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## A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TARO.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the taro plant is  
2 sacred to Hawaii's indigenous people and central to their  
3 beliefs about their origin. It is the official plant of Hawaii,  
4 as well as a symbol used in the crown of King Kalakaua, in the  
5 logo of the office of Hawaiian affairs, and in many commercial  
6 enterprises throughout the State. Its dietary and cultural  
7 significance is well-known and widely accepted.

8           It is thought that over three hundred varieties of the taro  
9 plant existed at the time of the arrival of European explorers.  
10 Today, there are approximately seventy varieties of the taro  
11 plant, many of which are unique to the State. The existence of  
12 the taro plant is dependent upon dedicated farmers who  
13 appreciate and sustain the time-honored tradition of growing and  
14 cultivating the taro plant for the benefit of all of Hawaii's  
15 residents.

16           However, taro farming has become increasingly difficult  
17 over the years due to a variety of obstacles that threaten its  
18 production, such as invasive species, disease, flooding and



1 other adverse weather, lack of land or open patches, lack of  
2 infrastructure, soil loss, and increased regulation. For  
3 instance, farmers have struggled recently to try to combat the  
4 apple snail, a persistent pest that has affected taro crops  
5 across the islands. The disease known as taro pocket rot has  
6 also been a threat. Some farmers face a shortage of open  
7 patches, whereas others face a shortage of land for taro  
8 production.

9 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to assist  
10 taro farmers to help preserve the cultural legacy of taro  
11 farming for future generations.

12 SECTION 2. (a) The department of agriculture shall  
13 develop and implement a taro farming grant program to assist  
14 taro farmers in need. The department shall:

- 15 (1) Determine what constitutes need; and  
16 (2) Consider, in its determination of need, the acreage  
17 and yield of the taro production versus the income and  
18 resources of the applicant.

19 (b) The taro farming grant program shall provide subsidies  
20 for the following purposes:



- 1           (1) Fallow rotation to rest fields and help regenerate
- 2                   competitive soil microbes or help break disease
- 3                   cycles;
- 4           (2) Use of land or patches for research that is beneficial
- 5                   to taro farmers, such as sustainable and
- 6                   environmentally conscientious methods for controlling
- 7                   plant rot, pest infestation, or disease; provided that
- 8                   nothing in this paragraph shall authorize the use of
- 9                   funds for genetically modified taro research;
- 10          (3) Address infrastructure problems, such as fencing and
- 11                   underground piping; and
- 12          (4) Watershed level management, such as ditch
- 13                   rehabilitation.

14           SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general

15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                   or so

16 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2008-2009 for

17 the taro farming grant program pursuant to section 2 of this

18 Act.

19           The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of

20 agriculture for the purposes of this Act.



**Report Title:**

Appropriation; Taro Farming Grant Program

**Description:**

Appropriates funds for a taro farming grant program to assist taro farmers in need to help preserve the cultural legacy of taro farming for future generations.

