

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE

Newsletter of the Kona Coffee Farmers Association

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Shame on Captain Cook Coffee Co!

Brenda Ford, Hawaii County Council member, is trying to help Kona coffee farmers, but she needs your help to do it.

The Captain Cook Coffee Company (CCCC), owned by Steve McLaughlin of Millbrae, California, reportedly owes cherry farmers (latest estimate is at least 25) many thousands of dollars for coffee delivered during the 2009 season, now 9-12 months in arrears. Brenda has written to Jeri Kahana of the Dept of Agriculture, asking for a formal investigation of the books of CCCC to determine just how much they are holding farmers hostage for.

However, as Brenda notes to Jeri Kahana, those who are owed money are scared to file a formal complaint with the State because of their fear of intimidation. Some of the reasons the farmers gave for not wanting their names revealed include:

- Fear that CCCC would not accept cherry from them this season
- Fear that they would be "black balled" by other processors and not be able to take their cherry anywhere
- Fear that CCCC is using their money as a private loan without interest
- Fear that CCCC may declare bankruptcy and avoid paying them altogether.

Financial times are bad for everyone, but the cherry farmers' line between financial survival and failure is very small, and a large California company has much deeper pockets to survive with.

If CCCC owes you money, please contact Brenda Ford at 329-4786 or bford@co.hawaii.hi.us.

It is unconscionable that this large California processor can act this way – this is not how any of us want to do business in Hawaii. Its just not pono.

We Are Not Alone! Consumers Paying a Premium Price for Product Adulterated with Cheap Imports.

Oh, does this sound familiar? But this time we are talking about Olive Oil – yes, it happens to them too.

The UC Davis Olive Oil Chemistry Laboratory, funded in part by the California Olive Oil Council, evaluated the quality of extra virgin olive oils sold on retail shelves in California. More than 69% of imported olive oils sold as "extra virgin" failed to meet internationally-accepted standards. Because of these required standards, extra virgin olive oil commands a top price.

"Nothing is more important than the trust consumers put in our products which is why we established a certification program to ensure that when consumers buy a California-produced olive oil with the Certified Extra Virgin seal on it, they know they are buying real extra virgin olive oil," said Patty Darragh, executive director of the California Olive Oil Council.

American consumers are being deceived into spending hard-earned dollars on olive oils that are deliberately mislabeled to cheat the system. Competition from those who use unsavory practices has become a significant problem for producers as many stores don't care what is in the packages, all they care about is what the label says.

California, Connecticut and Oregon have enacted their own state regulations. New York is expected to

join them, and a bill on the issue has been introduced in New Jersey.

However, companies only have to follow these regulations if their products have the federal seal of approval on their labels, or if retailers buying their oil require it.

"It's like saying you have to stop at stop signs, but there are no cops at the corner," said Paul Vossen, a UC Cooperative Extension farm advisor for Sonoma County. "Standards are a good start, but enforcement is important."

Let's hope that California has not had almost all its agricultural enforcement cut the way the Hawaii Legislature has done to us.

The report is available online at <http://olivecenter.ucdavis.edu/>

Editorial

By Christine Sheppard. A friend sent me Paul Krugman's superb op-ed "Who Cooked the Planet"

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/26/opinion/26krugman.html?_r=1&emc=eta1.

I could not help but see the parallel to our problems with the blenders false labeling of Kona Coffee and the Hawaii Legislature "Why didn't legislation get through the Senate? The triumph of greed and cowardice"

To paraphrase – "we didn't fail to act because of legitimate doubts about the science". Even our legislators admitted in 2007 that that "existing labeling requirements for Kona coffee causes consumer fraud and confusion"

"Did reasonable concerns about the economic impact block action?"

No. Several scientific studies have shown that false labeling degrades the 'Kona coffee' name, and brings down the prices that would be paid. So it wasn't the science, or the economics that killed action on honest labeling. What was it?

The answer is, the usual suspects: greed and cowardice.

If you want to understand the opposition, follow the money. The economy wouldn't be significantly hurt if we labeled Kona coffee correctly, but certain industries — the deceptive blenders — would. And they mounted a huge disinformation campaign to protect their bottom lines.

Look at the politicians who have been most vociferously opposed to action. Where do they get much of their campaign money? You already know the answer.

By itself, however, greed wouldn't have triumphed. It needed the aid of cowardice — above all, the cowardice of the politician willing to sacrifice principles, and farmers' futures, for the sake of a few years added to a political career.

Greed, aided by cowardice, has triumphed. And the Kona coffee farmers will pay the price.

Carbon Credits - What Are They?

The Star Advertiser recently posted an article about McCandless Land & Cattle, a Big Island ranch that is selling carbon credits — see <http://konacoffeefarmers.org/Carbon.Credits.Kona.asp>

Carbon credit is a term that assigns a value to greenhouse gas emissions — one carbon credit is equal to one ton of carbon dioxide — and was started by an awareness of the need to control these emissions. Basically, an industry is assigned the amount of carbon it may emit. If it emits more, it must change to reduce those emissions. If it cannot do so, or cannot do so immediately, it can buy credits from an industry that has reduced its carbon footprint below its assigned amount. As demand for energy grows, the total emissions must still stay within the limit set, but it allows industry some flexibility to seek out the most cost-effective way of reducing its emissions.

Carbon credits create a market for reducing greenhouse emissions by giving a monetary value to the cost of polluting the air. Emissions become an internal cost of doing business and are on the balance sheet

alongside raw materials and other liabilities and assets. The long-term premise is that the cost of buying carbon credits will eventually be higher than the cost of investing in low emission technology, and be an incentive for all industries to improve.

But before all our farmers leap to sell "credits" be aware that you have to prove "additionality" ie would the project have happened anyway even without the possibility of claiming a carbon credit? Only carbon credits from projects that are "additional to" the business-as-usual scenario represent a net environmental benefit, and produce credits that you can sell.

Doing the right thing can not only make you proud of your carbon footprint, it could also generate some income.

Political Viewpoint

While the KCFA does not endorse candidates, the Association does welcome position papers that will inform KCFA members on issues affecting Kona coffee growers.

In Support of

Kona Coffee Farmers

Like many folks in Hawaii and around the world, my day begins with a cup of coffee. I know first-hand the importance of local agriculture and of coffee in particular on the neighbor islands, because I have lived and raised my family in a neighbor island rural community for over 30 years. I support legislation that prohibits the exploitation of Hawaii's name on incorrectly labeled products. Furthermore, I support the fostering of small to mid sized farms and high value, high quality niche agricultural products, rather than focusing only on large mass market agribusiness operations.

It is imperative that we preserve the quality of locally produced crops and promote their birthplace here in the islands. We have seen the Dole plantations provide jobs statewide and create a lasting legacy associating the world's finest pineapples with Hawaii. Sadly, we have also seen them outsource and leave, like several successful sugar mills. As we look toward a greener

future, we must be able to retain high value crops like coffee and macadamia nuts, and preserve their authenticity as Hawaii-grown.

A sustainable economy is dependent upon a diversity of economic drivers. We cannot rely on importing guests and depending on tourism alone as our financial lifeline. Exporting quality goods that benefit local farmers and communities should be part of our sustainable island future. Limiting a farmer's revenue by co-opting the name of their product is unacceptable and I support legislation to protect them.

Gary Hooser

[Mr. Hooser was State Senator from Kauai and is currently a candidate for Lt. Governor]

Events Planning!

The Kona Coffee Cultural Festival starts November 5th and culminates in our Banquet and Auction on Sunday 14th at the King Kamehaha Beach Hotel. I always need volunteers to work the events. So, please volunteer or at least expect a phone call. We need to fill lots of working slots for the festival.

Mahalo, Mary Lou

Membership Corner

By Joanie Rowe

As of July 2010 the KCFA board passed a motion to change the dual owner/farmer membership fees. The cost for the second owner/farmer is \$10.00 for the duration of this 2010 membership year. In the future a two member owner/farmer membership will cost \$40.00. We encourage you to join and show your support as a farmer and to have a voice in what happens to 100% Kona Coffee.

If you would like to take advantage of this new fee please contact me at joanierowe@rowesviewcoffee.com. Or send a check, made payable to KCFA to Deb Sims at PO BOX 832 Honaunau HI 96726-0832.

GrainPro and Burlap bags are here! Shipping cost increased and the cost of the burlap bags is \$2.25 GrainPro bags are \$3.00 to members and 3.65 to non members. Please remember to login before purchasing any KCFA merchandise.