
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TARO.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii imports
2 approximately eighty-five per cent of its food and is considered
3 highly vulnerable in food security as a state. Climate change
4 significantly increases this vulnerability with sea level rise
5 and intensified weather patterns in the Pacific, such as
6 droughts, hurricanes, and floods. In 2016, the governor pledged
7 to double food production in Hawaii by 2030 at the International
8 Union for Conservation of Nature World Conservation Congress, as
9 part of Hawaii's commitments to the world and the State and in
10 order to begin to address this heavy reliance on imports.

11 The legislature further finds that small farms on ten acres
12 or less in Hawaii produce a significant portion of locally-grown
13 and locally-consumed food on each island. The small farm sector
14 of agriculture is growing, yet the 2017 census of agriculture
15 reported that the average small-scale farmer in Hawaii made less
16 than \$40,000 per year, with losses of almost \$10,000 annually
17 due to the high costs of farming, including land and water. To



1 achieve the State's 2030 goal for local food production, there
2 is an urgent need to better support small farmers, including
3 through small economic incentives to build a larger market.

4 The legislature additionally finds that the department of
5 agriculture has identified staple starches as the greatest food
6 security risk in the State. Taro is a hypoallergenic complex
7 carbohydrate that plays a critical role in the health of
8 families, particularly Native Hawaiians. Yet, the cost of poi
9 renders poi inaccessible to families most in need of this
10 important staple starch food. Taro is one of Hawaii's highest
11 yielding staple starch food crops, producing ten thousand and
12 twenty thousand pounds per acre per annum under wet and dry
13 cultivation, respectively; however, taro is severely
14 underproduced in the State. The 2017 census of agriculture
15 reported two hundred seven farms and four hundred ninety-five
16 acres of taro in wetland and dryland production. An estimated
17 two hundred to three hundred additional acres are unreported or
18 in subsistence taro cultivation. Annual reported production
19 averages four million pounds; however, taro imports are
20 estimated to soon exceed local production.



1 The legislature also finds that loi kalo, or wetland taro
2 systems, are additionally recognized for their potential to
3 mitigate other impacts of climate change by functioning as
4 riparian buffers and sediment retention basins. Underground
5 foods, such as taro, can often survive hurricanes or flood
6 events and can be harvested to address immediate food shortages
7 where the capacity to store and cook food can be retained.

8 The legislature further finds that, in its 2010 report to
9 the legislature, the taro security and purity task force made
10 several recommendations to make taro farming affordable,
11 including improving access to land, water, mentoring, and
12 economic incentives. The legislature recognizes the critical
13 importance of protecting and perpetuating the traditional
14 practice of taro farming as part of Hawaii's cultural identity
15 and finds that there is a compelling interest in providing
16 funding to taro farmers in Hawaii to continue the traditional
17 practice of taro farming in the State.

18 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to the
19 department of agriculture to provide grants to assist taro
20 farmers in meeting the costs of cultivating taro for
21 consumption.



1 SECTION 2. Chapter 141, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
2 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
3 and to read as follows:

4 "§141- Grant program; taro farmers. (a) There is
5 established in the department of agriculture a grant program to
6 assist taro farmers in meeting the costs of cultivating taro for
7 consumption.

8 (b) The program shall provide grants to qualified
9 applicants under the following terms, conditions, and standards:

10 (1) The total amount of a grant to any one applicant shall
11 not exceed \$ _____ ;

12 (2) No grant shall be awarded for costs that were incurred
13 more than five years prior to the time the application
14 for the grant is received by the department;

15 (3) Any grant shall be used exclusively for the purposes
16 of the program;

17 (4) The applicant shall indicate capability to properly
18 use the grant for costs that were incurred cultivating
19 taro for consumption; provided that no grant shall be
20 awarded unless money has been spent by the applicant
21 toward cultivating taro for consumption;



- 1 (5) The applicant shall comply with all applicable federal
2 and state laws prohibiting discrimination against any
3 person on the basis of race, color, national origin,
4 religion, creed, sex, age, sexual orientation,
5 disability, or any other characteristic protected
6 under applicable federal or state law;
- 7 (6) The grant shall not be used for purposes of
8 entertainment or perquisites;
- 9 (7) All activities undertaken with grant funds received
10 shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and
11 county statutes and ordinances;
- 12 (8) The grantee shall:
- 13 (A) Indemnify and hold harmless the State of Hawaii
14 and its officers, agents, and employees from and
15 against any and all claims arising out of or
16 resulting from activities carried out or projects
17 undertaken with funds received from the program;
18 and
- 19 (B) Obtain sufficient insurance to provide the
20 indemnification under subparagraph (A), if



1 requested to do so by the department of
2 agriculture; and
3 (9) The grantee shall agree to make available to the
4 department of agriculture all records the grantee may
5 have relating to the grant to monitor the grantee's
6 compliance with the requirements of the program.
7 (c) The department of agriculture shall adopt rules to
8 implement the grant program. The grant applications shall be
9 reviewed and approved by an administrative staff member of the
10 department."

11 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
13 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and
14 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
15 year 2024-2025 for the department of agriculture to provide
16 grants under the grant program established pursuant to section 2
17 of this Act.

18 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
19 of agriculture for the purposes of this Act.

20 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.



1 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on June 30, 3000.

2



H.B. NO. 275 H.D. 1

Report Title:

Department of Agriculture; Taro Farmers; Grants; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds to the department of agriculture to provide grants to assist taro farmers in meeting the costs of cultivating taro for consumption. Effective 6/30/3000. (HD1)

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