
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 S.C.R. No. 206,
2 2007, recognized the need to develop a taro security and
3 research program to ensure that taro can be saved and protected
4 from natural attack of pests and diseases.

5 Taro and taro markets are in a state of decline. In
6 addition, the threats that taro farming families and communities
7 face in cultivating taro are numerous and growing. Taro lands
8 in Hawaii represent less than one per cent of all agricultural
9 lands in cultivation in the state, yet it remains the most
10 important traditional cultural crop in Hawaii. Taro production
11 is clearly underfunded.

12 The department of agriculture's preliminary report on the
13 implementation of S.C.R. No. 206 found that the invasive apple
14 snail, Pomacae canaliculata, represents the greatest concern to
15 taro farmers. The apple snail accounted for eighteen to twenty-
16 five per cent of crop losses in recent years.

17 A September 2006 report, entitled "Statewide Strategic
18 Control Plan for Apple Snail (*Pomacea canaliculata*) in Hawaii"



1 and funded by the department of land and natural resources
2 division of aquatic resources, clearly documented the rapid
3 spread of this pest in wetland taro systems, natural wetlands,
4 estuaries, streams, ditches, reservoirs, ponds, and springs on
5 all islands except Molokai and Kahoolawe; provided information
6 on the apple snail's biology and behavior, and past control
7 efforts locally and globally; and documented the negative
8 environmental, agricultural, economic, health-related,
9 educational, and cultural impacts of this invasive species on
10 the taro farming community, the taro market, and the overall
11 natural environment since its arrival in 1983-1984. This report
12 also documented that the State has spent less than \$400,000 on
13 snail control efforts, with little success. The importance of
14 addressing the decline in crop yields due to apple snails
15 continues to increase as Hawaii continued to import more and
16 more taro in 2006 and 2007.

17 One of the recommendations contained in this report as well
18 as the preliminary report on the implementation of S.C.R. No.
19 206 is to provide immediate funding of promising farmer-
20 developed organic snail control compounds and practices. Taro
21 farmers working with Pacific Biodiesel, a local Maui business
22 committed to promoting a clean, sustainable energy future



1 through the production of renewable fuels, discovered and
2 initiated research on an organic conditioner with promising
3 impacts on apple snail mortality. The partnership between the
4 farmers and Pacific Biodiesel has the potential to provide an
5 affordable and ecologically safe solution for farmers, and to
6 create further economic opportunities for the state.
7 Furthermore, Pacific Biodiesel has made a commitment to share
8 intellectual property rights directly with taro farmers. This
9 may provide taro farmers with the potential for self-funded
10 snail control efforts. No other invasive species control
11 efforts or agencies in the state have created such an option.
12 In addition, farmers on Kauai have developed a series of proven
13 organic cover crop rotation taro farming practices over a period
14 of ten years which suppresses snail presence in lo'i (wetland
15 patches). Both of these initiatives occurred without funding,
16 or state or county agency or institutional support.

17 Taro farmers have demonstrated their commitment to the
18 survival of taro and to finding a solution to the apple snail
19 problem despite many hurdles, including the lack of committed
20 funding and institutional support. They have initiated and
21 collaborated on an economic impact study, a statewide strategic
22 control plan, and self-initiated research and practices, and



1 have demonstrated a willingness to participate in the taro
2 purity and security dialogue. One of the biggest supporters of
3 taro research and laboratory work is E Kupaku Ka 'Aina - The
4 Hawaii Land Restoration Institute, a non-profit entity, which
5 has worked closely with taro farmers and Pacific Biodiesel in
6 promoting taro protection and improvement.

7 The purpose of this Act is to provide funding for E Kupaku
8 Ka 'Aina - The Hawaii Land Restoration Institute for:

- 9 (1) Laboratory costs and compensation for taro farmers
10 conducting experiments to improve and protect taro;
11 (2) Documentation of and outreach for taro farmer-
12 developed organic cover crop control practices on
13 Kauai.

14 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$500,000 or so much
16 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2008-2009 for a
17 grant-in-aid to E Kupaku Ka 'Aina - The Hawaii Land Restoration
18 Institute to be allocated as follows:

- 19 (1) \$450,000 for laboratory costs and compensation for
20 taro farmers conducting experiments to improve and
21 protect taro; and



1 (2) \$50,000 for documentation and outreach of Kauai
2 organic cover crop control practices.

3 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
4 agriculture for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2008.

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Report Title:

Taro; Apple Snails; Research

Description:

Provides a grant for taro research, laboratory costs, and outreach for the control of the invasive apple snail.

