

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

1167

Honolulu, Hawaii

APR 06 2009

RE: S.C.R. No. 37

Honorable Colleen Hanabusa
President of the Senate
Twenty-Fifth State Legislature
Regular Session of 2009
State of Hawaii

Madam:

Your Committee on Water, Land, Agriculture, and Hawaiian Affairs, to which was referred S.C.R. No. 37 entitled:

"SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAN FOR A STATE ORGANIC PROGRAM TO UNIFY THE STATE'S ORGANIC CERTIFICATION PRACTICES AND PROGRAMS,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to request the Department of Agriculture to develop a plan for a State Organic Program to unify the State's organic certification practices and programs.

Specifically, this measure requests that the State Organic Program:

- (1) Provide consistent interpretation and application of National Organic Program rules;
- (2) Actively collect and disseminate information on organic farms in the State;
- (3) Educate the general public about what organic certification means;
- (4) Become a primary point of contact for the public reporting and investigation of violations of the National Organic Program;
- (5) Provide local guidelines for and administer the National Organic Program; and



- (6) Establish an Office for Organic Advocacy that would be committed to building a reliable, safe, and responsive organic farming industry, including coordinating other state agencies for organic farming research and marketing.

Testimony in support of this measure was submitted by one organization and one public citizen. One state agency supported the intent of this measure. Testimony in opposition was submitted by two organizations and three public citizens. Written testimony presented to your Committee may be reviewed on the Legislature's website.

Your Committee finds that Hawaii needs to increase and diversify its agricultural output. Importing produce, especially organic produce, increases the State's risk of importing invasive species. Additionally, organic farmers are the most regulated farmers, strict standards and inspection regulations established by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Organic Program are implemented by third-party certifiers, and if a dispute arises the only recourse is to the USDA. Fifteen other states have established state organic programs to provide local administration of the USDA National Organic Program. This measure will provide the necessary planning to ensure an effective and efficient State Organic Program may be established.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Water, Land, Agriculture, and Hawaiian Affairs that is attached to this report, your Committee concurs with the intent and purpose of S.C.R. No. 37 and recommends its adoption.

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



CLAYTON HEE, Chair



