

For Immediate Release

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**Educational programs train new farmers and
introduce high school students to careers in sustainable agriculture**

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—September 24, 2015—Two programs aimed at training and supporting the next generation of farmers in Hawai‘i are seeking applicants for sessions being offered this fall.

The Kohala Center’s Beginning Farmer-Rancher Development Program is accepting applications from prospective students for its sixth cohort. The 14-session course begins on Friday, November 7, in Honoka‘a. The course meets every other Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.. University of Hawai‘i researchers, extension agents, and other agricultural experts will cover subjects such as production planning, farm design, soil management, composting and vermicomposting, cover cropping, business planning, and marketing and sales. More information and application materials are available online at <http://kohalacenter.org/farmertraining> or by calling The Kohala Center at (808) 887-6411. The deadline to apply is Friday, October 30.

Although no previous farming experience is required, preference is given to applicants who have taken steps to become agricultural producers but would benefit from a comprehensive curriculum. The course covers a wide range of critical subject areas, such as managing soil health and fertility; crop nutrition; pest management; business planning, and marketing. In addition to the classroom training the course includes trips to local farms, hands-on farm field days, and farm apprenticeship opportunities. Students who successfully complete the course and create viable farm and business plans may receive one-on-one technical assistance from The Center’s Rural and Cooperative Business Development Services Program to access start-up capital and/or access to land.

For high school students and recent graduates interested in sustainable agriculture, the eighth cohort of The Center’s weeklong High School Agriculture Internship Program will run from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily from October 5 through 9 in Honoka‘a. With the ‘aina serving as their classroom, interns are introduced to various aspects of agriculture in Hawai‘i—from learning about pre-contact indigenous farming systems to modern local, sustainable, and organic agriculture. Interns gain hands-on farm experience from “seed-to-sale” and visit successful

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The Kohala Center is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Educational programs train new farmers and introduce high school students to careers in sustainable agriculture, page 2

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agricultural businesses. Upon completion of the program, students receive a \$125 stipend. More information and application materials are available online at <http://kohalacenter.org/farmertraining/internships> or by calling The Center. The deadline to apply is Wednesday, October 1.

The Center’s farmer training and sustainable agriculture internship programs represent unique partnerships between The Kohala Center, local government agencies, academic institutions, and leading agricultural professionals. The farmer training program is funded primarily by the [United States Department of Agriculture Office of Advocacy and Outreach](#) and the County of Hawai‘i Department of Research and Development, and the high school internship program is supported by [Kamehameha Schools’ ‘Aina Ulu Program](#).

“Our farmer training program helps to prepare adults who’ve made the decision to start farming commercially, while our high school intern program is intended to inspire a new generation of local food producers to lead us into the future,” said program director Derrick Kiyabu. “Both programs were designed in an effort to move Hawai‘i towards greater food self-reliance by training and motivating the next generations of local food producers. Here in Hawai‘i we import nearly 90 percent of our food, the number of farms in the state and across the U.S. is declining, while the average age of our farmers is increasing. We and our partners are dedicated to training and supporting new farming families on Hawai‘i Island and inspiring island youth to consider careers in agriculture in an effort to increase local food production, decrease dependency on imports, and diversify our rural economy.”

About The Kohala Center

Founded in the year 2000, The Kohala Center (<http://www.kohalacenter.org>) is an independent, community-based center for research, conservation, and education. We turn research and ancestral knowledge into action, so that communities in Hawai‘i and around the world can thrive—ecologically, economically, culturally, and socially.