
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. The legislature
4 recognized kalo's role in the State's history and well-being by
5 designating kalo as the state plant.

6 In 2008, the legislature passed Act 211, which created the
7 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 funding enabled the task force to meet consistently
15 and gather input from taro-growing communities on all islands
16 and develop recommendations to improve taro farmers' conditions.
17 The 2010 legislative report entitled: "E ola hou ke kalo; ho'i



1 hou ka 'aina le'ia, The taro lives; abundance returns to the
2 land", outlines the work of the taro security and purity task
3 force and subsequent recommendations.

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

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



1 taro farming lands appear to have higher lease rates among state
2 agencies than leases for other agricultural uses. The high cost
3 of leases makes critical fallowing practices that improve soil
4 health and reduce apple snail populations and fungal diseases in
5 taro soils unaffordable.

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

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

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



- 1 (1) Reevaluate lands held by the department of land and
2 natural resources that have potential as taro-growing
3 lands and, using local knowledge of the location of
4 historic dry and wet taro-cultivated areas, work with
5 the department of agriculture to expeditiously
6 transfer identified potential taro-growing lands
7 within the department of land and natural resources to
8 the department of agriculture;
- 9 (2) Develop a consistent and affordable lease rent rate
10 schedule specific to taro-farmed lands by January 1,
11 2015;
- 12 (3) Set a cap on lease rents for taro farms at no more
13 than \$ per acre, regardless of adjacent land
14 values;
- 15 (4) Review existing qualifying criteria for farm leases
16 and develop by January 1, 2015, consistent and
17 accessible criteria for taro farmers to qualify for
18 taro land leases by January 1, 2015; and
- 19 (5) Provide taro farmers, organizations, and individuals
20 access to information by January 1, 2015, including:
21 (A) Taro land inventories;
22 (B) Opportunities for leases of these lands; and



1 (C) Qualifying criteria and costs for farm leases;
2 and

3 (6) Identify and protect ancient taro varieties and
4 ancient taro production lands, including any
5 infrastructure used to sustain production, within
6 forest reserves.

7 SECTION 3. The department of land and natural resources
8 and department of agriculture shall submit a report to the
9 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
10 the regular session of 2015 regarding the reclassification of
11 taro lands, adjustments to lease rents, and modifications to
12 lease qualification criteria.

13 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2020.



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. Effective July 1, 2020. (HB483 HD1)

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