

**LINDA LINGLE**  
Governor



State of Hawaii  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
1428 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512

**SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO**  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

**DUANE K. OKAMOTO**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

**TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON  
TOURISM, CULTURE & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
AND  
AGRICULTURE  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2009  
9:00 AM  
ROOM 312**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1471  
RELATING TO FARMS**

Chairpersons Manahan and Tsuji and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 1471 relating to the establishment of a Hawaii Tourism Authority food safety certification pilot program for small farmers. News reports over the past couple of years have highlighted the need for the agricultural industry, to improve food safety practices. Neither the Hawaii Tourism Authority nor the many restaurants or retail outlets catering to Hawaii's visitors can afford to be caught up in a major food recall of our own making. The department offers comments and defers to the Hawaii Tourism Authority as to the appropriateness of the use of the tourism special fund for the purpose of this bill and their expertise in establishing a food safety program.

The Department of Agriculture has a long history of supporting the purchase of local fresh foods. The department also conducts third party food safety audits to certify farms under both the USDA standards and Primus standards. The department has been working on a pilot food traceability project using radio frequency identification (RFID) technology with some of our larger and smaller farms, Armstrong Produce and

Foodland stores for the past year. The department has also established a small RFID laboratory to assist the farm community in training and traceability testing. Additionally, the department has established a website, the Hawaii Food Safety Center, to advertise and promote those food supply chain members participating in safe food production and processing practices. To date, this work has been supported with federal funds.

# Hawai'i Tourism Authority

Hawai'i Convention Center, 1801 Kalākaua Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96815  
Website: [www.hawaii-tourism-authority.org](http://www.hawaii-tourism-authority.org)

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Testimony of  
**Lloyd Unebasami**  
Interim President and Chief Executive Officer  
Hawai'i Tourism Authority

on  
**H.B. 1471**  
**Relating to Farms**

House Committee on Agriculture  
House Committee on Tourism, Culture & International Affairs  
Wednesday, February 4, 2009  
9:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 312

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) strongly opposes H.B. 1471, which directs the HTA to plan and implement a food certification pilot program throughout the State and establish a food certification pilot program special fund.

The HTA was established to develop, coordinate, and implement state policies and directions for tourism, with a focus on marketing and promotion of the Hawai'i brand for the tourism industry. H.B. 1471 directs the HTA to carry out a function, which would be better carried out by agencies that are involved with the agricultural industry.

The USDA has a Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program (RCDG) for the development of agricultural cooperatives, the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture has a Market Development Branch, which is more qualified than the HTA to coordinate purchasing agreements with hotels, restaurants, and other buyers, and the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service is responsible for the safety of food.

H.B. 1471 seems primarily to serve as a means to provide funding for the pilot program. Section 37-52.3 provides that special funds shall only be established by an act of the legislature and one of the criteria for establishing a special fund is that there is a "*clear nexus between the benefits sought and the charges made upon the users or beneficiaries of the program, as opposed to serving primarily as a means to provide the program or users with an automatic means to support the program...*" This is not an appropriate means of financing such a program.

It should be noted that the HTA has been working with the Farm Bureau to determine the extent to which the HTA can be involved in this program, however, the HTA recommends that H.B. 1471 be held.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON  
AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM, CULTURE, &  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2009**

**9:00 A.M.**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1471  
RELATING TO FARMS**

**CHAIRS TSUJI AND MANAHAN AND MEMBERS OF THE  
COMMITTEE:**

My name is Mark Teruya, CEO of Armstrong Produce. We are a wholesale produce distributor with operations here in Honolulu, Maui, and Kona.

I am here to testify on HB 1471, Relating to Farms. We have been in the distribution business for three generations and in that time, a lot has changed. As a distributor of produce, we are constantly being challenged to comply with new and stricter laws and rules governing food security, food safety and traceability. You are all aware of the many episodes involving commodities such as green onions, spinach, and just a few weeks ago, peanut butter. In Hawaii, the issue with the lungworm problem on the Big Island where people ate home grown produce, which they thought were safe, have done some serious and permanent damage to several individuals. Countless thousands of people have become ill, with hundreds dying as a result of these nationwide recalls. Using good agricultural practices all the way from the farm to the plate is not just a good idea, it is crucial and often becomes a life or death matter, or a major liability issue.

About five years ago, we became the first wholesale produce company in Hawaii to be food safety certified and two years ago, we became the first to be HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) certified. We firmly believe that food safety measures must be taken seriously by farmers, distributors and end users such as the hotels.

When we began our food safety certification process 5 years ago, every one laughed at us, saying that it wasn't a requirement so they were not going to do it. We believe that it was the right thing to do and many of our customers were asking for certification. That told us that this was important and something that was not going to go away. The demand came not as a regulation but from our customers. Today, when companies are looking for a new distributor, certification is a critical issue, because if their suppliers are not certified and the farmers that supply them are not, there is a lot of liability that hangs on the end users.



Hawaii is very dependant on tourism as our major source of revenues. If even one incident were to take place here where tourists got sick eating food from any of the many restaurants or hotels that service our tourists, Hawaii would have a black eye forever. With tourism suffering as it is now, we do not want to give tourists any reason to stay away from Hawaii.

Our testimony on this measure focuses on the point that this bill makes to provide funding to help our farmers become food safety certified. Of the over two thousand farms that we have in Hawaii, approximately 35-40 are certified. We need to increase that number dramatically.

Many chefs and many of the hotels, restaurants and stores that we service want to buy as much local produce as they can, which is a good thing, but we also need to have the confidence that buyers like the Sheraton will be assured that all the farmers they receive product from, practice good agricultural practices in their fields and packing operations.

We think it is imperative that we work to encourage farmers to not only produce more fruits and vegetables but also safe produce.

We ask for your support of this measure. Thank you very much.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Teruya", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Teruya  
President, CEO



## **Hawaii Agriculture Research Center**

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### **TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, CULTURE, & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND AGRICULTURE**

#### **HOUSE BILL 1471**

**February 4, 2009**

Chairmen Manahan, Tsuji and Members of your Committees:

My name is Stephanie Whalen. I am Executive Director of the Hawaii Agriculture Research Center (HARC). I am testifying today on behalf of the center and our research and support staff.

#### **HARC supports House Bill 1471 Relating to Farms.**

This is an appropriation from the Hawaii Tourism Authority to match funds from RETAH, ADC and the Hawaii Farm Bureau to support the certification of farmers throughout the state to meet standards for a safer food supply. This is a great partnership that has come together which will encourage an increase local market supply of fresh, safe cuisine for the tourism industry and for our citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Hawaii's diversifying agriculture..



**HAWAI'I HOTEL & LODGING  
ASSOCIATION**

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31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary  
Are You Walking???  
May 16, 2009  
(Always the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in May)  
[www.charitywalkhawaii.org](http://www.charitywalkhawaii.org)

**TESTIMONY OF MURRAY TOWILL  
PRESIDENT  
HAWAI'I HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION**

**February 4, 2009**

**RE: HB 1471 Relating to Farms**

Good morning Chairman Manahan and Chairman Tsuji, and members of the House Committee on Tourism, Culture & International Affairs, and Committee on Agriculture. I am Murray Towill, President of the Hawai'i Hotel & Lodging Association.

The Hawai'i Hotel & Lodging Association is a statewide association of hotels, condominiums, timeshare companies, management firms, suppliers, and other related firms and individuals. Our membership includes over 170 hotels representing over 47,300 rooms. Our hotel members range from the 2,523 rooms of the Hilton Hawaiian Village to the 4 rooms of the Bougainvillea Bed & Breakfast on the Big Island.

The Hawai'i Hotel & Lodging Association supports the intent of this measure. We believe this concept will be very valuable in assisting local farms become certified for safe food handling practices. The "safe" food certification pilot project will help create a process where visitor industry restaurants and local farmers can effectively partner in increasing the use of local produce.

Rather than create a separate special fund, a more effective initial step may be to fund the pilot project working with a statewide group like the Economic Development Council of Hawaii. It is our understanding that this group already has federal funds to determine whether a farm has met certification criteria.

This pilot would provide the training to assist farms to become certified and help match the certified farms with regular customers. In essence this pilot project would fund the first step in the two-step process for certification.

We believe this is a valuable measure and urge you to move it forward.

Again, mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

**wooley1-Christopher**

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**From:**  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 03, 2009 9:23 AM  
**To:** AGRtestimony  
**Subject:** HB 1471

Chairman Tsuji and other members of the House Ag Committee

My name is Doug MacCluer and I am the Chairman of the Central Maui Soil and Water Conservation District.

I support HB 1471 because we have to produce more of our own food in the State of Hawaii for our residents and the tourist industry. We need to train, as in the provisions of this Bill, the farmers and food handlers that produce our food so that we don't have another "peanut scare" in our State. I urge your passage of this Bill.

Sincerely,  
Doug MacCluer

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