

LINDA LINGLE
Governor



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Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 2009
10:00 A.M.
ROOM 312**

**SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 37
REQUESTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAN FOR A STATE ORGANIC
PROGRAM TO UNIFY THE STATE'S ORGANIC CERTIFICATION PRACTICES AND
PROGRAMS**

Chairperson Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 37 relating to the establishment of a plan for a State Organic Program intended to unify the State's organic practices and programs.

While there is merit in undertaking the development of a plan for a State Organic Program, it does create an unfunded mandate for the department and is better deferred to a time when sufficient resources are available to undertake this potentially costly and time-consuming effort.

Hawaii
Cooperative
of Organic Farmers



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April 1, 2009

Testimony in Support of SR21 & SCR37

To Develop a Plan for a State Organic Program (SOP)

Aloha Chair Hee and Members of the Senate Ag Committee,

I am President of the Hawaii Co-op of Organic Farmers and an organic farmer on the North Shore. I am happy to submit testimony in support of SR21 & SCR 37. Organic farmers are already the most regulated farmers in the Nation under the strict standards and inspections rules of the USDA National Organic Program (NOP). Unfortunately these rules are administered from 6,000 miles away and implemented by multiple third-party certifiers operating in the State. These Resolutions now before this committee will bring about a much needed plan to move administration of the NOP to our own local agencies. By so doing, we will address issues that directly affect our certified organic farmers such as: multiple, inconsistent interpretations of the NOP, data on the size and scope of the organic component, consumer protection from NOP violations, truth in labeling and selling and most importantly – advocacy for organic farming issues.

As this Committee well understands that our agriculture industry does not produce enough; that when we import fresh produce, especially organic, we import invasive species. Therefore we must address solutions that will bring about change that both increases production and removes impediments. At least 15 of the largest organic producing States have already recognized this as an imperative and have formulated their own SOPs. Since our Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDoA) is the agriculture industry's regulatory agency it is easily intuitive that local administration of the NOP be included in their mission. This is good legislation that will allow them and the organic farming stakeholders to develop a plan that best addresses these important issues without increasing bureaucratic overhead. Mahalo.

Sincerely,

Al Santoro
President, HICOF

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April 16, 2009

Testimony in Support of SCR37 & SCR38

To Develop a Plan for a State Organic Program (SOP);
To Develop a Plan for Increasing Aid to Organic Farmers

Aloha Chair Tsuji and Members of the House Agriculture Committee,

I am President of the Hawaii Co-op of Organic Farmers (HICOF) and an organic farmer on the North Shore. I am happy to renew and amplify my testimony in support of SCR 37 & SCR 38. So as to be brief, I have attached my previous testimony to Senator Hee's committee which passed both Resolutions unanimously. Both of these Resolutions call for development of a Plan; one to assess how to better administer the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) locally and one on how to better include organic farm issues as part of our overall agricultural planning. Since all of us agree that our agricultural system does not produce enough; and we agree that when we import fresh produce, especially organic, we import invasive species; it is clear we need to develop better strategies. Both of these Resolutions will break the logjam of status quo and lead to significant change and improvement.

SCR 37 calls for a Plan to move administration of the USDA NOP from National to Local authority. At least 15 other organic producing states have already done so. This will give us the opportunity to develop a Plan that will improve the processes, the interpretation and the enforcement of the NOP without undo bureaucracy or costs to farmers and increase our organic production through advocacy.

SCR 38 also calls for a Plan for inclusion of organic farming in our solutions and visions for agriculture. It is well known that organic has usually been excluded in the past and never will be considered unless we introduce change to the status quo.

These are both good solutions-oriented Resolutions that specifically address shortfalls in organic agriculture. Even in periods of limited resources it is still good government to continue to do good planning. Mahalo.

Sincerely,

Al Santoro
President, HICOF