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## A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TARO LANDS.

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

1           SECTION 1. Kalo (*colocasia esculenta*), the Hawaiian word  
2 for taro, is a culturally significant plant to the kanaka maoli,  
3 Hawaii's indigenous peoples, and to the State. In 2008, the  
4 legislature recognized kalo's role in the State's history and  
5 well being by designating kalo as the state plant.

6           In 2008, the legislature also passed Act 211, which created  
7 the taro security and purity task force that directed the taro  
8 farmers, department of agriculture, department of land and  
9 natural resources, University of Hawaii, Hawaii farm bureau  
10 federation, and Onipa'a Na Hui kalo representatives to seek  
11 solutions to challenges facing taro, taro farmers, and taro  
12 markets for a period of two years. The task force was funded  
13 and administered by the office of Hawaiian affairs from 2008 to  
14 2010. This enabled the task force to meet consistently and  
15 gather input from taro growing communities on all islands and  
16 develop recommendations to improve taro farmer conditions. The  
17 2010 legislative report entitled: E ola hou ke kalo; ho'i hou  
18 ka 'aina le'ia, the taro lives; abundance returns to the land,



1 outlines the work of the taro task force and subsequent  
2 recommendations.

3       Currently, the State imports an estimated 1,800,000 pounds  
4 of taro annually. The taro security and purity task force found  
5 "no logical reason why we should continue to import any kind of  
6 taro to meet local needs." The problems articulated by taro  
7 farmers are multi-faceted: the key to expanding the capacity  
8 for taro self-sufficiency in Hawaii is access and affordability  
9 of taro lands.

10       The task force found that the State retains numerous lands  
11 within its jurisdiction that were former taro lands or are  
12 capable of becoming wet or dry taro producing lands on all  
13 islands, many of which are prioritized for other uses. It also  
14 found that lease rates were inconsistent and in some cases  
15 unduly expensive due to the influence by the value of adjacent  
16 developed lands, therefore making the land unaffordable to  
17 existing or future taro farmers. The task force found that some  
18 agricultural leases, both public and private, were as low as \$30  
19 per acre per year, but as high as \$2,000 per acre per year when  
20 they were adjacent to highly valued residential properties or  
21 conservation land. In general, taro farming lands appear to  
22 have higher lease rates among state agencies than leases for



1 other agricultural uses. The high cost of leases makes critical  
2 fallowing practices that improve soil health and reduce apple  
3 snail populations and fungal diseases in taro soils  
4 unaffordable.

5 Taro farming is a practice learned on-farm, through family,  
6 and by example. Lease criteria that require specific education  
7 levels or financial status prevent taro farmers from qualifying  
8 for leases, particularly among young farmers.

9 The purpose of this Act is to improve access to taro  
10 growing lands and opportunity for taro self-sufficiency by  
11 requiring the department of land and natural resources and  
12 department of agriculture to reevaluate their inventory of lands  
13 for potential taro-growing lands, develop more affordable and  
14 reasonable lease rent rates, establish accessible criteria for  
15 qualifying taro farmers, and, in partnership with the taro  
16 security and purity task force, facilitate the expansion of taro  
17 production and food self-sufficiency.

18 SECTION 2. The department of land and natural resources  
19 and department of agriculture, in conjunction with the taro  
20 security and purity task force, shall:

- 21 (1) Reevaluate agency land inventory for potential taro-  
22 growing lands and, using local knowledge of the



1 location of historic dry and wet taro-cultivated  
2 areas, designate these lands for taro production use  
3 by January 1, 2013;

4 (2) Develop a consistent and affordable lease rent rate  
5 schedule specific to taro farmed lands by January 1,  
6 2013;

7 (3) Set a cap on lease rents for taro farms at no more  
8 than \$100 per acre, regardless of adjacent land  
9 values;

10 (4) Review existing qualifying criteria for farm leases  
11 and develop a consistent and accessible criteria for  
12 taro farmers to qualify for taro land leases by  
13 January 1, 2013; and

14 (5) Provide taro farmers, organizations, and individuals  
15 access to information by January 1, 2013, including:

16 (A) Taro land inventories;

17 (B) Opportunities for leases of these lands; and

18 (C) Qualifying criteria and costs for farm leases.

19 SECTION 3. The department of land and natural resources  
20 and department of agriculture shall submit a report to the  
21 legislature no later than twenty day prior to the 2013 regular  
22 session regarding the reclassification of taro lands,




1 adjustments to lease rents, and modifications to lease  
2 qualification criteria.

3 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2011.

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INTRODUCED BY:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
JAN 20 2011



**Report Title:**

Agriculture; Affordable Taro Lands

**Description:**

Requires the department of land and natural resources and the department of agriculture to work with the taro security and purity task force to identify taro lands, adjust lease rents, and modify lease qualification criteria.

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