
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TARO SECURITY.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. Kalo, the Hawaiian word for taro (*Colocasia*
2 *esculenta*), is a culturally significant plant to the kanaka
3 maoli (Hawaii's indigenous peoples) and the State of Hawaii.
4 Kalo intrinsically embodies the interdependency of the past, the
5 present, and the future, the essence of procreation and
6 regeneration, as the foundation of any sustainable practice.
7 Kalo expresses the spiritual and physical well-being of not only
8 the kanaka maoli and their heritage, but also symbolizes the
9 environmental, social, and cultural values important to the
10 State. This relationship is represented in the use of the kalo
11 plant on the crown of King Kalakaua. The state seal, adopted in
12 1959, includes eight taro leaves below the shield, honoring the
13 connection between the health of the land and the health of the
14 state. Today, the logo of the office of Hawaiian affairs and
15 many commercial enterprises throughout the state use this symbol
16 to communicate ohana, integrity, and a connection to Hawaiian
17 culture. The State of Hawaii further recognized the cultural



1 and historic significance of taro by designating it as the
2 official state plant.

3 Over three hundred kalo varieties may have existed at the
4 time of the arrival of European explorers (Pukui and Elbert,
5 *Hawaiian Dictionary*, 1986). Of these, sixty-nine varieties are
6 unique to the Hawaiian islands due to the horticultural skills
7 of native Hawaiian farmers (according to *Bulletin 84: Taro*
8 *Varieties in Hawaii*, 1939). Some varieties are extremely rare.
9 Encouraging the cultivation and innovative uses of these
10 varieties is critically important to the recovery of old taro
11 varieties in Hawaii.

12 Kalo is an important food crop in Hawaii and, most locally-
13 grown taro is consumed within the State, indicating a highly
14 specialized market. Historically, there were thousands of acres
15 under taro cultivation in Hawaii. Today, however, there remain
16 less than five hundred acres of taro in production. In 2007,
17 4,000,000 pounds were produced on three hundred eighty acres of
18 commercial taro land (10,526 pounds per acre) at a farm gate
19 value of \$2,360,000, amounting to an estimated per acre value of
20 \$6,210, excluding luau leaf. Raw taro and value-added taro
21 products represent a multi-million dollar crop in Hawaii with



1 great potential for further growth as the State moves towards
2 food security and self-sufficiency.

3 In addition to its value as a crop, taro cultivation also
4 has economic and environmental benefits. For example, the
5 cultivation of taro can assist with flood control and erosion
6 prevention. Taro cultivation also flushes wastes from
7 groundwater, helping to improve near-shore and wetland water
8 quality. As an indigenous crop to Hawaii, taro is a ready
9 source of locally grown food that may help provide food security
10 for the State by easing Hawaii's dependence on imported food
11 products. Taro cultivation also presents opportunities for job
12 creation and community economic development. Finally, taro's
13 unique place in Hawaii's history and culture make it an
14 educational tool for Hawaii's youth, providing a way for them to
15 learn about Hawaiian culture as well as to develop valuable
16 agricultural and job skills.

17 Taro cultivation in Hawaii, however, faces many challenges.
18 Pests, invasive species, and diseases place taro crops at risk.
19 Water quality concerns and shrinking arable land available for
20 taro farms also threaten taro production. Alternatives to
21 Hawaiian taro, such as genetically-engineered taro and foreign
22 varieties of taro, also create obstacles to taro production. In



1 2008 the legislature established the two-year taro security and
2 purity task force under Act 211, Session Laws of Hawaii 2008, to
3 address non-genetically modified organism alternatives to taro
4 farmer issues, including land and water concerns, threats from
5 pests, diseases and taro imports, educational opportunities, and
6 economic issues.

7 The purpose of this Act is to encourage the cultivation and
8 innovative use of Hawaiian varieties of taro for projects that
9 address:

- 10 (1) Flood control;
- 11 (2) Research;
- 12 (3) Food security;
- 13 (4) Community economic development;
- 14 (5) Job creation;
- 15 (6) Education; and
- 16 (7) Water quality protection.

17 SECTION 2. Chapter 141, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
18 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
19 and to read as follows:

20 "§141- Taro security; funding. (a) The department
21 shall seek available federal, state, county, or private funding
22 that may be available for the purposes of restoring Hawaiian



1 taro and lo'i cultivation. The department, as necessary, shall
2 cooperate with other relevant agencies, including the office of
3 Hawaiian affairs, in applying for funds and administering
4 projects pursuant to this section.

5 (b) The department shall use funds received pursuant to
6 subsection (a) for projects that utilize exclusively Hawaiian
7 taro for:

8 (1) Flood control;

9 (2) Research;

10 (3) Food security;

11 (4) Community economic development;

12 (5) Job creation;

13 (6) Education; and

14 (7) Water quality protection;

15 provided that no moneys may be expended pursuant to this section
16 for projects that utilize genetically engineered taro or non-
17 Hawaiian taro.

18 (c) As used in this section:

19 "Genetically engineered" means alterations to a life form
20 or its living progeny at the nucleic acid level, using the
21 techniques collectively referred to as recombinant DNA
22 technology.



1 "Hawaiian taro" means taro species that are unique to
2 Hawaii, as listed in *Bulletin 84: Taro Varieties in Hawaii,*
3 1939.

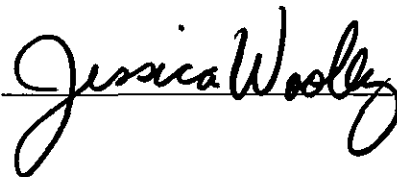
4 "Recombinant DNA technology" means the transfer of genes,
5 regulatory sequences, or nucleic acid between hosts by the use
6 of vectors or laboratory manipulations and includes the
7 insertion, excision, duplication, inactivation, or relocation of
8 specific genes, regulatory sequences, or sections of nucleic
9 acid. This term does not apply to a material or an organism
10 developed exclusively through traditional methods of breeding,
11 hybridization, or nondirected mutagenesis."

12 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

13 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2010;
14 provided that this Act shall be repealed on June 30, 2015.

15

INTRODUCED BY:



JAN 27 2010



Report Title:
Taro Security

Description:

Directs the department of agriculture to seek funding for projects that increase the cultivation and use of non-GMO Hawaiian taro. Repealed on 06/30/2015.

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