

TESTIMONY
SCR37/SR21
LATE



HAWAII ORGANIC FARMERS ASSOCIATION

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March 30, 2009

Committee on Water, Land, Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs
Senator Clayton, Hee, Chair
Senator Jill Tokuda, Vice Chair

LATE

Wednesday April 1, 2009, 2:45 pm, Room 229
RE: **OPPOSE SCR # 37 and SCR 21**

The Hawaii Organic Farmers Association (HOFA) represents over 400 members including 143 certified organic farmers in the state of Hawaii. HOFA is the state of Hawaii's only third party certifying agency accredited by the USDA National Organic Program, and our certified farmers represent about 80% of the certified farms in the state of Hawaii.

The Board of Directors of this farmer organization **does not support SCR 37 and SCR 21**, which requests the development of a plan for a state organic program.

We would like provide some clarifying information: There are other three certifying agencies that provide certification services to a few producers in Hawaii, in addition to HOFA. Each agency is required by the USDA's National Organic Program to follow the same Rule, CFR 7-205.

The Rule does provide an exemption for small producers, who make less than \$5000 in gross annual organic sales, to declare and sell their produce as organic without certification requirements.

While several other states do conduct organic certification programs through their departments of agriculture, several (including New Jersey) are considering abandoning this route, and others (including Utah) have shut down their program in this time of fiscal austerity. Participation in the certification programs of other states (such as Idaho, Oklahoma and New Jersey) requires payment of a fee to the participating state. This increases the cost of organic certification.

In no case would it be lawful to provide local guidelines for, or interpretation of, the National Organic Program (NOP) rule: this responsibility rests entirely with the NOP. The SOH DOA has also recently funded HOFA's request for financial assistance with the organic reaccreditation review, scheduled for November 2009.

We appreciate the efforts of these organizations to support organic farming, and look forward to continuing the work. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony.

Hawaii Organic Farmers Association

Our mission is to protect the life of the land and the health of our communities through education about organic land care practices. Developing and strengthening certified organic farms enhances Hawaii's many fragile ecosystems and provides a base for a local sustainable economy.

March 31, 2009

LATE

To: Committee on Water, Land, Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs
Senator Clayton, Hee, Chair
Senator Jill Tokuda, Vice Chair

Wednesday April 1, 2009, 2:45 pm, Room 229
RE: OPPOSE SCR # 37 and SCR 21

I am a farmer and a member of the Hawaii Organic Farmers Association (HOFA). This organization represents over 400 members including 143 certified organic farmers in the state of Hawaii. HOFA is the state of Hawaii's only third party certifying agency accredited by the USDA National Organic Program, and our certified farmers represent about 80% of the certified farms in the state of Hawaii.

I would like provide some clarifying information about the wording of this resolution that which requests the development of a plan for a state organic program: There are other three certifying agencies that provide certification services to a few producers in Hawaii, in addition to HOFA. Each agency is required by the USDA's National Organic Program to follow the same Rule, CFR 7- 205. The Rule does provide an exemption for small producers, who make less than \$5000 in gross annual organic sales, to declare and sell their produce as organic without certification requirements.

While several other states do conduct organic certification programs through their departments of agriculture, several (including New Jersey) are considering abandoning this route, and others (including Utah) have shut down their program in this time of fiscal austerity. Participation in the certification programs of other states (such as Idaho, Oklahoma and New Jersey) requires payment of a fee to the participating state. This increases the cost of organic certification.

In no case would it be lawful to provide local guidelines for, or interpretation of, the National Organic Program (NOP) rule: this responsibility rests entirely with the NOP.

I have spoken with several staff members at the State of Hawaii Department of Agriculture. The DOA does not have any plans to start a new organic certification program during this period of financial crisis. The SOH DOA has supported, and has recently funded HOFA's request for financial assistance with the NOP organic reaccreditation review, scheduled for November 2009.

I appreciate the efforts of the DOA to support organic farming, They do NOT need to start a new program to supplant the work being appropriately carried out by a local non-profit accredited certifying agency. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony.

Sincerely,
Fred Stone, Laiku Organic Produce, POB 918, Kurtistown HI 96760

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LATE

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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SCR37/SR21
LATE
(END)