The Media Consortium is proud to announce our participation in the Kauai Media and Journalism Project—The World is Watching. Underwritten by individual donors living on the island, the Kauai Project is designed to look at Kauai as a microcosm of biotech agriculture and its impacts both on local communities and on the world’s food supply.

Over the next two years, up to ten Media Consortium member news organizations will send reporters to Kauai. Reporters will collaborate, sharing sources and story ideas; outlets will publish jointly across different media platforms; and all will cross-promote each other’s content using a joint website (name tbd). Outlets taking part in the first phase of this project include Earth Island Journal, Truthout, Specialty Studios, KCETLINKTV, and Yes! magazine.

Why Kauai? Kauai is the subject of this project because it is “likely that [every kernel of corn](http://www.cocaction.com/doccoch/alicia_ppt.pdf) grown in the world is a result of research in Hawaii.” On Kauai itself, the [number one crop](http://kauaichamber.org/pages/KauaiIndustries1/#http://kauaichamber.org/pages/KauaiIndustries1/) is seed corn. In addition to growing seed corn for sale, the major agrichemical companies--Monsanto, Pioneer Dupont, Syngenta, Dow and BASF—use their Kauai land to test seed genetically modified to resist pesticides.

The seed crop business plays a significant role in Kauai’s economy, taking up as much as [20 percent of available agricultural land](http://thegardenisland.com/business/local/gmo-by-the-numbers/article_c9d7a29c-1dd1-11e3-9ea3-001a4bcf887a.html?mode=jqm) on the island. While tourism is the island’s number one economic driver overall, seed crop agriculture is a top-three employment driver on the island’s west side. Yet, residents on the west side have become increasingly concerned about the health and environmental impact of the pesticides used to test GMO seed corn.

This fall, people on the island have taken action to attempt to rein in pesticide use. [On September 8, 2013](http://www.civilbeat.com/articles/2013/09/09/19855-kauais-passionate-anti-gmo-march-aims-to-sway-local-biotech-vote/), several thousand people marched to the Kauai County Building protest the use of pesticides on biotech fields. They were advocating for passage of bill 2491, the right to know bill. According to [local TV KHON 2](http://www.khon2.com/news/kauai-approves-right-to-know-bill-2491), “the bill requires farms to disclose pesticide use and the presence of genetically modified crops and requires buffer zones near schools, homes, medical facilities, public roads and waterways.”

The political fight over bill 2491—which the Kauai County Council passed, the mayor vetoed, and is up for an override as of November 14, 2013—is just one aspect to the complex Kauai story. Money in politics, sustainable local economies, pesticide-based pollution, GMO food, along with the sometimes competing desires of native Hawaiians, locals, snowbirds, and tourists, all will make for a rich set of stories. Stay tuned for an announcement of the joint microsite where you will be able to find these stories unfolding!