

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 HOUSE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE
AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FEBRUARY 11, 2022

9:45 A.M.

CONFERENCE ROOM 325 & VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

HOUSE BILL NO. 1499
RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Chairpersons Hashem and Quinlan, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1499. 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



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. Having both the auditing and training programs in the DOA may adversely affect the food safety certification program's ability to remain independent and objective and provide unbiased audits. It is highly advisable that the educational functions of the program remain separate from the enforcement and auditing functions.

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. As such, UH-CTAHR would be a more appropriate partner for a Hawaii entity to establish a pilot USDA Harmonized GAP food safety training and certification program to assist small- to medium-sized farms in obtaining a Harmonized GAP food safety certification.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

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 HOUSE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1499

February 11, 2022
9:45 a.m.
Room 325 and Videoconference

RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

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

House Bill No. 1499 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

Submitted on: 2/10/2022 5:20:02 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2022 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Morris Atta	Hawaii Department of Agriculture	Support	Yes

Comments:

Available for questions



67-332 Kaiea Pl.
Waialua, HI 96791-9501
808-383-4481
www.NSEVP.org

February 9, 2022

House Committees on Agriculture and Economic Development
Friday February 11, 2022, 9:45 am

SUBJECT: Support for HB 1499 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Dear Chairs Hashem and Quinlan, Vice-Chairs Perruso and Holt, and members of the Committees:

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. Access to larger, more consistent markets is a significant challenge for 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.

Our work has since expanded statewide and now includes farms on O'ahu, Kaua'i, and Hawai'i Island. As the number of farms in the group increases, the cost to each farm is lower as expenses are divided between a larger pool of farms. Staffing needs however increase as we work to maintain the current standard of technical assistance to the farms, including two internal audits of each farm each year. Currently North Shore EVP heavily subsidizes the Hawai'i GroupGAP program through grants and philanthropic support but with a growing number of farms joining the program our ability to include more farms is limited by our ability to write and win grants.

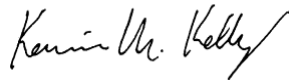
Hawaii GroupGAP's 2021 USDA audit certified seven (7) new farms and an additional two (2) will be certified upon completion of corrective actions. This increases the number of Harmonized GAP farms in the state to seventeen (17), an increase of 138%! Hawai'i GroupGAP is now responsible for 65% of all

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. Economic analyses suggest 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 (2020) requires the Hawai'i Department of Education to source 50% 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.

North Shore EVP is committed to increasing the number of certified farms in Hawai'i and assisting regions across the state develop mid-scale aggregation facilities that would combine the production from dozens of farms and focus on opening newmarket opportunities for small and medium producers in the state and we strongly urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin M. Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin M Kelly, President



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 | Honolulu, HI 96813
P: 808-533-1292 | e: info@hawaiiifood.com

Executive Officers

Charlie Gustafson, Tamura Super Market, *Chair*
Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Vice Chair*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Secretary/Treas.*
Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *Executive Director*
John Schliff, Rainbow Sales and Marketing, *Advisor*
Stan Brown, Acosta Sales & Marketing, *Advisor*
Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*
Derek Kurisu, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO:

Committee on Agriculture
Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Chair
Rep. Amy A. Perruso, Vice Chair

Committee on Economic Development
Rep. Sean Quinlan, Chair
Rep. Daniel Holt, Vice Chair

FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: February 11, 2022
TIME: 9:45am
PLACE: Via Videoconference

RE: HB1499 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.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

HOUSE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Friday, February 11, 2022 — 9:45 a.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports HB 1499, Relating to Food Safety.

Dear Chair Hashem, Chair Quinlan, and Members of the Committees:

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, 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



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 11 2, 2022

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB HB 1499
RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:45 AM

Aloha Chairs Hashem and Quinlan, Vice-Chairs Perruso and Holt, and Members of the Committees:

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

The Hawaii Farm Bureau supports HB 1499, which 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.

HFB appreciates the support by the legislature in our past efforts to help Hawaii'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. Hawaii 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 Hawaii with abundant safe food. This bill will assist Hawaii'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 Hawaii's small farmers 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-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

Date: February 10, 2022

Testimony Presented to
House Committee on Agriculture
House Committee on Economic Development
February 11, 2022 9:45am Conference Room 325
by
Lisa Rhoden, Food Safety Director, NSEVP

SUBJECT: Support for HB1499 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Perruso, members of the Ag Committee:

Chair Quinlan, Vice Chair Holt, members of the Economic Development Committee:

My name is Lisa Rhoden and I am the food safety director for North Shore EVP. Since 2017 Kevin Kelly and I have been working to establish a strong GroupGAP program here in Hawaii with the goal of helping small and medium sized producers across the state achieve food safety certification through the USDA.

I strongly support HB1499 relating to the establishment of a GroupGAP Pilot Program and appropriating funding for its administration.

Hawaii imports approximately 85% of the food that is consumed here. There is growing demand to increase local food production, which would have multiple positive impacts on our economy.

Investing in food safety training is a sustainable way to support greater food self-sufficiency in the state. Specifically, food safety certifications would pave the way for local producers to provide more food to the local market. Small and mid-scale producers in Hawaii are limited on market access when they do not have food safety certification because this certification is desired, and often required, by many larger scale buyers, including Hawaii Foodservice Alliance, Y. Hata, Sysco, and many grocery chains. Producers who do not have certification are shut out of potential larger local market venues and are then unable to scale their operations and break away from or reduce the direct-to-consumer sales opportunities that many are solely dependent on. Despite strong support in the State for local food purchasing, most of the State's agricultural producers are not well prepared to show evidence that they meet food safety guidelines, outlined as "using Good Agricultural Practices", and the vast majority are not food safety certified, creating a liability risk of liability should a customer become ill due to foodborne illness. Food safety is also a consideration for food served to our keiki in schools and to health-compromised individuals in hospitals and other facilities.



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Date: February 10, 2022

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. 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, 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 producers share the costs of auditing across all farms in the group.

To date, North Shore EVP's GroupGAP program has certified a total of 12 producers in USDA GAP and HGAP food safety certification across the state, most recently 8 operations that maintained certification or were newly certified by the end of 2021. The prevailing attitude has been that small and medium sized operations are unable to achieve the required certifications to gain larger market access, but we are proving that that sentiment is unfounded.

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. Dedicated funding to provide continued 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 the State's producers is a market advantage that should be developed.

I strongly support HB1499 related to the establishment of a GroupGAP Pilot program and appropriation of funding. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Respectfully,

Lisa Rhoden

Food Safety Director



**Testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture and House Committee on
Economic Development
Friday, February 11, 2022, 9:45 a.m.
Conf. Room**

HB 1499, Relating to Food Safety

Chair Hashem, Vice-Chair Perruso, members of the Ag Committee:
Chair Quinlan, Vice-Chair Holt, members of the Economic Development Committee:

We strongly support HB1499 relating to the establishment of a Group GAP Pilot Program and appropriating funding for its administration.

Established in 2005, the H.T. Hayashi Foundation reflects the legacy of visionary hotelier and philanthropist Herbert Takami "H.T." Hayashi. Today, the foundation invests in arts and culture, human development, environmental conservation, and economic security, focusing on programs serving women, children, and the elderly. Among our areas of focus: collaborating with others to realize an increase in individual, small and large scale food production for greater food security and self-sufficiency. We aspire to do this through several avenues, including a keen interest in supporting food safety certification and practices in our small and medium-sized farming communities for the reasons this bill and the proposed pilot program seek to address.

Investing in food safety training is a sustainable way to support greater food self-sufficiency in the state. Specifically, food safety certifications would pave the way for local producers to provide more food to the local market. Small and mid-scale producers in Hawaii are limited on market access when they do not have food safety certification. Many larger-scale buyers desire and often require this certification, including Hawaii Foodservice Alliance, Y. Hata, Sysco, and many grocery chains. Without it, producers are shut out of potential larger market venues. They cannot scale their operations and break away from or reduce the direct-to-consumer sales opportunities that many solely depend on.

Additionally, the Hawaii State Legislature has now mandated that by 2030, 50% of the Department of Education's institutional food purchasing should come from local sources (Act 175). By 2050, 50% of all state food purchasing must come from in-state producers (Act 176). Despite strong support in the state for local food purchasing, most of the state's agricultural producers are not well prepared to show evidence that they meet food safety guidelines and the vast majority are not food safety certified. This creates a liability risk should a customer become ill due to foodborne illness. Food

safety is also of concern when thinking about our keiki in schools and the health of sick individuals in hospitals and other facilities.

USDA GroupGAP is gaining momentum nationwide as a resource for smaller-sized operations that need food safety certification. This pilot program believes it 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-scale producers can, if they are interested in doing so, 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, write a food safety plan, etc. GroupGAP alleviates those burdens for those who choose to pursue food safety certification, by providing technical assistance via a food safety manager to guide practices and assist with the documentation. Audit costs are also shared across all farms in the group.

At this time, there are only thirty (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 Economic Vitality Partnership's (EVP) GroupGAP program has certified 12 producers in USDA GAP and HGAP food safety certification.

Dedicated funding to provide training and support within a USDA GroupGAP program would help to stabilize and increase this number.

We strongly urge you to pass this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

Mahalo,

Jan M. Harada
Executive Director



Hawaii Foodservice Alliance LLC, 2720 Waiwai Loop, Honolulu, HI 96819
Tel: 808.839.2004 ~ Fax: 808.839.2033 ~ HFA@HFAHawaii.com

February 9, 2022

TO: Committee on Agriculture and Economic Development
Chair Hashem & Chair Quinlan
Vice Chair Perruso & Vice Chair Holt

FROM: Chad Buck
CEO
Hawaii Foodservice Alliance LLC
Hawaii Secure Foods LLC

RE: **Support for HB 1499** relating to food safety

Aloha,

Hawaii Foodservice Alliance (HFA) is the largest local supplier of perishable foods and logistics to Hawai'i's grocer, retail and club chains. HFA serves all islands and locations daily. **We fully support HB1499 Relating to Food Safety** that 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.

HFA continues to seek reliable sources of locally grown produce that is food safety certified. Our entire supply chain is built on full compliance with all state and federal food safety regulations, including the FDA's Food Safety & Modernization Act (FSMA). I and many of our customers often require this certification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Chad Buck", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Chad Buck
Hawaii Foodservice Alliance LLC



Testimony Presented to
House Committee on Agriculture
House Committee on Economic Development
February 11, 2022 9:45am Conference Room 325

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

SUBJECT: Support for HB1499 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Perruso, members of the Ag Committee:
Chair Quinlan, Vice Chair Hold, members of the Economic Development Committee:

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 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 the need for staff to manage the operation's food safety practices, write a food safety plan, etc. GroupGAP alleviates those burdens by providing technical assistance, in essence providing a food safety manager to guide practices and assist with documentation, and by enabling producers to 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. Dedicated funding to provide 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 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/President, Hawaii Fish Company Inc.

Sustainability. Innovation. Quality.

HB-1499

Submitted on: 2/9/2022 1:52:07 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2022 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Megan Fox	Malama Kaua'i	Support	No

Comments:

Food safety training is needed to reach larger markets and is a huge burden for producers. This program helps to alleviate some of the challenges and is a worthwhile investment to increase our agricultural industry's profitability and markets.



February 10, 2022

SUBJECT: Support for HB 1499 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Dear Chairs Hashem and Quinlan, Vice-Chairs Perruso and Holt, and members of the Committees:

I am pleased to support HB1499 Relating to Food Safety that 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.

Y. Hata & Co., Limited is Hawaii's largest locally owned and operated foodservice distributor with locations on Oahu, Kauai, and Hawaii island. We have been supporters of North Shore EVP's food safety training and certification program for several years and am impressed with their success at certifying farms that add to the availability of high demand locally grown produce for the commercial and institutional markets of our state, but progress is slow.

The proposed GAP training and certification program is long overdue and would rapidly increase the number of certified farms and open new markets, like ours, to our farmers and would encourage increased production of local fresh fruits and vegetables.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Russell Hata".

Russell Hata
Chairman, President & CEO



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285 Sand Island Access Rd, Honolulu, HI 96819 | 808.447.4100 | www.yhata.com





Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Testimony Presented to
House Committee on Agriculture and
House Committee on Economic Development
February 11, 2022 9:45am, Conference Room 325

SUBJECT: Support for HB1499 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Perruso, members of the Ag Committee:

Chair Quinlan, Vice Chair Hold, members of the Economic Development Committee:

Lanakila Pacific strongly supports HB1499 relating to the establishment of a GroupGAP Pilot Program and appropriating funding for its administration.

Lanakila Pacific is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides services and social enterprise programs to build independence and improve the quality of life for individuals with cognitive, physical, social, or age-related challenges. In 2019, Lanakila Pacific embarked on an endeavor to utilize more local produce in the 576,000 senior meals that we delivered through the Lanakila Meals on Wheels program. Due to cost constraints, the opportunity to achieve this goal requires working with farmers to build their production capacity and ability to safely handle the produce. To that end, we partnered with the North Shore Economic Vitality Partnership (NSEVP), as one of the first steps, to understanding and prioritizing food safety – in light of the vulnerable seniors we feed.

Hawaii imports approximately 85% of the food that is consumed here. There is growing demand to increase local food production, which would have a positive impact on our economy. A 2012 report by DBEDT, in cooperation with HDOA, states that *“The economic impact of food import replacement is significant. Replacing just 10% of the food we currently import would amount to approximately \$313 million. Assuming a 30% farm share, \$94 million would be realized at the farm-gate which would generate an economy-wide impact of an additional \$188 million in sales, \$47 million in earnings, \$6 million in state tax revenues, and more than 2,300 jobs. An investment in programs and projects which support greater food self-sufficiency will result in economic, social and environmental benefits to the State of Hawaii.”*

Investing in food safety training is a sustainable way to support greater food self-sufficiency in the state and help institutional feeding organizations, like Lanakila Pacific, increase utilization. Specifically, food safety certifications would pave the way for local producers to provide more food to the local market.

Lanakila Pacific Board
Scott Nahme, *Chair*
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Lanakila Pacific
Foundation Board
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President and CEO
Rona Yagi Fukumoto



Despite strong support in the State for local food purchasing, most of the State's agricultural producers are not well prepared to show evidence that they meet food safety guidelines, outlined as "using Good Agricultural Practices", and the vast majority are not food safety certified, creating a liability risk of liability should a customer become ill due to foodborne illness. Food safety is also a consideration for food served to our keiki in schools and to health-compromised individuals in hospitals and other facilities.

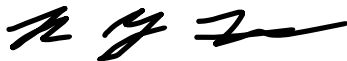
USDA GroupGAP is gaining momentum across the nation as a resource for smaller sized operations who need food safety certification and is the perfect mechanism for many of Hawaii's producers, because it provides a system of shared costs and a supportive network within a group of producers seeking certification. In Hawaii, many small and mid-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 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, NSEVP's GroupGAP program has certified 12 producers in USDA GAP and HGAP food safety certification. Our food service director has audited the program.

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.

We strongly urge you to pass this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Respectfully,



Rona Yagi Fukumoto
President & CEO

Testimony Presented to
House Committee on Agriculture
House Committee on Economic Development
February 11, 2022 9:45am Conference Room 325

by
Erika Kuhr

SUBJECT: Support for HB1499 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Perruso, members of the Ag Committee:

Chair Quinlan, Vice Chair Hold, members of the Economic Development Committee:

The organizations that I work for has been working with NSEVP with the groupGAP process. Inorder to support Farm to School efforts and to see that more Food hubs and other farm establishments are able to meet state and federal requirements for food safety, Group GAP is pivotal to meet these needs and to support local aggregation.

I strongly support HB1499 relating to the establishment of a GroupGAP Pilot Program and appropriating funding for it's administration.

Hawaii imports approximately 85% of the food that is consumed here. There is growing demand to increase local food production, which would have a positive impact on our economy. A 2012 report by DBEDT, in cooperation with HDOA, states that *“The economic impact of food import replacement is significant. Replacing just 10% of the food we currently import would amount to approximately \$313 million. Assuming a 30% farm share, \$94 million would be realized at the farm-gate which would generate an economy-wide impact of an additional \$188 million in sales, \$47 million in earnings, \$6 million in state tax revenues, and more than 2,300 jobs. An investment in programs and projects which support greater food self-sufficiency will result in economic, social and environmental benefits to the State of Hawaii.”*

Investing in food safety training is a sustainable way to support greater food self sufficiency in the state. Specifically, food safety certifications would pave the way for local producers to provide more food to the local market. Small and mid scale producers in Hawaii are limited on market access when they do not have food safety certification because this certification is desired, and often required, by many larger scale buyers, including Hawaii Foodservice Alliance, Y. Hata, Sysco, and many grocery chains. Without it, producers are shut out of potential larger local market venues, and are then unable to scale their operations and break away from or reduce the direct to consumer sales opportunities that many are solely dependent on.

Additionally the Hawaii State Legislature has now mandated that by 2030, 50% of the Department of Education's institutional food purchasing come from local sources (Act 175) and by 2050 50% of all state food purchasing must come from in-state producers (Act 176). Despite strong support in the State for local food purchasing, most of the State's agricultural producers

are not well prepared to show evidence that they meet food safety guidelines, outlined as “using Good Agricultural Practices”, and the vast majority are not food safety certified, creating a liability risk of liability should a customer become ill due to foodborne illness. Food safety is also a consideration for food served to our keiki in schools and to health-compromised individuals in hospitals and other facilities.

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 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, 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 in USDA GAP and HGAP food safety certification.

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.

I strongly support HB1499 related to the establishment of a GroupGAP Pilot program and appropriation of funding. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Respectfully,

Erika Kuhr

Director of Operations, HIP Agriculture

Testimony Presented to
House Committee on Agriculture
House Committee on Economic Development
February 11, 2022 9:45am Conference Room 325
by
Francesca Scola

SUBJECT: Support for HB1499 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Perruso, members of the Ag Committee:

Chair Quinlan, Vice Chair Hold, members of the Economic Development Committee:

Aloha, my name is Francesca Scola and I am the Food Safety Specialist at North Shore Economic Vitality Partnership. In this roll working with a verity of small and mid-sized operations across the state on obtaining their USDA HGAP certification I have ongoing and in-depth exposure to the importance of food safety certification and the struggles faced by local farmers. I strongly support HB1499 relating to the establishment of a GroupGAP Pilot Program and appropriating funding for its administration.

Hawaii imports approximately 85% of the food that is consumed here. There is growing demand to increase local food production, which would have a positive impact on our economy. A 2012 report by DBEDT, in cooperation with HDOA, states that *“The economic impact of food import replacement is significant. Replacing just 10% of the food we currently import would amount to approximately \$313 million. Assuming a 30% farm share, \$94 million would be realized at the farm-gate which would generate an economy-wide impact of an additional \$188 million in sales, \$47 million in earnings, \$6 million in state tax revenues, and more than 2,300 jobs. An investment in programs and projects which support greater food self-sufficiency will result in economic, social and environmental benefits to the State of Hawaii.”*

Investing in food safety training is a sustainable way to support greater food self-sufficiency in the state. Specifically, food safety certifications would pave the way for local producers to provide more food to the local market. Small and mid-scale producers in Hawaii are limited on market access when they do not have food safety certification because this certification is desired, and often required, by many larger scale buyers. Without it, producers are shut out of potential larger local market venues, and are then unable to scale their operations and break away from or reduce the direct-to-consumer sales opportunities that many are solely dependent on.

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.

I strongly support HB1499 related to the establishment of a GroupGAP Pilot program and appropriation of funding. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Respectfully,

Francesca Scola

HB-1499

Submitted on: 2/9/2022 7:08:40 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2022 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Michelle Galimba	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Support for HB 1499 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Aloha Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Perruso, members of the Ag Committee, and

Chair Quinlan, Vice Chair Hold, members of the Economic Development Committee:

I strongly **support** HB1499 relating to the establishment of a GroupGAP Pilot Program and appropriating funding for its administration. Helping farmers to fulfill food safety requirements is a practical way to support farmers and the health of consumers.

HB-1499

Submitted on: 2/9/2022 9:25:27 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2022 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
David Buerge	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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 GroupGAP certification. North Shore EVP is launching its sixth GroupGAP 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.

HB-1499

Submitted on: 2/9/2022 10:45:00 PM

Testimony for AGR on 2/11/2022 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Torey Jenkins	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

This proposed bill would allow Hawaii agricultural producers to compete with farms shipping food from the mainland. Since Hawaii imports most of its food, it is important to consider strategies to help local farmers compete on a national scale, and increase consumer confidence in farms.

Thank You,

Torey Jenkins

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
FEB. 11, 2022, 9:45 AM, CONFERENCE ROOM 325
BY : DEAN J. OKIMOTO

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

Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Perusso, and members of the Ag Committee

Chair Quilan, Vice Chair Holt, members of the Economic Development 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. 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

CHAIR MARK HASHEM
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
HB 1499 - RELATING TO FOOD SECURITY

Chairperson Mark Hashem and Committee Members,

My name is Haley Hocking. I am a third year social work student at UH Manoa, and a resident of Kahului, Maui. I am testifying in support of HB 1499.

Through the recent coronavirus pandemic, food and agriculture autonomy has been a more prevalent issue than ever before. During Hawaii's initial State of Emergency lockdown in Spring 2020, all businesses experienced extreme economic stress. The shipping companies' our community so heavily relies upon was no different, with economic constraints directly influencing the imports of daily essentials such as food. During this time, Young Brothers LLC, requested state emergency funding and adjustments to minimize their sailing schedule. Matson experienced a 14% capacity decline for all incoming cargo, subsequently resulting in inflated prices to sustain profits. With 85-90% of Hawaii's food being imported, the state is dependent on shipping companies.

Beginning in late 2021 and continuing now into 2022, we have seen this phenomenon once more. Shipments nationwide have been inconsistent, with staff shortages and ports backing up, sometimes for multiple weeks. Our community stores reflect this issue, with entire sections of food and essential supplies sitting empty for prolonged periods. Certain grocery items are inflated significantly, with little to no options for a more affordable alternative. Eating at fast food and quick service restaurants, while negatively impacting community health, is oftentimes cheaper than groceries.

The central valley of my home island Maui, has sat virtually empty since the removal and closure of the sugar cane industry in early 2016. It is not uncommon to witness daily dust storms and fires in this area, subsequently causing soil displacement and leaching into our reefs. Filling these areas with locally owned and managed agriculture would be beneficial in both preventing environmental disaster and bringing food security to our state.

By providing small and local farms the opportunity to obtain the USDA Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices certification, we open the doors for autonomy and revenue within our state. Not only does the passing of HB 1499 create more economic opportunities for the state, but job opportunities for residents as well. Hawaii is located in the optimal climate zone for agriculture production. Allowing small farms to obtain certification is critical to the independence of the State.

Haley Hocking
UH Manoa