

For Immediate Release

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**Educational programs train new farmers and
introduce youth to agricultural careers**

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—September 8, 2014—Two programs aimed at introducing high school students and aspiring farmers on Hawai‘i Island to agricultural careers are seeking applicants for upcoming cohorts in October.

Ku I Ka Mana, a beginning farmer and rancher training program administered by The Kohala Center, is accepting applications from prospective students for its fourth cohort. The 30-session course begins on Friday, October 17 and is conducted in Honoka‘a on Friday evenings from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. and Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon. More information and application materials are available online at <http://kohalacenter.org/farmertraining/application> or by calling The Kohala Center at 808-887-6411. The deadline to apply is Friday, October 10.

Although no previous farming experience is required, preference is given to United States veterans and to applicants who have taken steps to become agricultural producers but would benefit from a comprehensive, hands-on curriculum. The course covers a wide range of critical subject areas such as soil management, irrigation, composting, cover cropping, and pest management, as well as the “business” side of farming—marketing, accounting, budgeting, and record-keeping. Students who successfully complete the course and create viable farm and business plans will be able to work with program staff to obtain leasable farmland, should they not already have land on which to farm or ranch.

Ku I Ka Mana represents a unique partnership between The Kohala Center, local government agencies, academic institutions, and leading agricultural professionals. The program is funded primarily by an initiative of the [United States Department of Agriculture](http://www.usda.gov) that supports new farmer training and education programs in 27 states. The County of Hawai‘i provided matching funds that enabled The Kohala Center to secure the USDA grant.

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Open to Hawai‘i Island high school students and recent graduates, the fourth cohort of The Center’s weeklong High School Agriculture Internship Program will run from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily from October 6 through 10. 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.

With the ‘aina serving as their classroom, interns are introduced to various aspects of agriculture in Hawai‘i through site visits to Waipi‘o, Kohala, Hamakua, Kona, and Hilo. Participants gain hands-on experience in sustainable agriculture, learn about island food systems, and receive a \$125 stipend upon completion. The High School Agriculture Internship Program is co-sponsored by [Kamehameha Schools’ ‘Aina Ulu Program](#).

“These 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,” said Derrick Kiyabu, director of The Kohala Center’s Ku I Ka Mana Beginning Farmer-Rancher Development Program. “Here in Hawai‘i we import nearly 90% 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, diversify our rural economy, and create meaningful jobs.”

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 traditional knowledge into action, so that communities in Hawai‘i and around the world can thrive—ecologically, economically, culturally, and socially.