

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE

Newsletter of the Kona Coffee Farmers Association

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Contents:

Hawaii Brand Name Bill a Law.....1

Courage of Their Convictions.....1

Mandatory Green Certification.....2

Kona Coffee in Style in Illinois2

Coffee Flavored Gum..... 2

Membership Information.....2

Editor: Christine Sheppard

Hawaii Brand Name Bill Becomes Law

Lt. Gov. Duke Aiona has signed into law a measure that appropriates \$50,000 to study "Hawaii" as a brand name. "It is a foregone conclusion that Hawaii's products and services typically cannot compete on the basis of price or newness. What the state possesses is the strength and power of the Hawaii brand," the Hawaii Legislature said in ordering the research. "Hawaii is a highly recognized and valued brand that carries the value-added premium most brands seek in tourism, coffee, flowers, deep-sea water, and astronomy."

Governments in other places are taking back geographic brands. Napa County succeeded in prohibiting use of "Napa Valley" in the name of a wine not produced with Napa grapes. Kona coffee growers succeeded in setting a minimum requirement before the name "Kona" can be used in a product. France aggressively protects its brands that are dependent on the French country image from wines to French chocolate.

The Hawaii Tourism Authority will undertake the study. The Legislature specified that the assessment also include legal considerations for protecting the Hawaii name brand.

The Pacific Business News reported on June 21, 2006



Melanie & Colehour Bondera

The Courage of Their Convictions

With their permission, we reprint below Kanalani Ohana Farm's letter to Honaunau Coffee Company. Honaunau is now owned by the Hawaii Coffee Company, the biggest blender in the State, and will be run by Captain Cook Coffee Company.

As Colehour and Melanie Bondera told the editor "our farm is making action choices related to our priorities. Selling Kona coffee cherry to those who defend blending is something that we can all make sure we are not doing!"

Why don't we all have the courage of our convictions? Ask your processor if he supports blends that have only 10% Kona yet use the Kona name. Everyone has the right to blend coffee, nothing wrong with that. What you are asking is do they defend the practice of using the Kona NAME on 10% blends. And if he does, move to another processor.

For example, we know that Kona Joe now sells a 10% and a 30% blend using the name Kona prominently on them. There are plenty of great processors around who will defend Kona from deceptive labeling. If they send us a letter stating their position, we will happily publish a list so you know who to sell your cherry to.

To Honaunau Coffee Company

Thank you for buying our extra coffee cherry for the last 5 seasons. Steve has been most gracious and our kids love him.

We will be switching to selling our cherry to a processor that does not sell any Kona Blends. We feel that this misleads the consumer and we don't want our coffee to support this kind of marketing. In addition, it competes unfairly with our main source of income, our 100% Kona, Estate Grown, Certified Organic coffee. Finally, we both spend many hours of our precious free time voluntarily promoting 100% Kona out in the community and we would like to walk our talk by not supporting Kona Blends in any way.

We hope that you consider selling only 100% Kona in the future or Hawaiian Blends. We also hope you support legislation at the state level for increasing the blend % to at least 75%. If you do, we would reconsider supplying you.

Sincerely,

Colehour Bondera, Melanie Bondera
Kanalani Ohana Farm, Honaunau, HI

Event Announcement!

Kona Coffee Celebration: Taste gourmet coffees for FREE and then vote for your favorite!

Join us for fun and coffee on Saturday August 19th, 10-4 pm in the Lanihau-Center, Palani Road. Keiki fun and games; Win a pound of coffee a month for a year; Raffle prizes; Educational display on coffee; Crafts, coffee and edibles to buy, Antique gas farm engine (running!); and more.



Mandatory Green Certification

At the invitation of Howard Conant, a Panel Discussion met in Kona to thrash out some of the issues surrounding the HCA's proposal to force Mandatory Green Certification on all farmers.

Howard's agenda was comprehensive including enumerating and evaluating the problems that mandatory certification (MC) is intended to solve, and the ways in which MC would or would not solve those problems.

Participants: Howard Conant (facilitator), Roger Dilts (KCC), Jim Wayman (HCA), George Fike (KCC), Geri M. Kahana (HDOA), Tom Greenwell (HCA & processor), Roger Kaiwi-Machen (HCA & processor), Rick Funk (KCFA), Ken Sheppard (KCFA), Virginia Easton Smith (CTAHR).

Howard's notes of the discussion are comprehensive and illuminating. But in the interest of brevity we include only his conclusions. If you wish to read the entire proceedings, please apply to Howard for a copy. howard@konarainforestcoffee.com.

Editorial Conclusions of the facilitator Howard Conant:

1. There was unanimous consensus that there are problems. However, even after this intensive three hour meeting, the number and nature of the alleged complaints remain mysterious. Geri Kahana said approximately six have been received this year, and they included origin, as well as labeling violations. However, even without specifics, three distinctly different problems were voiced:

i. Out of origin coffee migrating to Kona and being incorporated into the Kona coffee supply.

ii. Widespread counterfeiting of Kona coffee on the mainland where no rules prevent it.

iii. Roasting of offgrade Kona in Kona, mainly but not limited to, small vertically integrated operations. Some transgression occurs due to the high percentage of new farmers who are not knowledgeable, and some occurs through fraud.

2. Mandatory Certification is being suggested as a method of solving all the problems enumerated in #1. MC impacts only the small farmer, and any larger operator who might roast in Kona and is not certifying, but mainly it will be the small farmer who is impacted the most. There were interesting suggestions to create a system of qualification and exemption for the small farms. In order to become exempt from MC, after a protocol is adopted, the small farmer would validate his/her knowledge through testing and then file periodic reports to HDOC on the farm's coffee production and sales. In that way, small farms could choose to certify or become exempt, while larger operations would be required to certify. I would call this Universal Certification.

3. Reporting of TMK's on the purchase of all cherry by processors is a very new system, less than two years. It is too soon to institute another system (MC) which is intended to solve the same problem that TMK reporting is trying to solve. More time is needed to evaluate TMK reporting.

4. The State is prepared to extend the trademark to roasted coffee, if industry demands it. The premise is that with promotion of our State of Hawaii grade trademark, over time it could become well enough known so that local and mainland roasters who sell 100% (origin) coffee would want to pay a small license fee for use, and that customers will rely upon the trademark for authenticity.

I find the proposal without merit. It is the long, expensive way to protect our name, as it takes many years and a lot of money to promote a brand. The path from MC to trademark extension to roasted coffee is uncertain at best. Any mainland roaster will still be able to label coffee bags with the Kona name, without using our trademark and without breaking any law. The fast track way is to achieve either: 1. Federal trademark protection for 100% Kona Coffee or 2. FDA protection, 3. The application of COOL (Country of origin legislation) to protect Hawaiian coffee and (hopefully) all subsets of Hawaiian coffee. A lot of legal work must be done before it will be known if COOL legislation can actually protect Kona.

4. There was unanimous consensus that there is widespread fraud and misuse of the name Kona in coffee labeling. MC will do nothing to stop or prevent that.

Kona Coffee in Style in Illinois

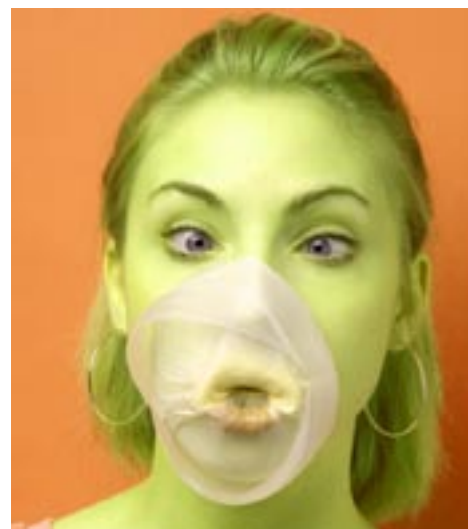
Kona coffee has become popular at Country Style Ice Cream and Hawaiian Style Coffee in East Moline. The company debuted its new line of coffee products this year. As ice cream sales slow down in the fall, coffee sales pick up, store co-owner Kent Kindel-sperger said. He and co-owner Jim Sadler buy the gourmet product from Kona Coffee, of Captain Cook, Hawaii.



Recently, the store sold out and ordered a new shipment of Kona Coffee's Estate Reserve brand. Most coffee shops in the Quad-Cities area don't sell Kona coffee to drink on the spot. When the store received the shipment last week, employees made five to six pots of coffee a day to keep up with demand, employee Karen Sanchez said, when customers know the store has Kona in stock, they'll buy it "We don't do blends," said Vince Mills, owner of Kona Coffee. "We only offer 100 percent Kona coffee because we believe that's the best experience."

Extracted from an article By Jenny Lee, jlee@qconline.com

Coffee Flavored Gum - Again!



A letter from reader Cynthia Kirsch states: *I just wanted to respond to you about the Kona Creme gum from Wrigley's. I'm sorry to say that it's a horrific product. I bought a package and everyone in the office tried it and thought that it tasted of instant coffee masked with a chemical taste and lots of sugar. Of course, that does not represent the wonderful flavor of Kona Coffee!*

Thank you Cynthia :)

Yet the New Food Review by an FBR Staff Writer June 23 says "Wrigley's has introduced a new flavored gum in the US, which exploits the growing appeal of coffee flavored products in the food and drinks sector. The Kona Creme variant of Double-Mint gum is flavored with coffee powder and artificial ingredients. The "Kona" branding suggests a high quality coffee experience and is unique to the chewing gum market." Is Kona just a branding name now? Is there ANY Kona in this gum? What is this doing to our good name?

Membership Information

The Kona Coffee Farmers Association was founded to protect and promote 100% Kona coffee, and to support and provide an independent voice to the farmers who grow Kona coffee. With over 80 members now, we are a member-driven organization and encourage member input at all times. KCFA holds four quarterly member meetings each year specifically for member communications so we can all get together to talk story. You can also contact any of the Kona Coffee Farmers board of directors and voice your concerns. Only farmers are allowed voting privileges in KCFA elections. Proxy votes are not allowed. Only farmers can be elected to the KCFA Board of Directors.

The Kona Coffee Farmers Association's goals are to help all of our member farmers succeed in their farming business and enjoy participating in an organization that represents their interests. Tell a friend.

Membership Information:
Learn more and join us online.
www.konacoffeefarmers.com