

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

996

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 02 2007

RE: S.B. No. 890
S.D. 1

Honorable Colleen Hanabusa
President of the Senate
Twenty-Fourth State Legislature
Regular Session of 2007
State of Hawaii

Madam:

Your Committee on Ways and Means, to which was referred S.B. No. 890 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO INTEGRATED STRATEGIES FOR STATEWIDE FOOD AND ENERGY CROP PRODUCTION,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to reduce the State's dependency on fossil fuels.

Specifically, this measure appropriates moneys to develop comprehensive agricultural management practices to facilitate the sustainable production of clean energy crops through the long-term enhancement of soil quality using ecologically sustainable means.

Comments in support of this measure were submitted by the University of Hawai'i System, Hawaiian Mahogany, Inc., Joule Junction, LLC, and Kauai County Farm Bureau.

Your Committee finds that this measure provides an opportunity to develop solutions to resolve Hawaii's dependence on fossil fuels for fertilizer and energy through the utilization of charcoal produced locally from biomass as a permanent soil additive. It is possible that through the production process of biomass-derived charcoal for soil nutrient enhancement purposes, positive net energy may be produced to satisfy community electrical needs while at the same time reduce carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere. If no action is taken to reduce greenhouse emissions, the concentration of these gases in the

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atmosphere will negatively impact Hawaii's, as well as the rest of the world's, economy and ecosystems.

Concern over Hawaii's dependence on fossil fuels to satisfy its agriculture and energy needs has grown rapidly over the past few years. The State's dependence on fossil fuel is compounded by the fact that the Hawaiian Islands have heavily leached soils with very low nutrient content and almost no potassium or phosphorus available for potential uptake by vegetation or agricultural crops. Agricultural crop yields for use as food and clean energy feedstocks are strongly dependent on sufficient levels of available nutrients for plant uptake.

Unfortunately, American agriculture has become as dependent on the Middle East for fertilizer as the rest of American industry has become for energy. Farmers need safe energy, clean air, and quality soil and water in order to continue feeding our communities. Thousands of years ago, many agrarian cultures understood the value of enriching soil fertility with charcoal (carbon). Some of the greatest leaps forward in agricultural science have come from re-introducing the use of historical practices. Many of the answers for the future come from our past, and your Committee finds that this ancient technique of soil enrichment deserves further exploration.

Your Committee finds that this measure provides for the development of critical sustainable agriculture strategies and a training program to facilitate both food and energy production while reducing greenhouse gas levels and increasing state employment. This measure will support local farmers and provide for a potential alternative crop, thereby reducing Hawaii's dependence on off-island energy providers.

Accordingly, your Committee has amended this measure by:


- (1) Changing the amounts of the appropriations in sections 3 and 4 to unspecified amounts to facilitate further discussion; and,
- (2) Making technical nonsubstantive amendments for the purpose of clarity and style.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Ways and Means that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B.



No. 890, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Third Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 890, S.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Ways and Means,



ROSALYN H. BAKER, Chair



