

Kona name merely to get better prices. Once coffee left Kona, roasters marketed the product any way they chose, for there was no definition of a *Kona blend*.

The Hawai'i County Council on Economic Development felt that at least 51 percent of a blend should be Kona before it could be considered a Kona blend.¹⁰ Masao Nakamura, vice president of Mauna Loa Macadamia Nut Company, a C. Brewer company that purchased Superior Tea and Coffee, differed sharply. He claimed that consumers didn't want too much Kona in their blends because that would make the coffee too strong. An increase in the amount of Kona in the blend also would drive costs too high.¹¹ Others felt that abuse of the Kona name would lessen the quality of the coffee.

In response to these arguments and in response to the Kona Coffee Council, the state legislature passed a law that went into effect in 1992. The new statute required blends to be at least 10 percent Kona coffee before they could be marketed as a Kona blend. Many felt this law was watered down and carried the fight onward.

Grower Tom Greenwell considered this weak standard "false advertising" because, he said, it allowed Kona coffee beans to be mixed with low-grade beans, twigs, and other debris. "Technically, it is 100 percent Kona," he said, "but it's stuff I put on my compost pile."¹² Michael Craig, another grower, saw the misuse of the name *Kona* as a misuse of the cultural heritage of Hawai'i.¹³

The identity and reputation of Kona coffee, however, experienced a giant setback in 1996. It was discovered that Michael Norton of the Kona Kai Farms, a Berkeley, California-based distributor, had purchased inferior Panamanian and Costa Rican beans and sold these as Kona coffee at premium prices. The coffee would have sold at one-third to one-fourth that price if marketed honestly. Norton earned more than \$15 million through this scheme. According to court papers filed in the U.S. District Court in Northern California, Norton purchased 3.6 million pounds of coffee from a dealer in Costa Rica between 1993 and 1996.¹⁴ Only 1 million pounds of that quantity was Kona. Norton then arranged for another agent to act as a buyer