SB 2075 SD1 HD1 – RELATING TO THE SUSTAINABLE AND ORGANIC AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and members of the House Committee on Finance:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 2075 SD1 HD1.

Section 1. We fully support the idea that certified organic agriculture or some version of it is a valuable option in the diverse agricultural system portfolio that should exist in the state of Hawai‘i. The three challenges identified also outlines the three legs of the stool that define a sustainable system. Field research conducted by the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa using scientific experimentation, design, and statistical analysis will provide science-based information on these farming practices that will be communicated back to the farming community via extension agents across the state.

Section 2. We support this section and provide more detail on the budget that may be helpful.

1) Research and Extension Assistant #1– This person will be stationed at Mānoa and will execute field and laboratory research in priority areas based on an industry needs assessment. The research assistant will be responsible for conducting replicated research trials in collaboration with Extension faculty, industry groups such as Hawai‘i Farm Bureau, Kohala Group, Hawai‘i Farmers Union United and responsibly communicate those results to stakeholders via field days, newsletters and online website postings.

2) Research and Extension Assistant #2 - This person will be stationed outside of Oahu and will have responsibilities similar to that of Assistant #1 working with local stakeholders but also with some state-wide responsibilities. The location where this person is stationed will be based on discussions with local agricultural groups in order to leverage additional support for SOAP activities.
3) Educational Assistant – This person will be responsible for extending research based information to stakeholders via the SOAP website, Hanai’ai newsletter and social media channels. The educational assistant will work to help Extension faculty assemble information into useable forms of outreach material and ensure material are ADA compliant before circulation.

Costs:
Research/Extension Assistant = ~$70,000 x 2 positions = $140,000
Educational Assistant = ~ $42,000 + 52% Fringe benefits $21,840 = $63,840
Total Personnel = $203,840
Operations = $60,000
Grand Total = $263,840

We fully support SB 2075 SD1 HD1 with the caveat that it does not affect, and is in addition to, the UH budget request.