
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 to food shortage events. 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 address the State's heavy reliance on imports.

11 The legislature further finds that small farms on fewer
12 than ten acres in Hawaii produce a significant portion of
13 locally-grown and locally-consumed food on each island. The
14 small farm sector of agriculture is growing, yet the United
15 States Department of Agriculture's 2017 Census of Agriculture
16 reported that the average small-scale farmer in Hawaii earned
17 less than \$40,000 per year, with losses of almost \$10,000



1 annually due to the high costs of farming, including land and
2 water costs. To accomplish the State's 2030 goal for local food
3 production, there is an urgent need to better support small
4 farmers, including through small economic incentives to build a
5 larger market.

6 The legislature additionally finds that taro is a
7 hypoallergenic complex carbohydrate that plays a critical role
8 in the health of families, particularly Native Hawaiians. Taro
9 is one of Hawaii's highest-yielding staple starch food crops,
10 producing ten thousand pounds and twenty thousand pounds per
11 acre per annum under wet and dry cultivation, respectively.
12 However, taro is severely underproduced in the State. The 2017
13 Census of Agriculture reported two hundred seven farms and four
14 hundred ninety-five acres of taro in wetland and dryland
15 production. An estimated two hundred to three hundred
16 additional acres are unreported or in subsistence taro
17 cultivation. Annual reported production averages four million
18 tons. However, taro imports are estimated to soon exceed local
19 production.

20 The legislature also finds that loi kalo, or wetland taro
21 systems, are also recognized for their potential to mitigate



1 other impacts of climate change by functioning as riparian
2 buffers and sediment retention basins. Root vegetables, such as
3 taro, can often survive hurricanes and floods and can be
4 harvested to address immediate food shortages where the capacity
5 to store and cook food is strained.

6 The legislature further finds that, in its report to the
7 2010 legislature, the taro security and purity task force made
8 several recommendations to make taro farming affordable,
9 including improving access to land, water, mentoring, and
10 economic incentives. The legislature recognizes the critical
11 importance of protecting and perpetuating the traditional
12 practice of taro farming as part of Hawaii's cultural identity
13 and finds that there is a compelling public interest in
14 providing funding to taro farmers in Hawaii to continue the
15 traditional practice of taro farming in the State.

16 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
17 funds to the department of agriculture to provide grants to
18 Hawaii farming groups to be disbursed to taro farmers.

19 SECTION 2. Chapter 141, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
20 amended by adding a new section to part I to be appropriately
21 designated and to read as follows:



1 "§141- Grant program; taro farmers. (a) There is
2 established in the department of agriculture a grant program to
3 assist taro farmers in meeting the costs of cultivating taro for
4 consumption.

5 (b) The program shall provide grants to qualified
6 applicants with the following terms and conditions:

7 (1) The applicant shall submit to the department of
8 agriculture a substantive plan for increasing taro
9 production, including activities in which the
10 applicant intends to engage using grant funds;

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

13 (3) If the applicant is a limited liability company,
14 partnership, sole proprietorship, nonprofit
15 organization, or agricultural cooperative, the
16 applicant shall meet any insurance requirements
17 associated with the applicant's business
18 classification or designation.

19 (c) Grants issued pursuant to this section shall include
20 the following:



- 1 (1) Any grant shall be used exclusively for the purposes
2 of assisting taro farmers in meeting the costs of
3 cultivating taro for consumption;
- 4 (2) A grant applicant shall submit to the department of
5 agriculture a substantive plan for increasing taro
6 production, including activities that the applicant
7 intends to engage in using grant funds;
- 8 (3) A grant applicant shall comply with all applicable
9 federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination
10 against any person on the basis of race, color,
11 national origin, religion, creed, sex, age, sexual
12 orientation, disability, or any other characteristic
13 protected under applicable federal or state law;
- 14 (4) A grant shall not be used for purposes of providing
15 entertainment or perquisites;
- 16 (5) A grant applicant shall comply with other requirements
17 as the department of agriculture may prescribe;
- 18 (6) All activities undertaken using grant funds received
19 shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and
20 county statutes and ordinances;



1 (7) A grant applicant shall indemnify and hold harmless
2 the State of Hawaii and its officers, agents, and
3 employees from and against any and all claims arising
4 out of or resulting from activities carried out, or
5 projects undertaken, using grant funds provided under
6 this section, and shall procure sufficient insurance
7 to provide this indemnification if requested to do so
8 by the department of agriculture; and

9 (8) A grant applicant shall agree to make available to the
10 department of agriculture all records the applicant
11 may have relating to the grant, to allow state
12 agencies to monitor the applicant's compliance with
13 this section.

14 (d) The department of agriculture shall adopt rules
15 pursuant to chapter 91 to carry out the purposes of the grant
16 program. Grant applications shall be reviewed and approved by
17 an administrative staff member of the department of agriculture.

18 (e) As used in this section, "qualified applicant" means a
19 farmer cultivating taro plants, taro corm, taro leaf, and taro
20 huli."



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, 2050.



Report Title:

HDOA; 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. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

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