

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE

Newsletter of the Kona Coffee Farmers Association

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Contents:

Chemical Profiling for Origin.....1

HDoA Study on Hawaiian Coffee.....1

Kona as a Value Statement?.....2

What IS Green Certification..... 2

Agricultural Education.....2

Coffee in Space.....2

Membership Information.....2

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Chemical Profiling for Origin

Work being done by the University of Oregon may provide us with a definitive test for Kona coffee. If successful, this could enable Kona coffee producers to challenge suspect Kona coffee rip-offs and could make the current expensive and time-consuming certification system redundant.

Headed by Dr. Kim Anderson and Dr. Brian Smith, the team has already put out a study titled "Chemical Profiling to Differentiate Geographic Growing Origins of Coffee" and is continuing work on other agricultural products.

<http://emt.oregonstate.edu/faculty/pdfs/anderson/andersonChemicalProfiling.pdf>

Below is an extract from an article by Dawn Marie Woodward of KVAL-TV Oregon. Full article can be read at <http://www2.kval.com/x56468.xml>

"In the past, discerning shoppers purchasing "Oregon" strawberries from their grocers' shelves might have ended up with a product that came all the way from Mexico or Central America. And they might have never been made aware of the discrepancy.

Now, new testing methods developed by Oregon State University researchers will allow the food industry to determine whether those fresh "Oregon" strawberries came from fields in McMinnville, Burns or the Gulf of Mexico.

Fresh produce, coffee and wine are just some of the food products that are often mislabeled – either unintentionally or on purpose – and until recently there was not a sure-fire way to determine the true geographic origins of commodities.

By looking at stable isotopes and the availability of trace elements in different foods, like that luscious Oregon strawberry,

and comparing the results to a database, the researchers can pinpoint within a matter of miles where the berry came from. Their latest body of work on the subject will be published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry.

"We label food to protect the authenticity of the product," said Dr. Anderson. "But if the label is inaccurate, everyone suffers. This science allows us to protect growers' expertise, the value added to their crops, the economy and our health."

"Think about Kona coffee," said Anderson. "It sells at premium price because of where it was grown and the practices that have gone into it. About 20 million pounds of Kona coffee are sold annually, but only 2 million pounds are actually produced. Somewhere, 18 million pounds of coffee are being labeled as something it's not. When you can buy Columbian coffee for \$1 a pound then turn around and sell it under a different label for \$35 a pound, someone is going to take advantage of that."

This is not a prohibitively expensive testing method like a previously explored DNA method, and after the initial setup and profiling of the Kona region the costs per test (roasted or green, it doesn't matter) should be inexpensive and quick.



'...emh, the mug is from China, as its sticker says and according to my chemical profiling the coffee is from Guatemala, Sure you spent your vacation in Kona?'

Protecting market share, reputation, and consumer willingness to pay a premium for real Kona coffee is becoming ever more important. Misidentification of Kona by unscrupulous retailers/resellers will affect the consumers' choice, either because they did not like the inferior brew, or because they don't trust the name on the bag. Developing a method that can IDENTIFY Kona's origin, whether roast or green, will surely deter the counterfeiters. The KCFA will support Dr. Anderson's team to get various coffee samples (green or roasted) from Kona and but also from Ka'u and the Hamakua coffee growers, as well as Maui, Kauai and Molokai coffees. Based on the different geological soil profiles she is confident she will be able to determine each area's unique characteristics. Virginia Easton-Smith is also investigating how CTAHR can assist on this truly promising endeavor.

New Study Poses Hard Questions

A study has been released by Hawaii Department of Agriculture. Titled "Hawaii's Coffee Industry – Structural Change and Its Effects on Farm operations" it predicts possible hard times ahead for smaller coffee producers.

Some salient points:

"An explosive 600% output growth of the Kauai Coffee brand may have partially contributed to the Kona Coffee price crash in the late 1990's."

"... only farms large enough to economize on input and marketing costs will have the capability to withstand the increasing competitive pressure and price fluctuations"

"The future of small farms depends on their ability to develop and maintain niche market, or band together in an effective cooperative or any entity that could lower their production and distribution costs".

"Uncontrolled counterfeit coffee operation can cause a crisis similar to those that occurred in the early and late 1990's. Inadequate enforcement of measures put in place to curtail counterfeiting operations could leave the industry vulnerable"

The whole report, by economist Mana Southichack, Ph.D., is worth reading, available from the HDoA.

“Kona” As A Value Statement?

It seems the “Kona” name is being widely used (and abused?) to sell many different commodities. From new homes (Kona Coffee Estates) to chewing gum (Kona Crème) our famous name is popping up all over.

Does this hurt us? Well, some obviously will if the name Kona is linked with an unfavorable coffee experience...

Wm. Wrigley Jr. Co. is testing a new coffee-flavored gum, Doublemint Kona Crème, in 7-Eleven stores nationwide.

The gum, available for about 99 cents in 17-stick packs, is an offshoot of the company’s Wrigley’s Coffee Gum, which has garnered a niche market since its introduction in China last year.

Flavored with coffee powder and artificial ingredients, there’s only a trace of caffeine in the product.

We haven’t yet been able to find out if they use Kona coffee to make it. And this Editor has not been brave enough to taste-test it yet! We welcome *Letters To The Editor* if you have.



Vocational Agricultural Education

Matthew Loke of the HdoA’s Agricultural Development Division is proposing help to finance vocational agricultural education in high schools as a key piece of future legislation.

Schools are increasingly pulling back on subjects that don’t appear in the battery of tests for No Child Left Behind. Today’s specialty farmer needs to have a much broader education than those who worked for plantations, which had in-house experts in a wide variety of areas. They need to know not just how to grow crops, but how to market the product, transport it, manage workers, and know business accounting practices.

“If the trend persists, then it may impact the Neighbor Islands more than Oahu” said Loke, who noted that the outer islands tend to have more agricultural industries. “Farmers have to be agricultural entrepreneurs. It’s a little bit more challenging, but I think it’s a lot more rewarding.”

“What IS Green Certification?”

CTAHR hopes to help here – the Coffee Talk scheduled for June 14th will have Richard Dinker, a Commodities Inspector with HdoA, explain the process of getting your green coffee certified. At the CTAHR offices, 3:30 to 5.

Discussion Forum

Be sure to join the new forum where members can voice their opinions and read others’ views on a variety of topics. Mark Shultise will be ready to sign people up in a few days and will send out an email to all members telling them how to join. There will be a “member-only” area, and also a public area for discussions with all people interested in Kona coffee so encourage your neighbors to share their views too.

Coffee In Space

One of the big challenges for long duration spaceflights is food – four months of food takes up a lot of room. Astronaut Don Pettit aboard the International Space Station Alpha likes to have a couple of cups of coffee each day. And two cups of coffee over four months is a lot of coffee.

There’s no fresh-ground, fresh-brewed in space. NASA’s coffee is an instant Kona coffee packaged in plastic-coated metal foil bags, plus a piece of velcro so it can be placed against the wall where it won’t float away.

To enjoy a cup Pettit injects eight ounces of hot water, shakes and inserts a straw. More than 100 coffee pouches were squeezed into the shuttle’s food trays to give Pettit a supply. “It’s looking pretty good,” Pettit said. “Nothing like having a bag of coffee in the morning.”

Extracted from a longer article Courtesy NASA and Silverton Appeal. Photo courtesy of NASA.



NASA Astronaut Donald R. Pettit (Ph.D.)



**100% KONA
COFFEE
FARMERS
ASSOCIATION**

Membership Information

The Kona Coffee Farmers Association was founded to protect and promote 100% Kona coffee, and to support and provide an independent voice to the farmers who grow Kona coffee.

With nearly 80 members now, we are a member-driven organization and encourage member input at all times. KCFA holds four quarterly member meetings each year specifically for member communications so we can all get together to talk story. You can also contact any of the Kona Coffee Farmers board of directors and voice your concerns.

Only farmers are allowed voting privileges in KCFA elections. Proxy votes are not allowed. Only farmers can be elected to the KCFA Board of Directors.

The Kona Coffee Farmers Association’s goals are to help all of our member farmers succeed in their farming business and enjoy participating in an organization that represents their interests.

Tell a friend.

**Membership Information:
Learn more and join us online.
www.konacoffeefarmers.com**