

TESTIMONY
SB 1116

LINDA LINGLE
Governor



SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DUANE OKAMOTO
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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**TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WATER, LAND, AGRICULTURE, AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2009
3:30 P.M.
ROOM 229**

**SENATE BILL NO. 1116
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Chairperson Hee and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill No. 1116. The purpose of this bill is to appropriate \$500,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary in fiscal year 2009-2010 to the Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) to establish an Organic Agriculture Task Force and to develop a business plan for the Hawaii Organic Food Center.

The HDOA recognizes the importance of this bill to organic farmers, the environment and food self-sufficiency; however, in these difficult economic times, we do not believe that it is an opportune time to expend a large amount of planning funds to establish a new program which will likely require additional funds and positions to establish.

The HDOA is currently administering three federal grants: the National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program; the National Organic Program; and the Federal State Marketing Improvement Program for organic seed marketing/production. The state Matching Marketing Funds Program currently supports projects for distribution improvement, accreditation and website design that benefits the organic industry. In May 2009, USDA-NASS/HDOA will administer the federal Organic Production Survey.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented before the
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Agriculture, and Hawaiian Affairs
February 13, 2009 at 3:30 p.m.

by

Virginia S. Hinshaw, Chancellor

and

Andrew G. Hashimoto, Dean and Director
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 1116 - RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Hee, Vice Chair Tokuda, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Hashimoto, and I serve as Dean and Director of the UH Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR). I am presenting testimony on behalf of Virginia Hinshaw, Chancellor of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM).

The purpose of SB 1116 is to establish an organic agriculture task force under the administration of the Department of Agriculture (HDOA) to develop a business plan for the Hawai'i organic food center, and to appropriate funds for the task force to carry out its purposes.

Since provisions for the task force and accompanying appropriation are not within the UH or HDOA's budget requests, the UHM supports the intent of the bill provided it does not adversely affect UH priorities in its budget request, most notably in health and safety, and repairs and maintenance issues. Addressing these urgent needs is critical to our ability to perform our core mission for the State of Hawai'i.

The bill supports local agriculture and farmers, and promotes safe, fresh, high-quality, locally-grown organic produce. The bill is in keeping with the State's initiative to increase Hawai'i's food self-sufficiency from the current reality of importing 85% of all food we consume, and relates to UHM's vision to actively help Hawai'i diversify its economy, ensure a sustainable environment, and strengthen its communities.

CTAHR is willing to participate as a member in the organic agriculture task force, as specified in the bill, should the task force be established.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Hawaii
Cooperative
of Organic Farmers



P.O. Box 728
Waialua, HI 96791
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www.hicof.org

February 13, 2009

Testimony in Support of SB1116

To establish an organic ag task force under HDOA to develop a business plan for the Hawaii Organic Food Center

Aloha Chair Hee and Members of the Senate Ag Committee,

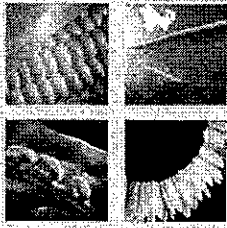
I am President of the Hawaii Co-op of Organic Farmers and an organic farmer on the North Shore. I am happy to submit testimony in support of SB1116 as this is a solutions-oriented bill that embraces the concepts of empowering farmers, increasing ag production, centralizing services and organic advocacy. It is well understood that our ag industry does not produce enough; that when we import fresh produce, especially organic, we import invasive species; that the majority of our farms are small with organic farms averaging only 4.2 acres; that economies of scale are few; that the local retail centers are dominated by imported produce and that our ag producers are in decline.

The Hawaii Organic Food Center will address all of the basic infrastructure problems and issues facing our small organic farmers. It will: 1) increase organic production in vegetable, fruit, seed and nursery crops, thus decrease import of invasive species; 2) empower farmers with a single warehouse for consolidation and distribution of organic produce throughout the State; 3) establish a diverse organic value-added processing site; 4) become a center for organic research and education and; 5) provide a venue for a visitor center and farmers' market.

Not only does SB1116 address the potential for dramatic change, it is a very smart approach to problem-solving. By identifying the specific task of a business plan it will congregate both business and ag expertise in identifying both the best practices and the economic feasibility for the food center. And it is the best approach in a competitive funding environment with huge potential impact for a very small investment. Your support of SB1116 will introduce historical changes and improvements to our agricultural industry. Mahalo.

Sincerely,

Al Santoro
President, HICOF



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Hawaii Crop Improvement Association

Growing the Future of Worldwide Agriculture in Hawaii

Testimony By: Alicia Maluafiti
SB 1116, Relating to Agriculture
Senate WTL Committee

Friday, Feb.13, 2009 - Room 229, 3:30 pm

Position: Support

Aloha Chair Hee, and Members of the Senate WTL Committee:

My name is Alicia Maluafiti, Executive Director of the Hawaii Crop Improvement Association. The Hawaii Crop Improvement Association (HCIA) is a nonprofit trade association representing the agricultural seed industry in Hawaii. Now the state's largest agricultural commodity, the seed industry contributes to the economic health and diversity of the islands by providing high quality jobs in rural communities, keeping important agricultural lands in agricultural use, and serving as responsible stewards of Hawaii's natural resources.

HCIA believes in co-existence of all farming practices, whether it might be organic, conventional and biotechnology methods. We continue to be supportive of increasing the organic agriculture sector. Certainly, with a robust organic agriculture sector there will be less reliance on imported organic produce, which contributes to the importation of invasive species into Hawaii. Consumer demand for organic produce is at an all time high and Hawaii grown organic produce will increase its contribution to the general revenue of the State.

We support the proposal to create a task force under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture to develop a business plan for the Hawaii Organic Food Center. Value-added processing facilities and distribution capacity is something that all of Hawaii agriculture needs. As such, we encourage the Task Force to look at how the Hawaii Organic Food Center can also be used by other growers. We encourage the inclusion of a Food Safety Certification program as an integral part of the business plan – especially in light of the recent rat lung disease episode on the island of Hawaii. We also respectfully urge that this task force **not** be used to politicize and further discourage the rights of farmers to use technology and other farming “best practices” in growing their crops – organic, convention or genetically engineered.

We also note for clarification that pg 1, line 1-6 is a common misstatement. For the record, organic growers do use approved organic pesticides and fertilizers, and that the USDA finds that organic and conventionally grown foods are nutritionally comparable to biotech crops.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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TESTIMONY
SB 1116
(END)