Aloha kākou,

The Kohala Center’s Rural and Cooperative Business Development Services team is dedicated to strengthening Hawai‘i’s rural and agricultural businesses. There are several events on the horizon supporting Hawai‘i Island’s agricultural producers, including workshops on food preservation and and soil health, and an opportunity for producers to increase sales through a new farmers market. Please visit our website at kohalacenter.org/business for more information about our services, upcoming events, microloan programs, and other resources.

Mahalo,
Nicole, Melanie, Anna-Lisa, Derrick, Anthony, and Zoe
Rural and Cooperative Business Development Services
The Kohala Center

OPPORTUNITIES:

Provide testimony TODAY to support cottage food production!
The Local Food Coalition has submitted cottage food bills to the Hawai‘i State Legislature seeking to promote the growth of Hawai‘i’s homemade food businesses. Testimony is being accepted TODAY for House Bill 1233. We encourage home-based food processing businesses to support this legislation to expand opportunities for at-home processing, increase local food production, and strengthen our local economy. Testimony must be submitted by 5 p.m. today (Thursday, February 5). If you are on O‘ahu and are able to testify in person, the hearing will be on Friday, February 6 at 9:20 a.m. in State Capitol Room 312 for the House Economic Development and Business committee. Testimony does not need to be lengthy; even a few sentences explaining how this initiative can help your business is sufficient. Please submit testimony so that your voice is heard!

To submit testimony for this bill please visit the Hawai‘i Legislature’s website at http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov. You will be required to register for an account to allow you to submit testimony; click ‘Register’ in the upper right hand corner of the website to create an account. You will then be directed to visit your email to confirm your registration. Following confirmation, return to the legislature’s website and search for HB1233. This site provides you with the text of the bill in PDF format and will allow you to submit testimony through the ‘submit testimony’ button. If you would like a draft template for testimony that provides an example format please email Nicole Milne, Associate Vice President for Programs, at nmilne@kohalacenter.org or call Nicole at 808-987-9210.
Help us build a commercial kitchen and contract packing facility that meets your needs
The Kohala Center is currently conducting a survey of Hawai‘i Island food producers. With investment from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, we'll be building a commercial kitchen and contract packing facility as part of our new campus on Kohala Mountain Road, and we're seeking the community’s input on features and amenities that will meet their needs. The survey is available online until March 1 at koha.la/survey-fp or by calling Nicole Milne at 808-987-9210.

High School Agriculture Internship Program
Applications are now being accepted for the spring cohort of our High School Agriculture Internship Program. The internships offer paid stipends to Hawai‘i Island high school students interested in learning more about farming, ranching, food production, and sustainability. Interns take field trips to island farms, gain hands-on experience in organic and natural farming methods, and learn more about career opportunities in agriculture. The program runs March 16–20 (during spring intersession) from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with each day beginning and ending in Honoka‘a. For more information and to apply, visit koha.la/farminterns. The application deadline is Wednesday, March 11.

Our Hawai‘i Island Food Producers Fund is making a difference!
Congratulations to Carolyn Wong of Pa‘ahana Livestock LLC, Howie Simon of Lotus Café, Kahealani Ka‘aihili of Mokuwai Piko Poi Inc., and Kai Bowman of Kamanele Farm, all of whom had their Kiva Zip loan requests funded and subsequently matched by our Hawai‘i Island Food Producers Fund. Kiva Zip enables entrepreneurs to secure no-interest microloans through crowdfunding. With support from the County of Hawai‘i we created the Hawai‘i Island Food Producers Fund to increase the amount of capital available to island food producers and stimulate local food production. For more information about our microloan programs visit koha.la/loans.

New Farmers Market Seeking Farmers and Food Entrepreneurs
Wednesdays from 2 p.m. to sunset
Kailua-Kona
The Kona Sunset Farmers Market is expanding! The market is seeking farmers and food entrepreneurs who share its mission of supporting sustainability and self-reliance in our local food economy. The market is held every Wednesday from 2 p.m. until sunset, at the northwest end of the Kmart parking lot. New and seasoned farmers are encouraged to apply, as well as food entrepreneurs committed to using the freshest, most locally grown ingredients possible. Part-time, full time, and occasional booth spaces are available. Please email konasunsetmarket@gmail.com or call 808-895-8665 for an application or to request more information.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Organic Survey
A nationwide U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Organic Survey is now underway. The study of organic agriculture production will help the USDA develop programs for producers. The survey is a complete inventory of all known organic producers that are certified, exempt from certification, and transitioning to certified organic production. Farmers and ranchers can fill out the survey online through a secure website, agcensus.usda.gov/Online_Response. For more information about the survey, see the press release. The deadline to complete the online survey is April 3, 2015.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Hawai‘i Master Food Preserver Certificate Program
Presented by The University of Hawai‘i at Hilo’s College of Continuing Education and Community Service in collaboration with Hawai‘i Tropical Fruit Growers
February 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 23, and 24, 2015
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
81-6393 Māmalahoa Highway, Kealakekua (map and directions)
This program will also be offered in Hilo; dates, times, and location TBA

This is an eight-day certificate program that will cover everything from canning fruit and vegetables to pickling, fermenting, and more, all while practicing food safety and preventing foodborne illness. The
course instructor is renowned fruit guru Ken Love, who will impart his knowledge, humor, and frankness over 64 hours of hands-on training.

If you're interested in getting certified as a Master Food Preserver in food safety and preservation, contact Luisa Castro at 808-974-7664 or luisac@hawaii.edu by January 28 to request an application. Attendance is limited to 12 students. Tuition is $100. For more information about the course, visit http://hilo.hawaii.edu/academics/ccecs/MasterFoodPreserver.php.

Plants and Us: Nutritive Cycles and Natural Farming in the Garden
Presented by Kalu Oyama, FoodCorps Hawai‘i Service Member
Saturday, February 7, 2015
9 a.m. to Noon
Nā‘ālehu Elementary School, 95-5545 Māmalahoa Hwy, Nā‘ālehu (map and directions)
Free of charge, open to all K-12 teachers

FoodCorps service member Kalu Oyama will share her knowledge on balancing our garden soil and improving plant vigor using natural farming methods. The presentation will include a discussion on the similarities between plants and people and the four nutritive stages. Participants will make fermented plant and fruit juices and take home materials on natural farming.

For more information and to register, contact Donna Mitts at dmitts@kohalacenter.org or 808-936-2117.