

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Governor



SCOTT E. ENRIGHT
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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LATE

TESTIMONY OF SCOTT E. ENRIGHT
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

January 28, 2014
2:45 P.M.

SENATE BILL NO. 2291
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairperson Nishihara and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2291. This bill appropriates funds to be expended by the Department of Agriculture to the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation for agricultural research. The Department supports the intent of this bill but believes that funding for research may be best utilized if it goes directly to the agricultural research institute like the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources.

The Department has an excellent working relationship with the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation and will continue to foster that relationship as we move forward to promote agriculture for the State of Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





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January 27, 2014

Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair
Senator Ronald D. Kouchi, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Agriculture
Hawaii State Capitol, 415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Nishihara, Vice Chair Kouchi and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Aquaculture and Aquaponics Association (HAAA) **strongly supports SB 2291**, "Relating to Agriculture." SB 2291 would appropriate \$2 million to the Hawaii Farm Bureau for research into alternative methods by which Hawaii's farmers can satisfy the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

Aquaponics is a highly efficient system of agricultural production that uses water from aquaculture (usually fish culture) to irrigate plant crops, and then recycles the water back to the aquaculture system. Aquaponics makes efficient use of the nutrients contained in the fish feed, and uses much less water than soil-based agriculture. Since the water and nutrients are contained within the system, nutrient runoff and pollution are minimized. Because aquaponics can produce high yields using a minimum of land and water, it is an ideal agricultural system for Hawaii. The number of commercial aquaponic farms in Hawaii is increasing rapidly.

As required by FSMA, The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is presently considering expanded food safety regulations on farmed produce. These regulations will impact all farmers, but the proposed regulations contain provisions that will be especially difficult for aquaponic farmers to satisfy. These provisions include a requirement for weekly water testing for bacterial content if the water comes from a nonpotable source. Since water being recirculated in an aquaponic system would probably be considered "nonpotable," this provision could result in substantial sampling costs for an aquaponic farmer, especially if each aquaponic module were considered a separate water source. FDA's estimate for the cost of each water sample runs as high as \$87 per sample – an estimate that is probably low compared to Hawaii's prices. This requirement would create a major burden for a small farmer. In addition, Hawaii does not have the capacity to process the number of water samples every week that would be required if many farms had to comply with this rule.

A second concern is FDA's proposed rule that a farmer wait nine months before harvesting crops where "soil amendments of animal origin" are used. FDA's rule does not distinguish between manures from warm-blooded animals, which can contain human pathogens, and "manures" from

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cold-blooded animals like fish, which present much less risk. Aquaponic crop production depends on a continuous input of water and nutrients from the fish "manure" provided by its aquaculture component; no waiting period is possible. A preliminary study done at CTAHR indicates that aquaponic water is likely to be safe, but more testing needs to be done to prove to FDA's satisfaction that this is true. Otherwise, if this provision is enforced, aquaponic production may have to stop.

FSMA allows farms to use alternative methods to FDA's prescribed procedures, so long as these methods are shown scientifically to be at least as safe as those prescribed by the rules. Research needs to be done to demonstrate the safety of aquaponic water in the growing of crops for human consumption. The burden of proof is on the farmer, but individual farmers cannot afford to carry on scientific research programs. We encourage the Legislature to provide funding so that these necessary studies can be carried out.

One University of Hawaii researcher, asked to provide a very rough estimate of the cost of a one-year water sampling program, suggested a cost including water sampling, bacteriological testing, and researchers' wages of about \$120,000 (not including University of Hawaii overhead). Aquaponics is just one sector of Hawaii's agriculture, and many other sectors will be impacted. The \$2 million funding request, which might fund roughly ten such projects, therefore seems reasonable given the potential impact of FSMA on Hawaii's food security. We encourage you to pass SB 2291.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter of importance to our membership.

Sincerely,



Frederick M. Mencher for
Ronald Weidenbach, President
Hawaii Aquaculture and Aquaponics Association

nishihara1 - Amanda

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2014 5:57 AM
To: AGL Testimony
Cc: farmfreshhawaii@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB2291 on Jan 28, 2014 14:45PM

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SB2291

Submitted on: 1/28/2014

Testimony for AGL on Jan 28, 2014 14:45PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Juanita Kawamoto Brown	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: Hawaii Farmers Union United is a very active organization of the farming community and should be included in proportionate interests in this appropriation. I am not a member of HFUU but do support fair and balanced representation for the agricultural community.

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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