

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2025
1:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224

SENATE BILL NO. 506
RELATING AGRICULTURE

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 506. This bill requires the Department of Agriculture (Department) to conduct a study on agricultural markets for Hawaii farmers and establishes two full-time positions focused on agricultural data collection and analysis. The Department fully supports this initiative.

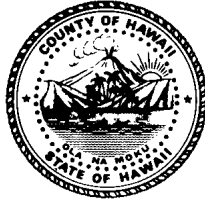
The Department deeply appreciates the additional support provided through this measure to track and discern trends in agricultural markets for Hawaii farmers. We are committed to prioritizing crops, livestock, and aquaculture products that demonstrate strong potential for market growth and flexible capacity for local production.

Finally, the additional staff positions will strengthen the Department's capacity to collect, compile and analyze data, enabling us to better anticipate key production challenges and market-related issues that may help reverse the decline in the value of agricultural products statewide. These efforts will provide valuable insights, empowering the Department to make well-informed decisions and deliver more targeted and effective support to Hawaii's agricultural sector and allied industries.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



Benson Medina
Director

Dennis Lin
Deputy Director

County of Hawai'i

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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January 28, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

WEDNESDAY, January 29, 2025
1:00 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 224

TESTIMONY ON SB 506
Relating to Agriculture

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and Members of the Committee,

I am Benson Medina, Director of the Department of Research and Development, County of Hawai'i. One of the agricultural objectives of this department is to "support research, development, control, and education that improves agricultural production, quality, resilience, and producer viability or reduces the impact of pests or disease on agricultural crops, livestock, forests, or the community."

The County of Hawai'i provides written testimony in **SUPPORT of SB506**, to conduct a study of agricultural markets for Hawai'i farmers and to establish positions in the Department of Agriculture to collect relevant agricultural data for public consumption.

Access to comprehensive agricultural statistics and market data would have a significant positive impact on Hawai'i's agriculture industry. The 2021 Hawai'i County Agriculture and Food Systems Study identified the need for increased market research and value chain analysis to better understand consumer demand and guide marketing efforts for producers in Hawai'i County. Stakeholders expressed frustration over the lack of available data on market demand, which makes it difficult for farmers to plan production. At the same time, without accurate and timely data, State and County agencies are unable to track statewide progress towards key local food systems goals.

Ultimately, this initiative strengthens the economic stability of Hawai'i's agricultural sector by equipping producers with actionable data to optimize their business strategies. Additionally, SB506 provides State and County policymakers and decision-makers with information needed to track statewide goals and direct public resources to benefit the agricultural sector and the public. This increased efficiency helps ensure that agriculture remains a reliable source of income; SB506 supports both the agricultural community and the broader economic well-being of Hawai'i.

Thank you for championing agriculture in Hawai'i and for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT** of SB506.

Respectfully,

Benson Medina
Director, Research and Development
County of Hawai'i



Officers

Kaipo Kekona
State President

Anabella Bruch
Vice-President

Maureen Datta
Secretary

Reba Lopez
Treasurer

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Environment Committee,

Chapter Presidents

Clarence Baber
Kohala, Hawai'i

Tony Vera
East Hawai'i

Puna, Hawai'i

Andrea Drayer
Ka'u, Hawai'i

Maureen Datta
Kona, Hawai'i

The Hawaii Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFUU supports SB506.**

By understanding market dynamics at play, our farmers can better position themselves to meet local demand and compete in a globalized marketplace. This study will provide invaluable insights into consumer preferences, supply chain inefficiencies, and potential new markets, thus empowering our farmers to make strategic decisions that enhance their livelihoods and contribute to Hawaii's food security.

Additionally, the bill's provisions to establish and fund two full-time positions dedicated to data collection and analysis are especially needed. Accurate, timely, and transparent data are crucial for informed decision-making and policy development. By collecting agricultural data for public consumption, these positions will enable stakeholders, including policymakers, farmers, and consumers, to access critical information that can drive the growth and diversification of Hawaii's agricultural sector.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF

Fawn Helekahi-Burns
Hāna, Maui

Mason Scharer
Haleakalā, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahālāwai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Kilia Avelino-Purdy
Moloka'i

Negus Manna
Lāna'i

India Clark
North Shore, O'ahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, O'ahu

Ted Radovich
Waimānalo, O'ahu

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January 29, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 506
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, and Members of the Committees:

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 SB 506, which requires the Department of Agriculture to conduct a study on agricultural markets for Hawai'i farmers, appropriates funds for the one year study on agricultural markets for Hawai'i farmers, and establishes and funds two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) positions to collect agricultural data and conduct data analysis for public consumption.

Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers face unique challenges, including high production costs, limited market access, and competition from imported goods. A thorough study of agricultural markets will provide valuable insights into consumer demand, market opportunities, and supply chain inefficiencies, helping farmers and ranchers make informed business decisions.

Identifying viable markets for Hawai'i-grown products is critical to strengthening local agriculture, promoting food security, and reducing reliance on imports. Market research will empower farmers to diversify crops, target new markets, and align production with consumer preferences. By fostering stronger agricultural markets, this study supports Hawai'i's broader sustainability and self-sufficiency goals and contributes to rural economic development.

Accurate and timely agricultural data is essential for effective decision-making by farmers, policymakers, and stakeholders. The lack of detailed, localized agricultural data creates barriers to understanding industry trends and making evidence-based decisions.

SB 506 represents a strategic investment in the future of Hawai'i's agricultural industry. By supporting the study of agricultural markets, funding dedicated positions for data collection and analysis, and fostering transparency through a report to the Legislature, this measure will provide essential tools to help farmers succeed in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau urges the committee to pass SB 506 and stands ready to collaborate on its implementation, which would benefit Hawai'i's farmers and agricultural community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

SB-506

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 1:31:57 PM

Testimony for AEN on 1/29/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline S. Ambrose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

YES to - Requires the Department of Agriculture to conduct a study on agricultural markets for Hawaii farmers. Appropriates funds for the one year study on agricultural markets for Hawaii farmers. Establishes and funds two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) positions to collect agricultural data and conduct data analysis for public consumption. Requires a report to the Legislature