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

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



1 The legislature also finds that lo'i 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 report to the
9 2010 legislature, the taro security and purity task force made
10 several recommendations to make taro farming
11 affordable, including improving access to land, water, mentoring,
12 and 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 Hawaii farming
20 groups to be disbursed to taro farmers.



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 with the following terms and conditions:

10 (1) No grants shall be given unless money has been spent
11 by the applicant toward producing taro for
12 consumption;

13 (2) The total amount of a grant to any one applicant shall
14 not exceed \$; and

15 (3) No grant shall be given for costs that were incurred
16 more than five years prior to the time the application
17 for the grant is received by the department.

18 (c) The department shall adopt rules to carry out the
19 purposes of the grant program. The grant applications shall be
20 reviewed and approved by an administrative staff member of the
21 department."



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1 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
3 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and
4 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
5 year 2024-2025 for the department of agriculture to provide
6 grants under the grant program established pursuant to section 2
7 of this Act.

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

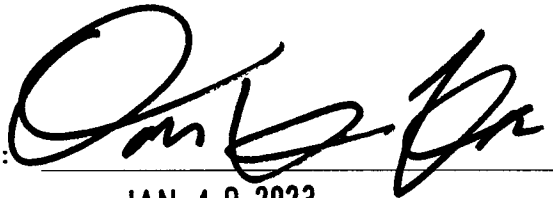
10 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

11 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.

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INTRODUCED BY:



JAN 19 2023



H.B. NO. 275

Report Title:

Department of Agriculture; Taro Farmers; Grants; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds to the department of agriculture to provide grants to Hawaii farming groups to be disbursed to taro farmers.

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