



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture
and
Senate Committee on Economic Development and Technology
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By
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And
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SCR 91 – ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP TO DISCUSS AND RECOMMEND LABELING REQUIREMENTS FOR HAWAII-GROWN TEA

Chairs Nishihara and Fukunaga, and members of the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Economic Development and Technology, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SCR 91, establishing a working group to discuss and recommend labeling requirements for Hawai'i-grown tea.

My name is Sylvia Yuen. I am Interim Dean and Director of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and am providing this testimony on behalf of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Last year (2011), CTAHR partnered with the UH-Mānoa Pacific Asian Center for Entrepreneurship (PACE), Shidler College of Business to research and produce a market feasibility study for developing Hawai'i-grown tea into a viable and sustainable agricultural industry for the State of Hawai'i. We engaged many stakeholders in this effort, including tea farmers and retailers, the Hawai'i Tea Society membership, and many other members of the community.

One key finding of this study was that for the currently small and developing tea industry in Hawai'i to grow and for tea to become a sustainable specialty crop, Hawai'i-grown tea must be established as a premium product, both in terms of quality and consumer association of "Hawai'i-grown" with that high quality. This perception of high quality can be diluted by use of the word "Hawai'i" on tea product labels that do not actually consist of tea grown in Hawai'i. These certainly may be quality products in their own right, but if they are not actually grown in Hawai'i and represent both the quality and price structure associated with Hawai'i-grown tea, the brand will be diluted.

SCR 91 will establish a committee to consider and make recommendations on the issue of label protection for Hawai'i-grown tea and, therefore, represents a major step towards establishing tea as a viable and high quality agricultural crop in Hawai'i. CTAHR is willing to participate on this committee, and to serve as either member or chair as the legislature deems appropriate. CTAHR strongly supports SCR 91.