For Immediate Release

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Local agriculture producers and consumers invited to take organic industry surveys

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—July 11, 2013—The Kohala Center today launched a series of online surveys aimed at soliciting input and feedback from various sectors of Hawai‘i’s organic food industry. The surveys are accessible online at http://www.laulimacenter.org/organic_survey.html through Friday, August 2, 2013.

The surveys are part of an initiative to determine the feasibility and potential roles of one or more organizations or agencies that would effectively support the growth and vitality of Hawai‘i’s organic industry. The initiative is supported by a grant from the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture.

Farmers, producers, distributors, retailers, consumers, and agricultural professionals are encouraged to participate in one or more of the surveys. Participation is voluntary and anonymous. Data collected from the surveys will influence the development of solutions and recommendations to strengthen Hawai‘i’s organic industry.

A nine-member advisory group comprised of organic farmers, producers, retailers, and agricultural professionals from around the state was convened in February to determine the primary barriers affecting the growth and sustainability of Hawai‘i’s organic industry. Representatives from local processors, distributors, retailers, certifiers, and the state legislature have also provided input to the group’s work. Based on the issues, barriers, and potential solutions defined by the advisory group, surveys were developed to gain insights and data from a broader range of industry constituents statewide.

“Organic agricultural producers operating in Hawai‘i currently don’t have a central place where they can obtain information on critical issues such as infrastructure, processing, marketing, certification, and business development,” said Melanie Bondera, Rural Cooperative Development Specialist for the Laulima Center, a program of The Kohala Center. “There are many entities in the state providing specific services, but no central educational or advocacy group. Our research seeks to determine how existing entities can support organics in Hawai‘i, and how the local industry can overcome the barriers that are affecting farming operations, production, distribution, quality, and costs.”

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Survey data will be analyzed and integrated with the advisory group’s research to develop actionable solutions and recommendations to the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture, as well as provide input on a legislative agenda for the industry in 2014. The advisory group will conduct an open meeting on Hawai‘i Island in late October, at which the group’s findings and preliminary recommendations will be presented to the public for feedback and further input.

Interested participants may access the surveys online at http://www.laulimacenter.org/organic_survey.html, or contact The Kohala Center at 808-887-6411 for more information.

About The Kohala Center
The Kohala Center (http://www.kohalacenter.org) is an independent, 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.

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