

For Immediate Release

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

Report ties expansion of local food system to community health, economy
Outcomes based on key recommendations

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—January 2, 2014—A recent health impact assessment ties the expansion of Hawai‘i County’s local food system to boosting community health, food security for families, and strengthening the local economy.

The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) built on earlier work by PingSun Leung at the University of Hawai‘i and Matthew Loke of the Hawai‘i State Department of Agriculture which showed that replacing 10 percent of Hawai‘i state imports with local farm output could result in the creation of more than 2,300 jobs, \$188 million in sales, \$47 million in earnings, and \$6 million in state tax revenues. The HIA suggests that increased local production, including home and school gardening, could also improve access to and affordability of more nutritious, farm-fresh foods for local families.

The HIA was funded by a \$150,000 grant from the Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, and was prepared for the County of Hawai‘i by The Kohala Center in partnership with the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture and Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research, Hawai‘i.

With the completion of the HIA, Hawai‘i’s legislative and regulatory decision-makers have essential information to positively impact the socio-economic and physical health of Hawai‘i Island residents when implementing the County’s agricultural plan.

Specific outcomes based on key recommendations from the HIA process include:

- The Hawai‘i Department of Health’s 2013 Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan includes recommendations to increase school garden capacity and agricultural training and nutritional education for teachers and the public.
- The Kohala Center obtained federal funds to assist rural farmers markets to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food

-more-

P.O. Box 437462 | Kamuela, Hawai‘i 96743 | Tel. 808-887-6411 | Fax 808-885-6707 | www.kohalacenter.org

The Kohala Center is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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

Stamps), significantly increasing low-income families' access to fresh food and augmenting small farmers' incomes.

- The University of Hawai'i is developing six new farmer-training programs, and The Kohala Center obtained federal funding for a beginning farmer-training program.
- The Hawai'i Department of Education's School Food Authority hired two new staff members to work on local farm-to-school procurement.

"The work The Kohala Center does is not only creative and innovative but more importantly, very necessary in instigating the much-needed change at both grassroots and institutional levels," said Joy Barua, director of Community Benefit and Health Policy for Kaiser Permanente, Hawai'i Region.

In the fall of 2013, the Kohala Center's Health Impact Project-funded HIA was featured in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Connect Program, which allows grantees to discuss new approaches to improving health with policymakers.

"There's a growing trend as more cities and states realize the importance and value of bringing health into decisions in other sectors," said Aaron Wernham, director of the Health Impact Project. "Not only was the Kohala Center on the forefront of that, their work to integrate health considerations into the county agricultural policies will contribute to improving Hawaiians' opportunity to be healthy."

The HIA executive summary is posted on The Kohala Center's website at <http://www.kohalacenter.org/pdf/HIAExecutiveSummaryFinalWeb.pdf>.

About The Kohala Center

The Kohala Center is an independent, not-for-profit, community-based center for research, education, and conservation. The Center was established in direct response to the request of island residents to create greater educational and employment opportunities by enhancing—and celebrating—Hawai'i's spectacular natural and cultural landscapes.