

Personal Testimony Presented before the
House Committee on Higher Education
April 1, 2008
2:00 p.m.
by
Dr. Andrew G. Hashimoto

HCR 357 / HR 294: Requesting the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources to study the feasibility of constructing a multipurpose, multi-user agricultural products processing facility or facilities

Chair Chang, Vice Chair Bertram, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Hashimoto, and I serve as Dean of the UH Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR). I am pleased to provide personal testimony on House Concurrent Resolution 357 / House Resolution 294, which asks UH CTAHR to study the feasibility of constructing a multipurpose, multi-user agricultural products processing facility or facilities. This testimony is presented from the perspective of the dean of CTAHR and an ex-officio member of the Board of Agriculture. It does not represent the position of the University of Hawai'i.

I support HCR 357 / HR 294 but have some concerns relating to the associated costs.

Hawai'i agriculture and its value-added products contribute \$2.4 billion and more than 28,000 jobs to the state's economy. As sugarcane and pineapple production have declined, diversified crops have become the mainstay of Hawai'i agriculture. The farm-level value of diversified agricultural products has nearly doubled during the past two decades. Diversified agriculture farm revenues, which topped \$456 million in 2006, represent 78 percent of our state's total farm revenues, up from only 31 percent in 1986. The availability of one or more facilities through which farmers and agribusinesses can process and package new products for local, national, and global markets has the potential to substantially increase the contribution that diversified agriculture and value-added products make to our state's economy.

HCR 357 / HR 294 raises important questions regarding the feasibility of one or more such processing facilities, the best mechanism(s) for facility ownership, the types of products that might be developed, the markets those products might reach, the technologies required, and the historical parallels for Hawai'i's shift from plantation to diversified agriculture. Because success in developing and launching one or more such processing facilities hinges on the answers to these questions, the study proposed by HCR 357 / HR 294 is needed. However, the scope of the proposed study is quite large, and accomplishing this task will require resources. I am concerned that funds for the study are not provided.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.