

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Janis Wong, media relations
The Kohala Center
jwong@kohalacenter.org
direct: 808-325-1114, office: 808-887-6411

Kohala Center expanding SNAP EBT card access to six farmers markets

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—October 26, 2011—The Kohala Center has received a one-year grant from the USDA to expand EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) card access to six farmers markets on Hawai‘i Island, thus providing participants in federal nutrition assistance programs with greater access to nutritious food. This funding will allow the Center to expand SNAP EBT access to these six farmers markets located at convenient locations around the island:

- Hilo Coffee Mill Farmers Market in Mountain View
- Ho‘oulu Community Farmers Market in Kona
- Keauhou Farmers Market in Kona
- Kinooles Farmers Market in Hilo
- Maku‘u Farmers Market in Puna
- Volcano Farmers Market in Volcano

The Kohala Center was one of nearly 150 projects funded nationally through the USDA’s Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP). The goal of FMPP is to increase consumer access to healthy food, much of it in food deserts—low-income areas identified as having limited access to affordable and nutritious food—and other low-income areas.

“This project will increase income to the six farmers markets, create expanded demand for local farm products, and benefit our rural island economy by investing more dollars into our local food system,” said Melanie Bondera, FMPP Project Coordinator for Hawai‘i Island and Rural Cooperative Development Specialist for the state-wide Lualima Center, a program of The Kohala Center.

The Kohala Center hopes to bring at least 1,800 new low-income families to the six farmer’s markets as regular customers over the next year. The six markets have made a commitment to providing EBT access, and each market will be responsible for managing and sustaining the EBT program after the one-year grant ends.

Increasing fresh food access in food deserts and other low-income communities was a priority for this year’s FMPP awards. Over 40 percent of projects funded by FMPP this year serve one or more food deserts and another 20 percent will be implemented in communities with a poverty rate of 20 percent or higher. According to a June 2011 Yale University report, 23.7 percent of Hawaii County households are low-income, with incomes below 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

Kohala Center expanding SNAP EBT card access to six farmers markets, page 2

Contact: Janis Wong, media relations
The Kohala Center
jwong@kohalacenter.org
direct: 808-325-1114, office: 808-887-6411

“Low-income households on Hawai‘i Island spend nearly double what their mainland counterparts spend on food,” Bondera said. “Increasing EBT access at farmers markets will respond to the immediate need of island residents to obtain fresh local food that will improve the overall health of their families.”

For more information on the USDA’s FMPP and a full list of awards granted for fiscal year 2011, visit www.ams.usda.gov/FMPP.

The Kohala Center is an independent, not-for-profit center for research and education *about* and *for* the environment. The Kohala Center builds teaching and research programs for energy and food self-reliance, as well as ecosystem health, to enhance island environments, serve island communities, and advance the work of the academy. See www.kohalacenter.org.