
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TARO.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature recognizes the need to develop
2 non-genetic modification based solutions to protect taro from
3 disease and insects on a statewide basis. In Senate Concurrent
4 Resolution No. 206 (2007), the legislature requested the
5 department of agriculture to develop a taro security and purity
6 research program to save and protect taro from natural attack.

7 In 2007, 1,800,000 pounds of taro were imported to Hawaii.
8 Under existing biosecurity rules, the department of agriculture
9 was unable to inspect much of the imported taro to protect
10 existing taro crops in the State.

11 At the same time, taro farmers are struggling with high
12 rates of pest and disease infestation, rising crop and land
13 costs, lack of access to quality water and land resources, a
14 decline in crop cultivar biodiversity, and a decrease in the
15 number of families continuing the taro farming lifestyle. Taro
16 and taro farms are important in helping to promote Hawaii's
17 economic vitality in agriculture, tourism, health and wellness,



1 and education and the arts. Taro and taro farms help to sell
2 Hawaii to the world.

3 Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 206 (2007) requested the
4 department of agriculture (DOA) to collaborate with taro growers
5 and various native Hawaiian groups to develop and adopt a
6 program that would:

- 7 (1) Allow DOA's biosecurity program to protect crops in
8 Hawaii by inspecting foreign crops upon entrance to
9 the state, thereby preventing any viruses or insects
10 from entering the State;
- 11 (2) Allow alternative forms of research on taro other than
12 genetic modification;
- 13 (3) Provide public outreach, engagement, and education on
14 taro research and protection; and
- 15 (4) Request the United States Department of Agriculture to
16 have the Alomae/Bobone virus disease complex and taro
17 beetles designated as "actionable pests" in the
18 findings of the United States Department of
19 Agriculture and DOA report to prevent the entry of
20 these pests into Hawaii from foreign countries.

21 DOA initiated a dialogue with taro farmers from each
22 island, researchers and representatives from the University of



1 Hawaii, the Hawaii Farm Bureau, and the office of Hawaiian
2 affairs to produce a joint report describing the outcomes and
3 recommendations of the participants. The joint report,
4 including proposed legislation, was forwarded to the
5 legislature.

6 One of the primary recommendations of that report was to
7 form a taro security and purity task force to guide policy and
8 prioritize research for the protection of taro in Hawaii.

9 To ensure that the task force would have the full
10 participation of taro farmers who have faced crop hardships for
11 many years without financial assistance and whose resources are
12 limited, the participants recommended that funds be appropriated
13 for the task force for fiscal year 2008-2009.

14 The purpose of this Act is to establish the taro security
15 and purity task force and appropriate funds for the formation
16 and operation of the task force with full participation of taro
17 farmers from all islands.

18 SECTION 2. (a) There is established the taro security and
19 purity task force that shall be placed within the office of
20 Hawaiian affairs for administrative purposes.

21 (b) The task force shall include one representative from
22 each of the following:



- 1 (1) The office of Hawaiian affairs;
- 2 (2) The department of agriculture;
- 3 (3) The department of land and natural resources;
- 4 (4) The University of Hawaii;
- 5 (5) Onipa'a Na Hui Kalo; and
- 6 (6) The Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation.

7 The task force shall also include a minimum of two
8 representatives from the taro farming communities of each of the
9 islands of Kauai, Oahu, Maui, Molokai, and Hawaii, and one
10 representative of botanical gardens or taro collections in the
11 State.

12 At no time shall less than fifty per cent of the task force
13 be comprised of taro farmers.

14 The members of the task force shall select a chairperson
15 from among its members.

16 The task force members shall serve without compensation but
17 shall be reimbursed for expenses, including travel expenses,
18 incurred in the performance of their official duties.

19 (c) The task force shall prioritize its objectives, which
20 shall include, but not be limited to the following, in order to
21 ensure that it is able to sufficiently address and render
22 conclusions:



- 1 (1) Develop guidelines, protocols, and recommendations for
2 taro policy, non-genetic modification based taro
3 research, and the allocation of resources to ensure
4 that taro is saved and protected in Hawaii;
- 5 (2) Develop a program of incentives and projects that have
6 the support of a broad spectrum of taro growers that
7 will enhance taro security, protect taro purity,
8 provide support to taro farms and farmers, and improve
9 taro markets for the long-term;
- 10 (3) Support the recovery of traditional Hawaiian taro
11 cultivars throughout the State;
- 12 (4) Increase public awareness of the value of taro and its
13 role culturally, socially, in health and well-being,
14 environmentally, and economically in the State;
- 15 (5) Develop a program to provide taro education and
16 training opportunities;
- 17 (6) Develop a program for commercial taro growers to
18 maximize business viability and success;
- 19 (7) Develop a taro farming grant program to assist taro
20 farmers in need to preserve the cultural legacy of
21 taro farming for future generations;



1 (8) Discuss the feasibility and impact of requiring the
2 department of land and natural resources to provide
3 reduced lease rent rates for taro farmers on state-
4 leased land; and

5 (9) Develop taro research and outreach for the control and
6 eradication of apple snails.

7 (d) The task force shall meet at times and locations to be
8 determined by its members; provided that the first meeting of
9 the task force shall be no later than three months after the
10 effective date of this Act.

11 (e) The task force shall submit a preliminary report to
12 the legislature documenting the status of its progress no later
13 than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session
14 of 2009. The task force shall submit a final report to the
15 legislature summarizing its program, the results achieved,
16 actual expenditures, and recommended legislation no later than
17 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of
18 2010.

19 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
20 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of ~~\$325,000~~²²⁵⁰ or so much
21 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2008-2009 to achieve



1 the objectives of the taro security and purity task force, which
2 may include:

3 (1) Convening and operating the task force, including
4 conducting discussions on all islands;

5 (2) Contracting at least one person to facilitate,
6 coordinate, communicate, and record the work of the
7 task force;

8 (3) Conducting archival and ethnographic research of the
9 history of taro and taro practices in Hawaii and the
10 traditional Hawaiian cultivars to aid in its revival
11 and to revise Bulletin 84: Taro Varieties in Hawaii
12 (1939) which is the key reference for taro growers and
13 researchers;

14 (4) Protecting the Molokai taro varieties collection, the
15 oldest and most complete collection and source of taro
16 varieties in Hawaii;

17 (5) Conducting taro research and outreach for the control
18 and eradication of the apple snail; and

19 (6) Preparing the preliminary and final reports to be
20 submitted to the legislature.

21 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the office of
22 Hawaiian affairs for the purposes of this Act; provided that no



1 funds shall be expended unless matched on a dollar for dollar
2 basis by the office of Hawaiian affairs.

3 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2008.

APPROVED this day of , 2008

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF HAWAII

