

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 13 2008

RE: S.B. No. 2518

Honorable Colleen Hanabusa
President of the Senate
Twenty-Fourth State Legislature
Regular Session of 2008
State of Hawaii

Madam:

Your Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs, to which was referred S.B. No. 2518 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO TARO,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to provide funding for 'E kūpaku ka 'āina - The Hawaii Land Restoration Institute for:

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

Testimony in support of this measure was submitted by the Department of Agriculture, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, Hawaii Crop Improvement Association, The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i, 'E kūpaku ka 'āina, Waioli Farm, Onipaa Na Hui Kalo, and four individuals. Testimony in opposition to this measure was submitted by the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Your Committee finds that Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 206, 2007 (S.C.R. No. 206), recognized the need to develop a taro security and research program to ensure that taro can be saved and protected from natural attack of pests and diseases.

Taro and taro markets are in a state of decline. In addition, the threats that taro farming families and communities



face in cultivating taro are numerous and growing. Taro lands in Hawaii represent less than one per cent of all agricultural lands in cultivation in the State, yet it remains the most important traditional cultural crop in Hawaii. Taro production is clearly underfunded.

The Department of Agriculture's preliminary report on the implementation of S.C.R. No. 206 found that the invasive apple snail, pomacae canaliculata, represents the greatest concern to taro farmers. The apple snail accounted for eighteen to twenty-five per cent of crop losses in recent years.

A September 2006 report, entitled "Statewide Strategic Control Plan for Apple Snail (*Pomacea canaliculata*) in Hawaii" and funded by the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Aquatic Resources, clearly documented the rapid spread of this pest in wetland taro systems, natural wetlands, estuaries, streams, ditches, reservoirs, ponds, and springs on all islands except Molokai and Kahoolawe; provided information on the apple snail's biology and behavior, and past control efforts locally and globally; and documented the negative environmental, agricultural, economic, health-related, educational, and cultural impacts of this invasive species on the taro farming community, the taro market, and the overall natural environment since its arrival in 1983-1984.

This report also documented that the State has spent less than \$400,000 on snail control efforts, with little success. The importance of addressing the decline in crop yields due to apple snails continues to increase as Hawaii continued to import more and more taro in 2006 and 2007.

Your Committee notes its concern that despite the completion of the Statewide Strategic Control Plan in 2006, no efforts have been made to implement any of the recommendations set forth therein; no additional funding requests have been made to the Legislature for these efforts; and the only grant request relating to control of the apple snail made to the Hawaii Invasive Species Council was denied.

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



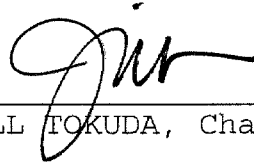
promoting a clean, sustainable energy future through the production of renewable fuels, discovered and initiated research on an organic conditioner with promising impacts on apple snail mortality. The partnership between the farmers and Pacific Biodiesel has the potential to provide an affordable and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

Taro farmers have demonstrated their commitment to the survival of taro and to finding a solution to the apple snail problem despite many hurdles, including the lack of committed funding and institutional support. They have initiated and collaborated on an economic impact study, a statewide strategic control plan, and self-initiated research and practices, and have demonstrated a willingness to participate in the taro purity and security dialogue. One of the biggest supporters of taro research and laboratory work is 'E kūpaku ka 'āina - The Hawaii Land Restoration Institute, a non-profit entity, which has worked closely with taro farmers and Pacific Biodiesel in promoting taro protection and improvement.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2518 and recommends that it pass Second Reading and be referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.



Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Agriculture and
Hawaiian Affairs,



JILL TOKUDA, Chair



The Senate
 Twenty-Fourth Legislature
 State of Hawaii

Record of Votes
Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs
AHW

Bill / Resolution No.:* SB 2518	Committee Referral: AHW, NAM	Date: 5 Feb 2008		
<input type="checkbox"/> The committee is reconsidering its previous decision on this measure. If so, then the previous decision was to: _____				
The Recommendation is: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pass, unamended 2312 <input type="checkbox"/> Pass, with amendments 2311 <input type="checkbox"/> Hold 2310 <input type="checkbox"/> Recommit 2313				
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
TOKUDA, Jill N. (C)	✓			
ENGLISH, J. Kalani (VC)	✓			
GABBARD, Mike	✓			
HEE, Clayton	✓			
KOKUBUN, Russell S.	✓			
SLOM, Sam	✓			
TOTAL	6	0	0	0
Recommendation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: <i>J. Kalani English</i>				
Distribution: Original Yellow Pink Goldenrod File with Committee Report Clerk's Office Drafting Agency Committee File Copy				

*Only one measure per Record of Votes