questions please contact joanierowe@rowesviewcoffee.com or 808-328-0825.

We look forward to your continued support in 2010!