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Department
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State of Hawaii

NEWS RELEASE

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Hawaii-Grown Bananas Go to Guam

For the first time ever, Kea'au Banana Plantation (the state's largest banana farm) will be exporting 864 cases, nearly 35,000 pounds, of bananas to Guam on Thursday, June 24.

"We are very excited to open a new market and share our quality bananas with our neighbors in Guam," said Richard Ha, owner of Kea'au Banana Plantation.

"Hopefully, with this container load we can look at exporting weekly shipments of bananas to Guam. As the state becomes close to self-sufficiency in producing bananas for local consumption, the banana industry needs to identify new markets for expansion and to increase revenues for the state of Hawaii. Consistent weekly shipments of bananas to Guam will mean more than \$400,000 in additional revenues annually, with approximately 100 acres committed to banana production in Pepeekeo on the Big Island."

The maiden voyage of green bananas to Guam is expected to reach Apra Harbor on July 6, Pacific Standard Time. The fruits will be distributed to all of Guam's wholesale and military markets.

A deal with Guam's leading wholesale distributor was finalized earlier this month, as Ha traveled with 24 other company representatives that took part in a State Department of Agriculture sponsored trade show featuring Hawaii's food and agricultural products.

"We are very pleased that in such a short period of time, Kea'au Banana Plantation has been able to form new business partnerships to launch such an advantageous project that is both beneficial for Hawaii, as well as Guam," said Deputy Director Letitia Uyehara, State Department of Agriculture.

The commercial export of certain varieties of green bananas — Brazilian, Valery, Williams — to the U.S. Mainland and Guam was made possible following federal rule changes in November 1998. Extensive research by the Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, found that these varieties of green bananas are not fruit fly hosts clearing federal quarantine restrictions which had prohibited the export of Hawaii-grown bananas.

In celebration of this inaugural shipment of green bananas to Guam, the media is invited to a ceremonial event scheduled for Thursday, June 24, 9:00AM at the farm's packing house located in Pepeekeo. Guest speakers will include Hawaii County Mayor Stephen K. Yamashiro and J.W.A. "Doc" Buyers of C. Brewer and Company, Ltd.

For more information please contact Richard Ha at (808) 981-0805.

Directions to the packing house: from Hilo go north on highway 19; just before the 11-mile marker make a left at the intersection of Hilo Coast Gears; follow roadway until you reach the packing house (signs will be posted).

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