State of Hawaii
Department of Agriculture

MORE COVID-19 EMERGENCY FARMER RELIEF GRANTS ISSUED

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96 More Farmers to Receive Assistance

HONOLULU – The Hawai`i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) will be issuing a second round of grants totaling an additional $200,000 under the COVID-19 Emergency Farmer Relief Program to assist farmers, ranchers and growers who have experienced financial damage. In this second round, 96 grants were issued ranging between $2,000 and $4,000 each and will provide stop-gap financial relief to help agribusinesses during the COVID-19 crisis. The funds may be used to help utilize an oversupply of agricultural products resulting from decreased demand due to closures of restaurants, schools and other businesses.

Last month, HDOA issued 106 grants totaling $270,000, of which $250,000 came from the State's barrel tax fund (Agriculture Development and Food Security Special Fund) and made available through Gov. Ige's March 4 emergency proclamation and $20,000 from the Ulupono Foundation to assist hog farmers with feed costs. Subsequently, HDOA was able to identify additional barrel tax funds slated for other projects and apply them to the emergency fund. The relief program has now awarded a total of about $470,000 through 202 grants.

"The heartfelt responses we received from grant recipients in the first round made us search even harder for additional funds so we can assist more agricultural producers," said Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser, chairperson of the Hawai`i Board of Agriculture. "Although these are not large grants, we know that they are helping many small farms stay in business."

HDOA received and reviewed a total of 333 grant applications in late March. Priority was given to applications that demonstrated significant financial damage caused or exacerbated specifically by the COVID-19 situation that poses a serious threat of permanently shutting down the applicant's agricultural operations. The second round of grants was issued to the next qualified

applicants on the priority list.

Both rounds of funding mainly focused on individual farmer grants of $2,000 with a few awards granted to non-profit commodity and agricultural industry associations ranging between $2,000 and $10,000.

The grants were awarded statewide:

Island	**Total # of grants**
Hawai`i Island	59
O`ahu	100
Kaua`i	18
Maui	14
Moloka`i	7
Lana`i	4

The emergency relief program has been a priority for HDOA as well as the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS), which has fast-tracked the processing and printing of the grant checks.

HDOA is also providing financial assistance through an Emergency Agricultural Loan Program, which was approved by the Hawai`i Board of Agriculture on April 14, 2020. So far, the program has received more than 125 inquiries and about 30 applications for emergency loans.

The emergency loan program offers low-interest loans to qualified farmers. Eligible farmers may apply for emergency loans of up to $150,000 at 3 percent interest. Loans of $100,000 or less will not require credit denials from other financial institutions, which would normally be required for agricultural loans. The board also waived the three-year residency requirements normally required for agricultural loans. Micro loans of less than $25,000 are also available and involve less paperwork and offer swifter processing.

Farmers interested in applying for emergency or micro loans should contact their nearest HDOA office:

Oahu, Kauai, Maui – (808) 973-9460
Hilo – (808) 933-9977
Kona – (808) 323-7591

In addition, several farmers with existing agricultural loans are working with HDOA's loan officers

to work out payment relief plans.

For more information on agricultural loans, go to the division's webpage:
http://hdoa.hawaii.gov/agl/

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