



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

2343 Rose Street, Honolulu, HI 96819
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LATE
Testimony

TESTIMONY

RE: SCR38 SD1 URGING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAN FOR INCREASING AID AND ASSISTANCE TO ORGANIC FARMERS.

Chair Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation on behalf of our commercial farm and ranch families and organizations supports SCR38 SD1 as amended.

Agriculture to provide for Hawaii is at risk. HFBF agrees that there is a demand for organic agriculture products and would like to see the expansion of that sector of our industry. At the same time it cannot be the sole focus of the Department of Agriculture. The rest of the industry is at serious risk. We have lost all of our large dairy operations and we now can count our poultry farms on one hand. Our livestock industry, even as it expands to range-fed beef is at risk. Depending on the range means increased dependence on Mother Nature. If rains stop coming, forage availability will drop and what will happen to the cattle. Effective means of having access to irrigated pastures or other affordable feed will be critical to survival of the industry.

The vegetable and fruit industry, (including organic) faces challenges in food safety. Federal guidelines are being drafted and there is a probability that instead of being voluntary they will be mandatory. We have heard comments among our farmers of how this will "kill the small farmer". We believe many of the practices are sound practices that make sense. Those that don't should be discussed with the Department of Health and Department of Agriculture as these rules get implemented. Bottom line, those of us involved in food production will be responsible for its' safety. Resources must be focused on getting our farmers and ranchers ready for this inevitability.

For the nursery, flower and landscape industry, foreign competition is nipping at their heels. Just as the other sectors, control of costs, increased productivity and identification of niche markets are important.

The larger companies, whether they be our remaining, sugarcane company, coffee, macadamia nuts or the growing seed companies will face challenges of productivity and availability of skilled labor.

During times of scarce resources it is critical to identify elements that will bring about the most benefit to the most people with minimum cost. And in the process, the people of Hawaii must understand that they are a critical component in nurturing the industry. Initiatives such as a required agricultural discount for electricity used by agricultural produces would have had wide spread benefit for producers and consumers. While we were not able to pass this measure this year, we must find ways to



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accomplish such initiatives so the costs of our producers can be contained. At the end of the day, without profits, there will be no agriculture.

The current measure amends to encourage the expansion of efforts of the Department of Agriculture on behalf of organic agricultural production. There are initiatives that the Department can do that benefits farmers and ranchers including those pursuing organic methods.

Farm Bureau and the Department of Agriculture are in support of the expansion of commercial agricultural entrepreneurs. We support this measure as amended.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our opinion on this measure.