

HB-1499-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2022 11:07:03 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/14/2022 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hawaii Department of Agriculture	Testifying for Hawaii Department of Agriculture	Comments	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Joining remotely to be available to answer questions on behalf of the Department of Agriculture.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT
Monday, March 14, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports HB 1499 HD 1, Relating to Food Safety.

Dear Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

My name is Micah Munekata, and I am the Director of Government Affairs at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food; renewable energy and clean transportation; and better management of freshwater and waste.

Ulupono supports HB 1499 HD 1, which requires the Department of Agriculture to partner with a Hawai'i entity to establish a pilot USDA Harmonized GAP food safety training and certification program to help small- to medium-sized farms obtain the United States Department of Agriculture's Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices certification.

Ulupono supports food safety certification training across the State for small to medium sized famers. According to the 2017 USDA NASS Census of Agriculture, of Hawai'i's 7,328 farms statewide, 66%, or 4,868 farms, are between 1–9 acres and 78%, or 5,701 farms, produce less than \$25,000 in sales. Hawai'i's agricultural producer majority is small farmers. Many of these small farmers struggle to enter the marketplace that is heavily driven by food safety compliance. Working off of such tight profit margins, local farmers are in need of support to meet grocer and food distributor demands such as food safety. Measures such as this seek to provide local producers with an opportunity to earn the necessary certifications in order to provide communities with fresh, Hawai'i grown products.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i



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Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Agriculture and the Environment
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: Monday, March 14
TIME: 1pm
PLACE: Via Videoconference

RE: HB1499 HD1 Relating to Food Safety

Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure for the Department of Agriculture to partner with a Hawaii entity to establish a pilot USDA Harmonized GAP food safety training and certification program to help small- and medium-sized farms obtain the United States Department of Agriculture's Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices certification.

Increasing local food production is a goal we all share. Hawaii's farmers and ranchers face a range of challenges and the economic down turn caused by COVID-19 hit many of our small local farms hard. The financial and administrative burden of meeting state and federal regulations can be a deterrent for those who want to start farming in Hawaii and can make it harder for existing small farms to stay in business. Providing Hawaii farms with the support they need to comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Good Agricultural Practices Certification will help alleviate that burden.

Many of our member retailers require the farms they buy from to have USDA GAP Certification because it confirms that a farm is committed to the highest standard of produce safety and freshness. GAP Certification is also an important first step towards full compliance with the Food Service Modernization Act (FSMA). This bill will help make Hawaii farms and Hawaii agriculture more viable. We encourage you to vote yes on this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.

DAVID Y. IGE
Governor

JOSH GREEN
Lt. Governor



PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS ATTA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

TESTIMONY OF PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

MARCH 14, 2022
1:00 P.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 224 & VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

HOUSE BILL NO. 1499 HD1
RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Chairperson Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1499 HD1. This measure requires the Department of Agriculture to partner with a Hawaii entity to establish a pilot USDA Harmonized GAP food safety training and certification program to help small- and medium-sized farms obtain the USDA Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices certification and appropriates funds for that purpose. The Department supports the intent of this measure and offers comments.

The Department of Agriculture (DOA) has a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) wherein DOA staff are licensed by USDA to conduct food safety audits for Hawaii farmers statewide, on a fee-for-service basis. Adding and consolidating GAP certification training for farmers to DOA's regulatory compliance responsibilities may create a potential conflict of interest if the training is also conducted by DOA staff involved in administering the USDA Harmonized GAP certification program. Combining both the auditing and training programs in the DOA could compromise the independence and objectivity of the food safety certification program's audits. It is highly advisable that the educational functions of the program be



segregated from the enforcement and auditing functions to mitigate the risk presented by arrangement. As such, we recommend that any appropriation for the educational functions be made into the budget for the DOA's Chairperson's office. This would separate funding for education from the funding for enforcement by the Quality Assurance Division.

The Department notes that UH-CTAHR Cooperative Extension Service has a food safety program to educate and train Hawaii farmers to comply with federal food safety regulations. Their Extension Agents work with farmers statewide and they have the GAP food safety technical expertise in training farmers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

March 14, 2022

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB HB 1499, HD1
RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Nishihara, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 1499, HD1, which requires the department of agriculture to partner with a Hawai'i entity to establish a pilot USDA Harmonized GAP food safety training and certification program to help small- and medium-sized farms obtain the United States Department of Agriculture's Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices certification.

HFB appreciates the support by the legislature in our past efforts to help Hawai'i's farmers achieve food safety certification required by businesses that purchase local produce. Foodborne illnesses can be serious, and we should seek ways to reduce risk. The many criteria associated with food safety certification should not be an impediment to safe food. Hawai'i cannot afford to further lose farmers as we strive to increase local food production. We want to incentivize our farmers' ability to continue their operations and provide Hawai'i with abundant safe food. This bill will assist Hawai'i's small farmers with the costs they will incur to become food safety compliant.

USDA GroupGAP is gaining momentum across the nation as a resource for smaller-sized operations that need food safety certification and is the perfect mechanism for Hawai'i's small farmers because it provides a system of shared costs and a supportive network within a group of producers seeking certification. In Hawai'i, many small and mid-scale producers can use food safety certification to gain market access but are still hindered by challenges including individual audit costs and staff to manage the operation's food safety practices, writing a food safety plan, etc. GroupGAP alleviates those burdens by providing technical assistance, in essence, a food safety manager to guide practices and assist

with documentation, and because producers share the costs of auditing across all farms in the group.

We support funding to provide training and support for a USDA GroupGAP program to increase the number of food safety certified farmers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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www.NSEVP.org

March 10, 2022

House Committee on Agriculture and the Environment
Wednesday March 14, 2022, 1:00 pm

SUBJECT: Support for HB 1499 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Dear Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Nishihara, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the North Shore Economic Vitality Partnership (North Shore EVP), I would like to extend our full **support of HB 1499**, which would require the Department of Agriculture to partner with a Hawai'i entity to establish a pilot USDA Harmonized GAP food safety training and certification program to help small and medium-sized farms obtain their United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification.

North Shore EVP was formed in 2015 as a result of a comprehensive, community-based economic analysis that identified the need for a mid-scale regional food hub to fill serious gaps in the food supply chain and maintain agriculture as one of the pillars of the economy of the region. Our research coupled with the implementation of the FDA's Food Safety & Modernization Act (FSMA) indicated that new commercial and institutional markets for aggregated food would require FSMA compliance and/or USDA food safety certification.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of the 5,826 farms growing crops in Hawai'i are not food safety certified. Most of these farms are smaller than 10 acres and because of low volume and inconsistent production, they choose to sell directly to consumers at farmers' markets, roadside stands, or through CSA programs. Many farms do not plant all of the land they have under lease because of this limited market access.

Moreover, during the pandemic, Hawai'i lost millions of dollars of direct food aid due to the lack of food safety certification required by suppliers in USDA funded food and nutrition programs. Even with federal incentives, access to larger, more consistent markets is a significant challenge for many small farms.

North Shore EVP received USDA approval for its Hawai'i GroupGAP food safety certification program in June 2018. USDA GroupGAP reduces the cost of food safety certification by spreading the training, technical assistance, and auditing costs between all farms in the group. Ours is the only GroupGAP program in Hawai'i and one of only 15 nationwide. **It is the only farm food safety training program in Hawai'i that results in USDA Harmonized GAP certification**, the most common standard required by larger commercial and institutional buyers. Hawai'i farmers now have the opportunity to economically attain their USDA Harmonized GAP certification through Hawai'i GroupGAP.

Hawai'i GroupGAP's 2021 USDA audit certified seven (7) new farms and an additional two (2) will be certified upon completion of corrective actions. This increases the number of Harmonized GAP farms in the state to seventeen (17), an increase of 138%! **Hawai'i GroupGAP is now responsible for 65% of all Harmonized GAP certified farms and 23% of all GAP certified**

farms in the state! But we still have a long way to go to certify enough farms to meet the growing commercial and institutional market demands for locally grown produce.

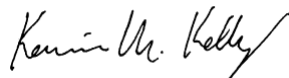
Central to the expansion of farmer food safety training and certification is ensuring the success of the state's small farms by making them eligible to access new, larger, and more stable institutional and commercial markets that require food safety certification. The latest analysis from DBEDT suggests that replacing just 10% of the food currently imported into Hawai'i (Hawai'i imports over 90% of its fresh produce) would amount to an economic impact of approximately \$313 million. **Local production adds resilience to a fragile food chain** that will likely be disrupted again by hurricanes, tsunamis, or other public emergencies. In addition to import substitution opportunities, substantial shifts in state policy in 2021 will spur increases in institutional purchasing of local produce by the state and nonprofit businesses. Act 175 (2021) requires the Hawai'i Department of Education to source 30% of food served in public schools from local producers by 2030, and Act 176 mandates local purchasing goals for all state departments, aiming for 50% local sourcing by 2050. These measures pave the way for market solutions to facilitate local purchasing by all state institutions. Collectively, these actions open new market opportunities for small producers assuming they can meet the food safety criteria that may be required by these institutional buyers.

I agree with the Department of Agriculture (HDOA) Chairperson Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser's prior testimony on this bill that HDOA has an internal conflict of interest in conducting both the internal audits required by GroupGAP and the external audits contracted to HDOA by the USDA. In addition, the Dean of CTAHR, Nick Comerford, has indicated that providing certification is outside the mission of his unit and might compromise the trust relationships that CTAHR extension agents have with farmers if they are, even erroneously, seen as enforcement agents of the government.

Hawai'i GroupGAP is a turnkey, scalable, and highly effective **program that gets farmers trained and certified**. The program was developed and implemented over four years and almost \$1M in grant and private funds. Although the cost to farmers has risen slightly, the program has introduced new technology that reduces the overall certification costs by minimizing the administrative burden placed on the farmer. But Hawai'i GroupGAP cannot continue to expand across the state without other avenues of support. Funding for this program through HDOA is a low-risk, high impact investment for the state that will lead to increases in farm output as farms become certified and begin entering new markets.

North Shore EVP is committed to increasing the number of certified farms in Hawai'i and assisting Hawai'i's small and medium producers access new commercial and institutional market opportunities. We strongly urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.



Kevin M Kelly, President



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair

HB1499 HD1
Relating to Food Safety

Monday, March 14, 2022, 1:00 PM
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the five county level Cattlemen's Associations. Our member ranchers represent over 60,000 head of beef cows; more than 75% of all the beef cows in the State. Ranchers are the stewards of over 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports HB1499 HD1** to require the department of agriculture to partner with a Hawaii entity to establish a pilot USDA Harmonized GAP food safety training and certification program to help small- and medium-sized farms obtain the United States Department of Agriculture's Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices certification.

Achieving food safety certification is an important aspect for sustaining Hawaii's ability to provide local food. We support this assistance to producers with the costs associated with becoming food safety compliant.

Nicole Galase
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Managing Director





Restore the Commons

Thursday, February 3, 2022, 9:00 am

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

SENATE BILL 1499 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Position: Strong Support

Me ke Aloha, Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Nishihara, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment

The Preamble of SB1499 clearly lays out the case for improving Hawaii's standing in food production, from keeping dollars at home to boost our internal economy, to generating revenues, gearing up the local agriculture economy across all known planetary biomes for food security, and protecting Hawaii from supply chain disruptions only now beginning in a world beset with proliferating crises.

Hawaii farmers need assistance to afford and complete certification in food safety, and this bill provides a great beginning. It will be important for the Department of Agriculture to develop this capacity with local partners to expand the readiness and capacity of local agriculture to stock our shelves with affordable locally grown, healthy fresh produce.

Mahalo for the opportunity to address this issue,

Charley Ice, Hoa'āina; and member of the Food Security and Agriculture Committee of the Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party

March 10, 2022

In support of HB 1499, HD1 RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Nishihara, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment:

I am a registered voter located in Hilo (SD-01; HD-02) and have worked to support the local agricultural sector in Hawai'i for the past five years in my professional role with The Kohala Center's Rural and Cooperative Business Development Services Program. I also currently volunteer as the Treasurer for the Hilo County Farm Bureau.

I strongly support HB 1499, which requires the Department of Agriculture to partner with a Hawai'i entity to establish a pilot USDA Harmonized GAP food safety training and certification program to help small- and medium-sized farms obtain the United States Department of Agriculture's Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices certification.

Over the past five years, UH CTAHR Farm Food Safety Team and North Shore Economic Vitality Partnership (EVP) have shown great leadership and expertise in helping prepare farmers for compliance with the FDA Food Safety and Modernization Act. Without their early and consistent efforts, many of our farmers would be severely unprepared as for FSMA compliance as inspections ramp up this year.

This bill will provide much needed financial and human resource support to supplement and bolster current outreach efforts to help our small and medium sized farmers become food safety compliant.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and share my support for this important bill.

Sincerely,

/s/ Megan Blazak
Hilo, Hawai'i

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

WRITTEN ONLY
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1499, H.D. 1

March 14, 2022
1:00 p.m.
Room 224 and Videoconference

RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

House Bill No. 1499, H.D. 1, requires the Department of Agriculture to partner with a Hawai'i entity to establish and implement a pilot food safety certification and training program for the purpose of providing small to medium sized farms with direct assistance to obtain a U.S. Department of Agriculture Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices certification. This bill also appropriates an unspecified amount of general funds in FY 23 to establish and implement the program.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and

- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

HB-1499-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2022 12:37:30 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/14/2022 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa H. Gibson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB1499 to provide for critically needed food safety and certifications programs to ensure Hawaii's food security.

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE HEARING 3/14,2022,1:00PM

BY : DEAN J. OKIMOTO

SUBJECT:Support for SB2960 and HB 1499---RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

To Chairman Mike Gabbard, Vice Chairman Clarence Nishihara and the Senate Agriculture Committee

My name is Dean Okimoto and I was president of Nalo Farms, Inc, and a farmer for 35 years. I was also President of the Hawaii state Farm Bureau from 2003-2014, and I currently work as an Ag consultant for a couple of farms, and am Chair of the Hawaii Agricultural Foundation. My testimony reflects my experiences as a farmer and I do NOT represent the Farm Bureau or the Hawaii Agricultural Foundation. When I quit farming in 2018, we were one of only about 60 farms that were food safety certified and compliant. Today there are only about 35 farms that are food safety certified out of over 5,000 farms in Hawaii.

There has been an increased demand for more locally grown farm products across the state, and we constantly hear about how we need to make our state more sustainable and not so dependent on importing over 85% of our food. I feel so frustrated when I hear this, as there is such a lack of understanding of agriculture when people say this without understanding that the first step to increasing our locally grown food supply, after getting the land, water, and labor is to obtain food safety certification and knowledge. Increasingly the buyers such as Hawaii Food Service Alliance(which all the supermarkets), and distributors such as Y. Hata, not to mention most of the hotels and an increasing amount of restaurants are requiring food safety. This is not to mention that the federal government through the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) is going to require farm food safety certification for most of our food producing farms. Without it farmers are facing a shrinking market for their products, and how do we increase sustainability and grow more of our local food supply?!? This is not to mention that it is the right thing to do to protect the public from food bourne illnesses to larger degree by having food safety.

We will also be providing more food to government institutions including our schools as mandated by this Hawaii State Legislature, which is great, but for farmers to access this market food safety should also be mandated.

If we want to save our small farms (which 85% of our farms in Hawaii are smaller than 5 acres) also it is imperative to create programs that make it cost effective for them to comply with food safety, and this group GAP program needs the support of our government and our people to up the production of our farms and increase sustainability. Increased funding to have more people training and helping farmers with this daunting task of food safety is critical for the survival of food production ag in our state.

Many farmers will need ongoing help to comply with food safety rules as it a lot of work to keep all the records that need to be kept and creating the systems for compliance are easy to develop or comply with. Gone are the days where anyone can go into ag and just grow and sell. Technical skills are needed to deal with all the tools needed to comply.

Dedicated funding to provide training and support within a USDA Group GAP program is critically needed and needed funding is right away! The longer we put off hiring and training trainers to help the farmers, the smaller the market will be for these farmers products and the more unsustainable our agricultural industry will become.

I advocated for money for food safety to start over 15 years ago, so we would not be in this critical situation today. Today...if we delay any longer we will surely start to see a decrease in what the ag industry can do to make us more food self sufficient.

I STRONGLY support HB1499, if we are to talk about food sustainability, and increasing our local food production, this is the first and one of the most critical steps in moving in that direction. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Dean J. Okimoto

HB-1499-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2022 1:45:33 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/14/2022 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Galimba	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Gabbard and Committee members,

Please support HB2499 HD1.

The GroupGAP program has been successful in getting off the ground, growing, and finding solutions to the problems that our producers face with respect to getting food safety certified. Food safety certification is within reach for smaller producers in Hawaii through the USDA GroupGAP program, and there are many more producers who could benefit from it.

It is time for the State and the HDOA to step up with support and funding for this program.

HB-1499-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2022 1:47:33 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/14/2022 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Erika Kuhr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The groupgap program needs secure funding from state or HDOA. This is not something that UH is willing to take on. It is important for Hawaii that farmers and producers and food hub have the resources and support needed to get Group Gap. Please support this bill



Testimony of
MetroGrow Hawaii
Kerry Kakazu, Ph.D., President

To the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair

DATE: Monday, March 14, 2022
TIME: 1:00 p.m.
PLACE: Conference Room 224
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street & Videoconference

Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

Measure: H.B. No. 1499

Title: RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Description: Requires the department of agriculture to partner with a Hawaii entity to establish a pilot USDA Harmonized GAP food safety training and certification program to help small- and medium-sized farms obtain the United States Department of Agriculture's Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices certification.

Position: MetroGrow Hawaii is in strong support of this measure.

Testimony: Thank you for your consideration of this measure to support and fund food safety training for the farming community in Hawaii. The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) while important for public health safety has put a burden of small and medium-sized farms. The time and cost to implement and maintain the certifications and documentation necessary to be compliant with the regulations adds to the already heavy workload farmers must contend with and threatens the ability of many farms to remain in business.

We were fortunate to be a part of the North Shore EVP Group GAP Cohort 5 in 2021 and received Harmonized Group GAP certification earlier this year. The certification is voluntary, but aligns with the requirements of the FSMA regulations so farms that can attain the certification have all the tools and support to pass USDA food safety audits successfully. Additionally farms with the certification can sell to larger buyers that often require it for dealing with their businesses. Individual GAP certification is quite costly so the availability of Group GAP where a cohort of farms pool their resources to get certified is invaluable to small and mid-sized farms.

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Honolulu, HI 96814
<http://metrogrowhawaii.com>

North Shore EVP is currently on cohort 6 of their program and they have gotten 16 Hawaii farms certified thus far so their success is well documented. They have accomplished this with only grant funding and donations, but to continue to grow and support this effort, support from the State will be essential.

The passage of this measure will provide funds to support efforts for more food safety certification training and make it possible for smaller farms to thrive and contribute to Hawaii's fragile food system and reduce our reliance on imported products. I encourage you to advance and pass this important measure. Thank you very much.

HB-1499-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/11/2022 11:57:11 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/14/2022 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Azuma Chrupaluk	Testifying for Administrator of Mahiku A'o Mai Food Security Services	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

From our farm to your legislature, we completely support this initiative as it relates to the economic empowerment of rural farmers and building younger demographics of farmers across Hawai'i

March 12, 2022

Senators Gabbard, Nishihara, Acasio, Rhoads, and Fevella,

Hawai'i's agricultural supply chain is in a precarious position. We rely on imports from the mainland to feed our families. Furthermore, the thousands of small farms in Hawai'i struggle to provide even a subsistence level of output for their local communities as large corporate farms dominate production. Finally, regulations like the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act increase the barriers our small farms must overcome to access institutional markets and scale beyond survival.

Beyond the obvious economic imperative to provide a path to growth for our small farms, Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) certification adds risk management and traceability into this critical pillar of our food supply chain. Implementing GAP reduces the risk of foodborne illness. In cases where contaminated products sicken our community; GAP certified producers are better able to participate in recalls and identify root causes. Furthermore, GAP certification is increasingly a prerequisite for small farms to supply the large, institutional wholesalers that can help them to expand. By expanding this mechanism for Hawai'i's small farms to engage the institutional supply chain, we increase opportunity and improve the safety of the food we consume every day.

HB1499 is a robust win-win for our community. It offers tangible and measurable economic benefits, while improving the supply chain's ability to deliver safe food to our tables. Furthermore, The North Shore Economic Vitality Partnership (North Shore EVP), an established leader in agricultural food safety in Hawai'i, is already leading the charge to help our growing small farms obtain GAP certification. North Shore EVP is launching its sixth GAP cohort and stands ready to partner with the Department of Agriculture to ensure widespread access to this training and certification. In this age of uncertainty, it is imperative that HB1499 is passed, to increase the flexibility and resilience of our small farms to grow their operations prudently.

I appreciate your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Buerge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "B".

David John Buerge
Honolulu, Hawai'i



Testimony Presented to
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
Monday, March 14, 2022 1:00pm Conference Room 224

by
Ron Weidenbach, Co-owner/President, Hawaii Fish Company Inc., Waialua, HI

SUBJECT: Support for HB1499 HD1 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Nishihara, members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment:

Hawaii Fish Company (HFC), established in 1978, is Hawaii's oldest commercial fish farm. In recent years, we have been integrating aquaponics production of leafy greens into our farming efforts to increase our company's sustainable local food production. In 2021, HFC obtained food safety training and USDA GroupGAP food safety certification through the North Shore EVP's exceedingly beneficial and supportive GroupGAP program, opening additional market opportunities for our farm and enabling us to provide locally-grown, food safety-certified produce for our State. HFC therefore strongly supports HB1499 HD1 relating to the establishment of a GroupGAP Pilot Program and appropriating funding for its administration.

USDA GroupGAP is gaining momentum across the nation as a resource for smaller sized operations who need food safety certification, and is the perfect mechanism for many of Hawaii's producers, because it provides a system of shared costs and a supportive network within a group of producers seeking certification. In Hawaii, many small- and mid-size producers can use food safety certification to gain market access but are still hindered by challenges including individual audit costs and staff to manage the operations food safety practices, write a food safety plan, etc. GroupGAP alleviates those burdens by providing technical assistance, in essence a food safety manager to guide practices and assist with documentation, and because producers share the costs of auditing across all farms in the group.

At this time there are only 30 operations whose growing and/or packing procedures are certified USDA GAP/GHP or USDA Harmonized GAP compliant in the state of Hawaii. To date, North Shore EVP's GroupGAP program has certified 12 producers, including HFC, in USDA GAP and HGAP food safety certification.

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Dedicated funding to provide training and support within a USDA GroupGAP program could help to stabilize and increase this number. Making food safety certification more accessible for all of our producers is a market advantage that should be developed.

HFC strongly supports HB1499 HD1 related to the establishment of a GroupGAP Pilot program and appropriation of funding. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this measure.

Respectfully,



Ronald P. Weidenbach
Co-owner and President
Hawaii Fish Company Inc

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HB-1499-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2022 3:25:50 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/14/2022 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglass S. Adams	Testifying for Research and Development, County of Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Nishihara and Members of the Committee on Agriculture & Environment:

The need to provide food safety certification training is vital to building capacity for food security on Hawaii Island and a key component of the County of Hawaii Agricultural Coalition's application for the Build Back Better Regional Challenge. We encourage the committees' support for and forwarding of HB1499 HD1 to the full Senate with a positive recommendation.

respectfully

Douglass S Adams, Director, County of Hawaii Research & Development

Testimony of Bruce Silverglade in Support of passage of HB 1499

March 14, 2022

I am Bruce Silverglade, former legal director (retired) of the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) writing in support of passage of HB 1499.

This testimony is submitted in my personal capacity; I served as Director of Legal Affairs of CSPI from 1981 to 2010. (I now consult on food and agriculture legal and regulatory issues). During that period, CSPI helped lead the fight for the enactment of the federal Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), including provisions dealing with produce safety.

CSPI is an independent non-profit consumer advocacy organization that supports policies aimed at keeping our food supply free of dangerous pathogens like Salmonella, E. coli, and Listeria. We helped lead the fight for the national legislation that ultimately became FSMA. The law modernized food safety protection and promises a safer food supply.

The enactment of FSMA's produce safety provisions followed numerous food safety outbreaks in which dozens of Americans died and thousands were stricken ill. FSMA was strongly supported by numerous non-profit consumer and environmental protection organizations. The resulting FDA produce safety regulation was promulgated and full notice and comment rulemaking proceedings.

The intention of the FDA's produce safety regulation was to bring FDA food safety regulation into the 21st century. In that sense, FSMA has been successful.

In retrospect, however, it is clear that supporters of FSMA like me, did not fully appreciate the economic and social impact that the FDA's produce safety regulation would have on small to very small produce farms including more than 6,500 such operations in Hawaii.

As a permanent full-time resident of the State of Hawaii since 2019, I can now understand first-hand the unintended consequences of FSMA's produce safety rule on the State's economy. If the clock could be turned back, I would have used my best efforts to see that FSMA provided sufficient technical assistance to small and very small farms to ensure that they could comply with the FDA's produce safety regulation that is mandated by FSMA.

That is why the passage of HB 1499 is so important. The legislation fills many of the gaps in the federal law regarding the need for technical assistance. The bill is a “win-win” for both the public which deserves safer produce, and the thousands of Hawaiian farms that need to modernize in order to succeed and thrive in today’s marketplace.

I urge the committee to ensure that this bill is enacted. Thank you for consideration of my views.

Bruce Silverglade

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