

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. 563
RELATING TO WATER INFRASTRUCTURE**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 563. This bill directs the Department of Agriculture (HDOA) to conduct an agricultural water infrastructure study for the State of Hawai'i, in collaboration with the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) and the counties. The study proposes an inventory of wells, irrigation ditches, reservoirs, pumping stations, and agricultural infrastructure; an assessment of current condition and maintenance needs; recommendations for future investments, and a tracking system for reporting future needs. The department respectfully opposes this bill due to an existing report of similar nature and intent.

The Agricultural Water Use and Development plan (AWUDP), required by Hawaii Revised Statutes, 174C-31, is prepared by the Department. It includes an inventory of irrigation systems, including systems managed by the HDOA, ADC, and known privately owned systems. As much as possible, it also includes an assessment of these systems and recommendations for future improvements. The first plan was published in 2003. Since then, with total appropriations of approximately \$2.65 million, AWUDP has



undertaken three updates of the plan. The plan was revised in 2004, 2019 with the most recent AWUDP update submitted to DLNR in January 2023. The Department views this document as a “living” document, meant to be updated in regular intervals. The document can be accessed via the Department's website at the following address: <https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/arm/>.

We respectfully identify a limitation of studies such as AWUDP is the inclusion of private irrigation systems. Many agricultural water systems are privately owned and operated, and the Department does not have the authority or penalties to compel private system owners to share information. Private entities may choose against participation, limiting HDOA's ability to gain information about system conditions and make recommendations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





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January 29, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY ON SB 563
RELATING TO WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, 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 SB 563, which directs the Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Agribusiness Development Corporation and the counties, to conduct a water infrastructure study for the State of Hawai'i.

Land cannot support agriculture without adequate, economical water resources. Water is a basic necessity for farmers and ranchers to maintain and expand their production. The reliability of water is essential for our farmers and ranchers to grow crops and raise livestock efficiently.

There is a need for an efficient and equitable state policy for agricultural water. The profitability of existing enterprises, as well as future expansion and success of the agricultural industry, rely on adequate sources of water suitable for irrigation and the allocation of that water at reasonable rates. Water development programs within the state must be planned with due consideration for actual and potential agricultural development. Similarly, water regulations in the state should support existing and potential agricultural development. There should be a balance between environmental interests and economic benefits.

Data is needed to help develop new sources and distribution systems and to maintain the existing systems. Water maintenance and development have high capital costs and risks. Joint private-public development of water sources to serve agricultural production on adjacent and/or contiguous state- and privately-owned lands suited for agriculture should be encouraged.

A study of the current conditions of the various irrigation systems is needed to properly inventory what and where these systems are located across the state. This is the beginning of an ongoing process to continually monitor and maintain these systems to ensure that the various agencies collaborate to ensure agriculture has a reliable and affordable source of water.

Climate change has altered how we think about our valuable resources. Near-constant droughts or fast-moving rainstorms are not conducive to a resilient agricultural industry. This study should identify what resources are needed to alleviate the effects of weather that jeopardize the viability of our farmers and ranchers.

The Legislature continues to advocate for increased self-sufficiency and sustainability. Agriculture must play a key role in this process, and water is essential for agriculture to thrive.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



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, Hawaii

Tony Vera
East Hawaii

Puna, Hawaii

Andrea Drayer
Ka'u, Hawaii

Maureen Datta
Kona, Hawaii

Fawn Helekahi-Burns
Hana, Maui

Mason Scharer
Haleakala, Maui

Kaiea Medeiros
Mauna Kahalawai,
Maui

Kaipo Kekona
Lahaina, Maui

Kilia Avelino-Purdy
Molokai

Negus Manna
Lana'i

India Clark
North Shore, Oahu

Christian Zuckerman
Wai'anae, Oahu

Ted Radovich
Waimanalo, Oahu

Vincent Kimura
Honolulu, Oahu

Natalie Urminska
Kauai

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 SB563.**

This study will provide invaluable insights into the current challenges and future opportunities related to agricultural water access, efficiency, and distribution. The appropriation of funds to conduct this study underscores a commitment to creating actionable policies that will have lasting benefits for Hawaii's farmers. Reliable water infrastructure is fundamental for maximizing crop yields, diversifying agricultural products, and reducing vulnerability to climate change—challenges that our farmers face on a daily basis. By understanding and addressing specific infrastructure needs, SB563 lays the groundwork for sustainable agricultural growth, supporting local food security and reducing dependency on imported goods. The Hawaii Farmers Union strongly supports this initiative, recognizing it as a crucial investment in the long-term prosperity of our island farming communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kaipo Kekona, President HFUU/HFUF

SB-563

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 1:41:33 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 - Directs that Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Agribusiness Development Corporation and the counties, to conduct an agricultural water infrastructure study for the State of Hawaii. Appropriates moneys

SB-563

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 7:48:53 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Theresa M Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support 563 SB RELATING TO WATER INFRASTRUCTURE.

Mahalo,

Theresa Thompson

SB-563

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 5:27:04 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Klayton Kubo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support