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. 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. Not surprisingly, the Big Five agrichemical companies play an outsized role in the island’s politics.

The Kauai seed crop brings together some of the most pressing issues of our time: 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. This tiny island provides a microcosm of the way U.S. society currently functions, with the biggest spenders setting the rules, and the land and locals suffering as a result. The stories coming out of Kauai have the potential to change the political and ecological landscape of Kauai—and to cast a brighter light on how money in politics works on the mainland as well.