

# THE INDEPENDENT VOICE

Newsletter of the Kona Coffee Farmers Association

July 2011

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## Welcome to New-in-2011 Members

**KCFA is proud to be the LARGEST group of Kona Coffee Farmers bar none!**

KCFA has 235 farmer members, from 194 active farms, plus 19 supporting businesses and 36 associate members, more than the other groups combined. And we extend a warm welcome to those who have joined us new in 2011. Let us know how we can help you.

### Farmers/Voting Members

Brian Axelrod, Lori Benton, Thomas Benton, Gus Brocksen, Jeff Colwell, Donald Blades, Eugene Dursin, Susan Dursin, Dennis Ellithorpe, Donna Fear, Bernadette Haleamau, Mila Horak, Dale Kabei, Larry Kane, Mark Littorin, Keith Lukat, Margaret Masunaga, Robert McDonald, Robert Moeller, Steve Nadell, Stanley Oka, Mika Ono, John Redden, Katherine Rement, Mildred Shimakura, Erin Sims, Justin Sims, Luane Spicer, Colette Stith, Gretchen Watson-Kabei, Nicholas Williams

### Supporting Business Members

RC Anderson, Brian Asbjornson, Eric Basalyga, Richard Han, Jamie Waiwaiole, Charles Zellmer

### Associate Members

Edward Call, Carolyn Corker-Free, Joseph Fuentes, Ken Hawkeswood, Dustin Johnston, Richard Kramer, Lorraine Mecca, Harry Mullin, John Sigurdson, Diana Smith, Cheryl Wessling.

Want to join? Go to our link at [konacoffeefarmers.org/join.asp](http://konacoffeefarmers.org/join.asp)

## Safeway's "Coffee Destination" Shows No Respect

Safeway is selling packaged coffee on the mainland called "Safeway Select Kona Blend". The label reads "Revel in the unmatched taste of savory beans from Hawaii's Big Island", and "100% Arabica Coffee". And the back label text of ALL their varieties reads "ESCAPE TO A COFFEE DESTINATION - From the lush soils of Colombia to the island paradise of Kona, we comb the globe to bring you only the finest flavors that nature has to offer." Nowhere on the label is there any indication whatever that the package contains any beans not grown in Kona.



The whole bean version sells for under \$11 a pound, the ground for under \$10 a pound! Less than the cost of **growing** 100% Kona coffee.

Yet, Blenda Wong of Safeway corporate headquarters, contacted by KCFA about the contents of the

"Safeway Select Kona Blend" coffee, stated that she had made an inquiry to the supplier (who she would not identify) and that **only some** of the coffee in the "Kona Blend" packages is, in fact, Kona-grown. She further stated that she did **not know what percentage of the coffee in the package was from Kona**, and that she did **not know the origin of the non-Kona coffee in the package**. She later emailed to say "Going forward, I am going to have you work directly with our legal department". No contact has been made by Safeway legal department.

In January KCFA presented a package of Safeway Select Kona Blend to HDOA Chair Russell Kokubun with a request that he arrange a meeting with the Hawaii Attorney General, HDOA representatives, and KCFA to discuss legal remedies for what appears to be a clear case of consumer fraud. Chair Kokubun took the package and assured KCFA that he would pursue the matter.

After a series of email inquiries to Russell Kokubun and Jimmy Nakatani, KCFA received a copy of a letter sent on April 11 from Chair Kokubun to Elsie Wolfe of Safeway headquarters in Pleasanton, CA. The letter firmly sets out the Hawaii labeling laws, and "...strongly urge[s] voluntary compliance with our laws in the interest of corporate responsibility and protecting the integrity of Hawaiian coffees...."

Having heard nothing more from HDOA, on June 20th Paul Uster of KCFA called HDOA to determine the status, and reported that: "Today I spoke by phone with Leslie Campaniano, who has been tasked by Kokubun to follow up with Safeway re the labeling. HDOA has not yet received a written or oral response from Safeway. Leslie stated that she followed up last week with a call to Elsie Wolfe's office, was routed to voice mail, and left a message asking

for a return call. No return call. Leslie told me she will call again this week, and if unable to reach Wolfe, another letter (stronger, I urged ) will be drafted and sent. I couldn't resist observing to Leslie, that is was incredible that Safeway was blowing off the State of Hawaii. I asked her to call me next week for follow up status and she agreed."

Nothing further has been heard from either Safeway or HDOA.

*Many thanks to Bruce Corker and Paul Uster for their tireless work on this issue of importance to KCFA members.*

## Editorial by C. Sheppard

### Why Is Safeway Deceiving Its Customers?

Safeway is a huge corporation. The effect of Safeway selling nationally a "Kona Blend", with an unknown quantity of Kona beans in it, and a most certainly non-Kona-typical flavor profile, is of huge impact to Kona farmers who would protect our unique coffee, and maintain it as a recognizable, reliable gourmet product. It is also tantamount to fooling their customers!

WHY would shoppers pay for real 100% Kona coffee, which they would perceive as too expensive when they compare it to the Safeway brand which APPEARS to be Kona coffee?

The State of Hawaii is being ignored by Safeway, despite the fact (as Russell Kokubun's letter stated) that other national and international corporations have modified their marketing materials in response to the HDOA's request. Starbucks stepped up to the plate and modified their packaging at the request of KCFA – mahalo to Starbucks!

Safeway has a good reputation – they are not known for such abuses. I can only think that they do not understand how serious this is for Kona coffee farmers. Is it time for a boycott of Safeway? Is it time for Kona people to step up to the plate and let Safeway know how they feel?

**Contact Safeway at  
Safeway Inc., PO Box 99,  
Pleasanton, CA 94566-0009. 1-888-  
safeway [www.safeway.com](http://www.safeway.com)**

Let them know they are doing harm

here. Maybe they will respond to their customers better than they do to our State officials.

## CBB Report



*Photo from Cea Smith who says "See all the belly buttons of the coffee- the darker center means the CBB is in there !"*

Report by Bob Smith - On May 24th, the Board of Agriculture approved the unrestricted importation of Bontanigard and Mycotrol, meaning you can buy it on the Internet and not just at local garden shops.

Awaiting word from Dept of Ag for the protocol when using freezing as a method of eliminating CBB; also on the progress being made to simplify the protocol for shipping green coffee in <10 pound quantities out of Kona to other islands.

## Get Connected

*Website Report for July 2011*

The KCFA is paying for a ¼ page ad in the very popular **Kona Coffee Cultural Festival Magazine** (comes out in October), highlighting that the KCFA encourages the Buying Public to BUY DIRECT from Farmers.

**Background:** When we began the KCFA web site, we felt that BUY DIRECT would be the BEST free Member benefit offering Direct Contact between our Farmers and the Buying Public. Take a look at the listings in our BUY Direct some time, and see what pops out at you. That is what the Buying Public will see as well. Unimpressive listings - such as a lack of photo/labels or information - will be passed over in favor of Listings with color and offerings that catch the Buying Public's eye. It is up to you but... if you want to encourage the Buying Public to choose **you**, make your listing is snazzy and be sure everything is accurate. You do need

your Username and Password to Login and adjust your listing, and if you don't have it, just email [info@konaCoffeeFarmers.org](mailto:info@konaCoffeeFarmers.org).

The WHATISKONAWORTH webpage is gathering interest but we can never have enough accurate price information. If you have new information, please contribute. To review this webpage, you do need to Login (it's a Members only place on the KCFA site) to see the news. Latest listing shows that Starbucks on Oahu at the Kahala Mall, was selling 100% Kona for \$22.50 per 8.8 ounces a couple weeks ago! Hope you are getting great prices too.

*Happy Summer from your  
KCFA webperson, Cea*

## Mahalo Plenty from the KCFA!

*We are starting a Mahalo Column for The Independent Voice and encourage all members to suggest people who have given their time and efforts to the KCFA, beyond their call. Send in your suggestions to the Editor, with the name and a sentence to indicate their contribution. Let's do the right thing and be thankful!*

**Chuck and Mary Lou Moss** for storing the "Coffee Shack" and hosting multiple KCFA meetings at their farm.

**Page Trygstad** for bringing the APEC Business Innovation Showcase competition to our attention and for his contributions in preparing the application for the competition. Sometimes stubbornness pays off.

**Mr. Henry Cho Sr. and The Painted Church** for the low cost rental of its great picnic facilities at beautiful Honaunau Bay.

## Coming Next Month

The fabulous new Kona Coffee Label Shirt! ! Fifteen KCFA farmers contributed labels, plus the KCFA label and logo, honu, and coffee sprigs are colorfully depicted, all on a top quality Aloha shirt.

Photo and How-To-Buy here next month.