

MAR 08 2024

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR TO CONDUCT A PERFORMANCE
AUDIT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S PLANT INDUSTRY
DIVISION.

1 WHEREAS, the establishment and spread of invasive species
2 is harmful to agriculture, native biota, public health, and the
3 economic well-being of the State; and
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5 WHEREAS, the State's mandated biosecurity program
6 established in 2008, pursuant to part VI of chapter 150A, Hawaii
7 Revised Statutes, is delivered by the Plant Quarantine Branch
8 within the Plant Industry Division of the Department of
9 Agriculture, which also comprises the Pesticides Branch and
10 Plant Pest Control Branch; and
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12 WHEREAS, the Plant Quarantine Branch inspects plants,
13 insects, microorganisms, and non-domestic animals that are
14 imported and certifies plants for export; the Pesticides Branch
15 regulates the manufacture, sale, and use of pesticides; and the
16 Plant Pest Control Branch not only inspects and certifies seeds,
17 but also eradicates, contains, or controls pests of plants that
18 could cause significant economic damage to Hawaii's agriculture,
19 environment, and quality of life; and
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21 WHEREAS, in 2016, the Department of Agriculture,
22 recognizing the challenges in developing a biosecurity program,
23 which include but are not limited to the State's dependency on
24 imports and high cost of controlling and eradicating invasive
25 species, developed the Hawaii Interagency Biosecurity Plan
26 (2017-2027) in collaboration with other state, county, and
27 federal agencies, as well as industry stakeholders and the
28 public, to be the guiding strategy of the State for an
29 effective, interagency biosecurity system that:
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1 (1) Prevents the entry and interisland movement of pests
2 and prohibited or restricted organisms without a
3 permit; and
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5 (2) Responds effectively to eradicate, control, reduce,
6 and suppress incipient pest populations and
7 established pests and seize and dispose of prohibited
8 or restricted organisms without a permit; and
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10 WHEREAS, the Hawaii Interagency Biosecurity Plan outlines
11 one hundred forty-seven action items assigned to various state
12 agencies to implement for the protection of Hawaii's
13 agriculture, environment, and people from the impacts of
14 invasive species; and
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16 WHEREAS, the Hawaii Interagency Biosecurity Plan states
17 that adding state staff capacity is essential if the Department
18 of Agriculture is expected to fully meet its obligations to
19 protect Hawaii from invasive species; noting that between 2008,
20 when the state biosecurity program was implemented, and 2016,
21 the Department of Agriculture suffered a decrease of staff by
22 eighteen percent, while both the tonnage of incoming air cargo
23 and cargo moving out of Honolulu Harbor increased by thirty-four
24 percent and twenty-one percent, respectively; and
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26 WHEREAS, the Office of the Auditor, pursuant to Act 243,
27 Session Laws of Hawaii 2016, conducted a financial and
28 performance audit of the duties and facilities of the Plant
29 Quarantine Branch, including the Branch's biosecurity programs
30 and related programs and submitted Report No. 17-05, entitled
31 "Audit of Hawai'i Department of Agriculture's Plant Quarantine
32 Branch" to the Legislature; and
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34 WHEREAS, Report No. 17-05 found that the Plant Quarantine
35 Branch not only lacked the data gathering and data analysis
36 functions necessary to actively and continuously assess risks
37 from invasive species, but also the organizational framework
38 necessary to manage and communicate risks from invasive species.
39 The report states, in part, that while food and farm product
40 imports continue to rise, Plant Quarantine Branch staffing
41 levels have still not recovered from a 2009 reduction-in-force
42 that cut thirty-seven positions, most of which were Inspector I



1 through III positions; and provided seven recommendations to the
2 Department of Agriculture and the Plant Quarantine Branch,
3 collectively; and
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5 WHEREAS, pursuant to section 23-7.5, Hawaii Revised
6 Statutes, the Auditor reviewed the implementation status of its
7 seven recommendations in 2020, and submitted Report No. 20-12,
8 entitled "Follow Up on Recommendations from Report No. 17-05,
9 Audit of Hawai'i Department of Agriculture's Plant Quarantine
10 Branch" to the Legislature, finding that the Plant Quarantine
11 Branch implemented one recommendation, partially implemented
12 five recommendations, and has not implemented one
13 recommendation; and
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15 WHEREAS, a January 2023 progress report on the Hawaii
16 Interagency Biosecurity Plan prepared by the Hawaii Invasive
17 Species Council found that sixty-eight percent of the action
18 items of the Hawaii Interagency Biosecurity Plan are completed,
19 approved, ongoing, or in progress and thirty-two percent of the
20 action items are not yet stated; no longer being pursued, or
21 need reevaluation; and
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23 WHEREAS, it has been stated in several legislative hearings
24 and informational briefings during the Thirty-Second Legislative
25 Session, that the Plant Pest Control Branch has been utilizing
26 staff and operational capacity from the Plant Quarantine Branch
27 to carry out its duties; and
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29 WHEREAS, the full and timely implementation of the Hawaii
30 Interagency Biosecurity Plan is necessary to strengthen the
31 State's biosecurity system and mitigate risks associated with
32 invasive species; now, therefore,
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34 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-second
35 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2024, the
36 House of Representatives concurring, that the Office of the
37 Auditor is requested to conduct a performance audit of the
38 Department of Agriculture's Plant Industry Division; and
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40 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the performance audit is
41 requested to also include:
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