

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Governor



State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512

RUSSELL S. KOKUBUN
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

JAMES J. NAKATANI
Deputy to the Chairperson

TESTIMONY OF RUSSELL KOKUBUN
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2011
9:40 A.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 312

HOUSE BILL NO. 1524
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairperson Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1524, which proposes to establish under the agricultural theft law, that possession of more than five pounds of an agricultural product grown on the premises is prima facie evidence that the product has been stolen unless a bill of sale is stolen. The department strongly supports this bill.

The reported losses, as documented by a statewide survey of farmers conducted by the Department of Agriculture, USDA, and the Hawaii Farm Bureau, totaled millions of dollars. The proposed amendment allows for the prosecutors to develop stronger legal cases relating to agricultural theft.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





January 29, 2011

Testimony

RE: HB1524 RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL THEFT

Chair Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Maui County Farm Bureau on behalf of our commercial farm and ranch families and organizations on the island **OPPOSES HB1524 despite agreeing with the intent** of establishing a 5 lb threshold for determining stolen agricultural products.

MCFB agrees all theft regardless of quantity or value is wrong. However, even under the current thresholds, police officers find it difficult to respond to calls relating to agricultural theft. Lowering the threshold to 5 lbs. may not have the desired result if implementation actions are not addressed.

We strongly recommend working with the various police departments to implement existing laws before this change is entertained. A resolution urging police department across the State to place a higher priority in addressing agricultural theft and to report back in 2012 pragmatic recommendations may be a first step. Oahu Farm Bureau has begun working with the County Police department moving in this direction. Their example could serve as a template for action across the State.

We respectfully request that this measure be HELD.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our opinion on this important matter. If there are questions, please contact Warren Watanabe, Executive Director of MCFB at 2819718.