

**SB 2925**

LINDA LINGLE  
Governor



SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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**LATE**

TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 31, 2008  
2:45 P.M.

SENATE BILL NO. 2925  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairperson Tokuda and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill No. 2925 relating to agriculture. The Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) considers organic farming to be a significant emerging market across the United States. Hawaii's organic farmers support agricultural diversification and provide consumers with important food supply options. The HDOA supports the intent this bill provided that it does not adversely impact the priorities set forth in the Executive Biennium budget.

The department is currently in the process of developing a centralized state food safety system that could help to meet some of the requirements of the proposed bill if adequate funding is secured. The department supports the future development of organic agriculture and, with appropriate funding, looks forward to working with organic farmers to develop a plan for implementation of a statewide organic program.



**Hawaii Farm Bureau**  
F E D E R A T I O N

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January 31, 2008

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY ON SB 2925  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Tokuda and committee members:

My name is Alan Takemoto, Executive Director, of the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, which is the largest non-profit general agriculture organization representing approximately 1,600 farm and ranch family members statewide.

The Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation (HFBF) supports the intent of SB 2925, which establishes a state organic program under the direction of the department of agriculture.

We agree that the organic sector of our agricultural industry has great potential and opportunity to expand in Hawaii. Having a stronger organic industry will not only help the overall agricultural industry, but it will also lead to reducing imported organic products and invasive species that are commonly found on the importation of organic fruits and produce.

The USDA's National Organic Program provides a standardized mechanism for the various States to establish programs specific to the needs of their local organic industry. We believe the State Department of Agriculture has begun assisting the certification of organic farming operations. We support the effort to establish a state organic program that will provide the necessary structure and recognition to enhance the organic industry.

Thank you.

# LATE

Re: SB 2925

For: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs; hearing Thurs 31 Jan, 2:45pm, Rm 224

Aloha,

I am President of the Hawaii Cooperative of Organic Farmers (HICOF) and I submit this testimony on behalf of our co-op, its members and other organic farmers. We strongly support this bill to develop and implement a State Organic Program (SOP) under the HDoA for the following reasons:

1. Organic farmers are now the most regulated sector of the agricultural industry by the Organic Food Production Act and the USDA National Organic Program (NOP). We believe our organic farmers would be better served by a program that is implemented and administered here in the State level instead of from 5000 miles away.

2. The development of an SOP fits nicely with the HDoA mission of regulation as well as authorizing the Department to also advocate for organic farming.

3. Regretably there is misuse and abuse of the organic label by some farmers who are not certified. The SOP would establish procedures and a local point of contact for enforcement of the organic standards.

4. The SOP would become a clearinghouse for organic farm production information which now exists only in the hands of the third-party certifiers and USDA. This information is extremely important to determine the true role of organics in our local ag economy.

5. There are presently multiple third-party certifiers operating in the State which means the possibility of multiple interpretations of the NOP rules which now can only be reconciled at the national level. A local NOP would ensure a standard local interpretation, resolve conflicts and questions locally and act as an Organic Ombudsman.

6. We are concerned that national level generalized dictums on food safety will be mandated without regard to our local situations.

Therefore we believe that a SOP will help to set in place food safety requirements which are consistent with existing organic certification requirements.

Thank you ...Al Santoro, Pres, HICOF, . 637-4555