



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
Wednesday, March 1, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

By

Anna Wieczorek, Interim Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1350 HD1 – RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1350 HD1 relating to food safety. This bill is of great interest to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), as we are actively involved in food safety education of Hawai'i's agricultural producers.

Since its passage in 2011, the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) is transforming the nation's food safety system by shifting the focus from responding to foodborne illness to preventing it. The GroupGAP program was created in 2015 to assist small farms with attaining their Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification. As a result of this congressional action CTAHR Cooperative Extension has been deeply engaged in educational efforts to actively provide agricultural producers the information and tools necessary to comply with current FSMA requirements.

The GroupGAP certification is the only comprehensive farm food safety training program in Hawai'i that results in U. S. Department of Agriculture Harmonized GAP certification that is the standard most closely aligned with the Food and Drug Administration's food safety guidelines.

CTAHR's work in this area is confined to education and we have Extension agents in each county of the state who assist agriculture producers in their preparation to pass the GroupGAP certification process. Land Grant universities do not certify agriculture producers for federally mandated programs such as GroupGAP. Likewise, pesticide applicator licenses are issued by the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA), not CTAHR Cooperative Extension. CTAHR Cooperative Extension can help producers prepare for those certifications, but we cannot be the certifying organization.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Regents approved budget. CTAHR defers to HDOA for 1) the logistics to establish and implement the GroupGAP food safety training and certification program, and 2) the allocation of funds to the entities capable to facilitate the GroupGap certification program for Hawai'i.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 03/01/2023

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: 308 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Finance

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 1350, HD1 RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY.

Purpose of Bill: Appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program. Effective 6/30/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 1350, HD1.

Procuring food that has been certified as safe is important when ensuring the health and well-being of our students. This bill will allow the Department to consider more food suppliers for its meal programs, which will assist the Department in meeting the local farm-to-school meal goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 2023
10:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 308 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

HOUSE BILL NO. 1350 HD1
RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Chairperson Yamashita and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1350 HD1. This bill appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program. The Department of Agriculture (DOA) supports the intent of this bill and offers comments.

The Department has a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture ("USDA") that allows the Department, pursuant to licensing by USDA, to conduct food safety audits for Hawaii farmers statewide, on a fee-for-service basis. Adding and consolidating Good Agricultural Practices ("GAP") or GroupGAP training for farmers to the Department's regulatory compliance responsibilities may create a potential conflict of interest if the training is also conducted by the same Departmental staff involved in administering the USDA GroupGAP certification program. Combining both the auditing and training programs in the Department 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 risks presented by arrangement. As



such, the Department supports this bill which provides appropriation placed under the budget of the Department's Chairperson (AGR 192 General Administration for Agriculture) to establish and implement a GroupGAP training and certification program. 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 farm 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 technical expertise in FSMA Produce Safety Rule and USDA GAP food safety regulations to educate and train farmers. UH-CTAHR does not currently handle GroupGAP training for farmers but may consider expanding or collaborating with GroupGAP training providers if there are funds to support this type of training statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

KEKUHAUPIO R. AKANA
Acting Managing Director



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.mauicounty.gov

February 27, 2023

TO: Honorable Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Honorable Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor
Rogerene K.M. Arce, Director of Agriculture

DATE: February 27, 2023

SUBJECT: SUPPORT OF HB 1350 HD1, RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure. The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to the State of Hawaii Department of Agriculture to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program.

Our administration **SUPPORTS** this measure for the following reasons:

1. This measure will assist Hawai'i's small farms by reducing the costs of food safety, training, and certification.
2. This measure supports the success and operation of small farms by providing agricultural practices based on national standards.
3. This measure educates small farms on good agricultural practices in preparing and selling food to retail distributors which require GAP certification.

For the foregoing reasons, we offer our **SUPPORT** of this measure.

HB-1350-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2023 4:13:20 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/1/2023 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee on Finance:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of **HB 1350 HD1**, which appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program. The approval of this measure will help the State achieve its goal of serving 30% locally procured foods by 2030 as required in Act 175. To increase local agriculture production and consumption, producers need support in complying with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). GroupGAP is an excellent way to support farmers in meeting and maintaining compliance standards that will enable them to be able to supply our institutions, grocers, and restaurants.

We strongly encourage the Committee to move HB 1350 HD1 forward with a **POSITIVE** recommendation for House passage.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact me or our Food Systems Specialist, Sarah Freeman (808-961-8582), with any questions.

very respectfully,

Douglass S Adams

Director, Department of Research & Development

County of Hawaii



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

February 27, 2023

House Committee on Finance
Wednesday, March 1, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

SUBJECT: Comments on HB 1350– RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the North Shore Economic Vitality Partnership (North Shore EVP), I would like to extend strong support for HB 1350, which appropriates funds for the establishment of a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program.

Accessing larger commercial and institutional markets that generally require food safety certification is a challenge for Hawaii's 3,682 production farms where over 90% of the farms are under 10 acres and less than 2% are USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified. The majority of Hawaii's commercial and institutional buyers will not purchase produce from farms that cannot provide food safety and traceability documentation required by the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). These buyers will import products that cannot be sourced locally to meet their customer's demands, increasing the State's dependency on imported food.

Food safety certification of Hawaii farms is a critical first step toward FSMA compliance and may lead to increased market access and opportunities to increase production for these farmers. The United States Department of Agriculture created the GroupGAP program in 2015 to assist small farms with attaining Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification. GroupGAP reduces the cost of food safety certification by spreading the training, technical assistance, and auditing costs between all farms in the group. Hawai'i GroupGAP is the only comprehensive farm food safety training program in Hawai'i that results in USDA Harmonized GAP certification, the standard most closely aligned with the Food and Drug Administration's FSMA food safety guidelines. This program is voluntary and is designed to reduce the farm-level risk of produce-based foodborne illness by applying and documenting recommended best practices.

Through grants and philanthropic support, North Shore EVP has stood up and expanded Hawaii GroupGAP. However, just as commercial and institutional buyers are asking for their supplier farms to get certified, the program has, for the first time, turned away farmers seeking to attain their GAP certification due to staffing shortfalls.

As such, providing direct training and food safety implementation assistance through GroupGAP helps reduce the burden on small- to medium-sized farms that are seeking to expand operations, enter new, high demand, commercial and institutional markets, or meet the requirements of their current customers. Support for this bill allows more farms to secure Harmonized GAP certification, and helps build a growing culture of food safety for Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Kevin M Kelly, President



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
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e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

March 1, 2023

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1350, HD1
RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY**

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
10:00 AM

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, 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 1350, HD1, which appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program.

HFB appreciates the support of 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 impede 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.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Wednesday, March 1, 2023 — 10:00 a.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports HB 1350 HD1, Relating to Food Safety.

Dear Chair Yamashita 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 choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

Ulupono supports HB 1350 HD1, which appropriates funds to the Department of Agriculture to establish and implement a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program.

Ulupono supports food safety certification training across the state for small- to medium-sized farmers. According to the 2017 USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (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, which 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 the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Director of Government Affairs

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i



Testimony Presented to
House Committee on Finance
Wednesday, March 1, 2023 10:00am Conference Room 308
by

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

SUBJECT: Strong support of HB 1350 HD1– RELATING TO FOOD SAFETY

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Kitagawa, and members of the Committee:

Hawaii Fish Company, established in 1978, is an integrated aquaculture and aquaponics farm on the North Shore of Oahu. We have been participating in the Hawaii GroupGAP food safety training and certification program since 2021. My family, employees, and I strongly support HB 1350 HD1 and the appropriation of funds to establish a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program in the Department of Agriculture (DOA).

We pursued the GroupGAP certification as a more cost-effective and supported means to obtain food safety certification, with dedicated, well informed food safety specialists for training, to oversee complex recordkeeping requirements, and for periodic audit inspections. This has prepared our farm to meet the FDA/FSMA and USDA recordkeeping and audit requirements with an efficient online recordkeeping app, the posting appropriate signage, and employee training in proper food handling and storage requirements.

As FSMA becomes mandatory for most farms and the food supply chain, consumer and market demand for food safety certified produce will become the norm. Market opportunities for farmers without such certification will be greatly reduced. To help meet this increasing demand for food safety certified foods, it is critical that the DOA establish a GroupGAP food safety training and certification program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 1350 HD1.

Respectfully,

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

Sustainability. Innovation. Quality.

P.O. Box 740 | Waialua, HI 96791 USA | info@hawaiifishcompany.com | hawaiifishcompany.com

HB-1350-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2023 1:27:04 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/1/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Crum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As our islands have transitioned from large monocropping agriculture to many small scale ag producers, while at the same time setting goals of more local food production and consumption, it is critical that we maintain the necessary food safety standards for that local food. It can be an onerous task for a small ag producer to devote the time and resources to Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) standards and certification, and so Group GAP, which allows small ag producers to band together for this training and certification, is a great way to get that done with other local small ag producers. This makes it more likely these smaller producers can expand into larger markets and also follow GAP standards. Please support this initiative to help our important local food production and help ensure food safety standards are followed.

HB-1350-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2023 5:03:04 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/1/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Taylor Kellerman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I strongly support this bill. Food safety is a crucial component of increasing our state's food security.

Mahalo

Taylor Kellerman

Director of Diversified Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Kualoa Ranch Hawaii

February 28, 2023

Representative Yamashita, Kitagawa, Aiu, Chun, Cochran, Garrett, Kahaloa, Kila, Kobayashi, Lamosao, Morikawa, Nishimoto, Poepoe, Takenouchi, Alcos and Ward

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.

HB1350 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 assist growing small farms obtain GAP certification. North Shore EVP is launching another GroupGAP cohort and stands ready to partner with the Department of Agriculture to ensure access to this training and certification. In this age of uncertainty, it is imperative that HB1350 is passed, to increase the flexibility and resilience of our small farms to prudently grow their operations.

I appreciate your consideration.



David John Buerge
Honolulu, Hawai'i

HB-1350-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/1/2023 3:56:37 AM

Testimony for FIN on 3/1/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Crum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As Hawaii has transitioned from a small number of large ag producers to many small ag producers the issue of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) has become less easy to ensure is in place and becomes much more of a burden for those small producers compared to the relatively minor impact to large companies. Group GAP is a potential solution to that problem as it can allow groups of smaller ag producers to band together to meet GAP regulations and requirements. Please support this bill to help ensure GAP is less of a burden and therefore more likely to be practiced among island ag producers.



Food+ Policy Internship 2023

food@purplemaia.org

February 21, 2023

To: House Committee on Finance

Subject: HB 1350, Relating To Food Safety

Aloha Hawaii State Legislators,

We are writing in support of HB 1350 to implement a Group GAP food safety training and certification program in the DOA. The vast majority of the ~6,000 farms in Hawaii operate on under 10 acres and do not have any food safety certification. This limits the business opportunities for small and mid-sized farms because they can only sell direct to consumers, and it potentially puts the community at risk when they buy local produce from farmers who don't follow safety standards.

To sell produce to grocery stores, restaurants, and institutions like schools, farms must meet certain food safety certifications. The Group GAP program is a game-changer for small farms. It reduces the cost of food safety certification and provides valuable training, technical assistance, and auditing services. A nonprofit called North Shore EVP started offering a group GAP program to Hawaii farmers in 2018, and has seen growing interest from farms as they recognize the opportunity in this certification. Establishing funding for Group GAP in the DOA will increase access to this certification and fill a key puka in Hawaii's food economy.

I strongly urge the state to appropriate funds for Group GAP and give farmers the opportunity to provide safe and healthy food to our community.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of this bill.

From the NS EVP's website:

Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) is an audit certification program created by the USDA and is based on guidelines from the Food and Drug Administration. GAP certification has increasingly become a requirement for retailers, making it difficult for small farmers to be able to sell their goods because of the rigor and cost required of traditional GAP certification.

GroupGAP is a new USDA food safety certification option that will increase opportunities for smaller farms to supply GAP-certified produce. This robust certification process addresses many challenges that small farms face in complying with food safety audits and meeting the demands of the retail, food service, and institutional buying community. GroupGAP makes food safety certification accessible for small and middle-sized producers by allowing farmers, food hubs, and other marketing organizations to work together to undergo GAP certification as a group.

[NS EVP 2022 Report:](#)

The vast majority of the 5,826 farms growing crops in Hawai'i are smaller than 10 acres and because of low volume and inconsistent production, most of these farms sell directly to consumers at farmers' markets, roadside stands or through CSA programs. 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, however Hawai'i farmers now have the opportunity to economically attain their USDA Harmonized GAP certification through Hawai'i GroupGAP.

Farms that sell over \$25,000 in produce are required to meet food safety standards.

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the



Food+ Policy Internship 2023

food@purplemaia.org

importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2023, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students from throughout the UH System. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.