NOT the cause of CBB arriving here.

But I am not holding my breath, here is the reality of Hawaii’s agriculture politics - the first meeting in Kona of legislators, HDOA and UH-CTAHR since confirmation of the CBB infestation was not with the farmers who are confronted with this new pest in their orchards, but a BEHIND CLOSED DOOR meeting, on a processor’s private property, with the blenders and their processor allies who each year have brought millions of pounds of green coffee into Hawaii from CBB infested regions.

What is needed is a ban on imports of green coffee, before additional damage is done – If not this, then what? If not now, then when?

The Need for Transparency in Local Government

By Kenneth Sheppard

Contributed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the KCFA Board.

In light of the outbreak of CBB it is worth looking at the need for transparency, open discussion and cooperation between the HDOA and those involved in actual agriculture. The recent secret meetings are a good example of a policy that does not encourage a free exchange of ideas and knowledge. Maybe borderline legal but highly offensive, intimating that farmers are second class citizens whose views don’t count.

An apropos example to the entry of the CBB into Kona is the HDOA policy of keeping green import shipments effectively secret. They will not send copies of the manifests to interested parties. If you travel to Honolulu, you may be able to see the manifests and if you ask nicely can make your own copies. HDOA will not assist, yet they are the only ones who collate this information.

Note: One of our members took the very considerable time to go through this exercise a couple of years ago. The documentation held by HDOA is not very good but you can glean limited information.

Why is this important? First, it is necessary to know how much and from which countries green coffee is coming to give an idea of the risk. Secondly, was the coffee fumigated properly or at all? I believe HDOA rely solely on seeing a certificate of fumigation to accept shipments. As far as we can ascertain (transparency again) no further checks are made on the actual cargo, no information disseminated.

A few years ago KCFA received intelligence that un-fumigated green coffee was coming into Kona. It was extremely difficult to get any cooperation from HDOA either in Honolulu or Kawaihae to track this down. Farmers thought it was critical to check on this information. We were never able to get a satisfactory answer after many days of trying.

For full container loads of green coffee the Customs Port Inspector in Honolulu informs the HDOA of the shipment, and the manifest and fumigation certificate is filed at HDOA. For partial shipments, Customs and the Ag Inspector have to find it either from the manifest, or not always obviously declared, or by physical inspection which does not always occur, as containers are not routinely emptied for inspection.

Which brings us back to Kona. Until recently foreign green coffee rarely if ever came into Kona, but now there are several blenders in Kona that do import green coffee most often in mixed cargo. The question becomes does all this coffee get fumigated? HDOA records are very thin on this issue and not freely shared. The information we did find on imports into Kona was troubling as the coffee could be on a pallet mixed with other goods often from the same country, the other product dominating.

In Kona (and Hawaii island in general), the blending is done close
Letters to the Editor

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Last night at the September board meeting the board gave away the opportunity to gain more influence and say in the Kona coffee industry. Bruce Corker, President, proposed a press release and letter to the candidates for governor demanding the resignation of the head of the Department of Ag and to also suggest replacements. In the discussion that followed it became apparent that some board members don’t care what the membership thinks as one tried to stop comments from the floor. Bruce, to his credit, allowed audience comments.

The Dept. of Ag has failed to keep out invasive species. We have Coqui frogs, fire ants, CBB, black twig borer for 50 years now. They offer no solutions. The blend issue, truth in labeling, corporate funded research, these issues dominated by the processors/blenders, none of those will be solved without upsetting people. That was a concern of some board members. How are you, the Kona coffee farmer feeling? No board member asked that!

Those board members voting to not challenge the powers that be might want to look inside themselves to see if they can truly represent the interests of the members.

The previous day my wife and I had committed to provide a product donation from Tiffany & Co. for the silent auction fund raiser. After the meeting I emailed the person in charge of the auction and told them we would not arrange the donation because of the vote.

The board failed to take advantage of an opportunity, that may not come for another 10 years, for Kona coffee farmers to have an equal voice in the industry.

Or perhaps we just wait for the processors/blenders, bureaucrats to be nice to us and the coffee rust disease arrives and we all burn our Kona coffee trees.

Page Trygstad & Yoko Harada
Princess Radha Farm

International Award

The Slow Food Foundation* has chosen 100% Kona Coffee as a finalist for its prestigious International Parmigiano-Reggiano Award. The award, which will presented at the Salone Del Gusto in Turin, Italy on October 23rd, honors food producers who have shown commitment to the protection of geographical origin, environmental protection, and dedication to taste.

The award is presented at the huge international exposition of good, clean and fair food that draws over 150,000 visitors to Turin, Italy in October every two years. Small-scale food producers come to Salone del Gusto from all over the world to showcase their products, and the event is dedicated both to excellent food and to the extraordinary people who produce it.

Colehour and Melanie Bondera will be attending the events on behalf of the KCFA. KCFA has high hopes of being rewarded for our work in establishing geographic origins, such as Kona Coffee now has with its membership in oriGIn. Geographic origin definition creates new economic protection for farmers, and guarantees the global consumer will recognize the real value of a product.

*Slow Food is a non-profit, eco-gastronomic member-supported organization that was founded in 1989 and now has over 100,000 members in 132 countries.

Fund Raising Frenzy!

Mary Lou and Kathy Wood have been spreading the 100% Kona Coffee word to our cruise ship visitors, and earning some big bucks for our promotional efforts too. They took our booth down to Alii Drive several days and made a total of $1647 selling coffee and our logo goods.

They work so hard, and need volunteers for Festival efforts. Contact Mary Lou at 329-4035 or Marylou@cuppakona.com

Membership Corner

Congratulations KCFA – only four years after inception KCFA now represents more independent Kona Coffee Farms than any other organization!

As of last month, 176 individual farms are members of KCFA. Yes, individual farms, as only active farmers can be full members of KCFA. All others are non-voting associate members. This compares to less than 100 farms for the Kona Coffee Council, who include in their voting membership numbers multiple (more than 20 in one case) members from processors, candy makers, PR types, and others who may not have the best interest of farmers in mind.

Renew your membership now. Or join and show your support as a farmer and have a voice in what happens to 100% Kona Coffee. New members joining any time from November 1st will have their membership run through the end of 2011. Please contact joanierowe@rowesviewcoffee.com.

Or send a check, made payable to KCFA to Deb Sims at PO BOX 832 Honau nau HI 96726-0832.