



For Immediate Release

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Two programs set to train new Hawai'i Island farmers *Courses aim to help new producers succeed and improve local food security*

KAMUELA, Hawai'i—January 3, 2017—New and aspiring farmers and ranchers on Hawai'i Island can choose from two comprehensive courses being launched by The Kohala Center in early 2017.

In addition to its Beginning Farmer-Rancher Development Program, which has graduated more than 120 students since 2013, The Center will host the state's largest farmer training program, GoFarm Hawai'i, for the first time on Hawai'i Island. More information about both programs is available online at kohalacenter.org/farmertraining.

The seventh cohort of The Kohala Center's Beginning Farmer-Rancher Development Program begins on Saturday, February 4 in Honoka'a, with classes held every other Saturday through October from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Classes will meet primarily in Honoka'a but will rotate between training sites in Hawi, Kailua-Kona, and Ka'u to encourage participation from multiple regions of Hawai'i Island. The program provides 188 hours of coursework, on-farm demonstrations, workshops, field trips, and online resources covering topics such as soil fertility management, tropical crop production, livestock production, business planning and financing, and agricultural product marketing. Tuition is \$250 for the full program and scholarship assistance is available. Students who successfully complete the program will be eligible for assistance in securing farm leases and capital to successfully produce, market, and distribute their crops. The program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the County of Hawai'i Department of Research and Development.

GoFarm Hawai'i @ The Kohala Center will offer students classroom instruction, tours of local farms, and hands-on experience in small-scale farming at The Center's demonstration farm in Honoka'a. Sponsored in part by Ulupono Initiative, Kamehameha Schools, and County of Hawai'i, the program is divided into three phases starting with an "AgCurious" introductory session, followed by four AgXposure site visits. AgXposure participants may then apply to AgSchool, an intensive, hands-on, four-month farmer training program. Applicants interested in GoFarm @ The Kohala Center are encouraged to attend the AgCurious session on Thursday,

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Two programs set to train new Hawai‘i Island farmers, page 2

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January 12 from 6–8 p.m. at the North Hawai‘i Education and Research Center (NHERC) in Honoka‘a. AgCurious will provide an overview of the GoFarm program and the current state of farming in Hawai‘i. AgCurious and AgXposure sessions are available at no cost, while enrollment in the 13-session AgSchool program is \$20 per session. Interested applicants may email Derrick Kiyabu at derrick@gofarmhawaii.org to register and for more information.

“Our farmer training programs were created with a specific goal in mind: to improve food security in Hawai‘i by training and empowering future generations of local food producers,” said Nicole Milne, director of food and agriculture initiatives at The Kohala Center. “Here in Hawai‘i we import roughly 85 percent of our food, the average age of our local farmers is increasing, and the number of farms in the islands and across the U.S. is declining. Encouraging island residents to consider careers in agriculture and give them the knowledge and support they need to succeed are critical elements in our strategy to reduce Hawai‘i’s dependence on imports and move us toward greater food self-reliance.”

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.

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.