



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Higher Education and
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
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HB 1717 HD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairs Kim and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Kidani and Nishihara, and members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education and Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the intent of HB 1717 HD1 but not in its present form.

Hawai'i agriculture will benefit from the incorporation of smaller equipment that matches the limited acreage indicative of many farms in the state. It must first be understood that CTAHR does not have the knowledge or capacity to accomplish the goals outlined below since it no longer has an Agriculture Engineering program. CTAHR provides the following evaluation and comment to address the specific goals of HB 1717 HD1:

1. Identify and purchase foreign agricultural technology, including but not limited to small equipment tractors and retrofit engines, which will benefit the State's farmers and ranchers and comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's emission standards.

It is CTAHR's understanding that such equipment does not exist currently, which is the reason that such equipment is not currently in use. The expectation of what type of equipment to consider is quite open-ended, and the success of HB 1717 HD1 would benefit from a more specific charge.

2. Establish contact with manufacturers of small equipment in Japan and other countries.

This is certainly possible; in fact, CTAHR's Extension program has done some years ago in response to previously expressed interests. Contacts with

manufacturers would have to be re-initiated, and an interpreter would have to be hired and probably an intermediary company would have to be subcontracted. This not the type of thing that a college does, but is more appropriate for an industry in the state.

3. Work with the United States Environmental Protection Agency to identify federal Environmental Protection Agency standard and compliance requirements for small foreign agricultural equipment.

From past experience, this would be necessary in order to import any equipment. One option that has not been considered, is for the state to pay one or more of these companies to retrofit equipment prior to exporting to Hawai'i and having it pre-approved for import. It would be a reasonable approach given the inventors of the equipment are the most knowledgeable and the mechanics/machinists in county may be able to make the adjustments. This would also overcome the limitation that CTAHR does not have the expertise to do that type of work.

4. Collaborate with agriculture and agricultural professionals from foreign countries on management practices.

Management practices using equipment is often well-known. We see this objective as one that could be dropped from the bill. It might be better expressed as training for the use of equipment. See below for training issues.

5. Bring harvesting, weed management, and field preparation machinery into the State of Hawaii for evaluation.

This is consistent with #1 above. The questions are harvesting of what? What type of weed management? What nature of field preparation? The open-endedness is seen as a problem.

6. Conduct on-farm trials to evaluate the efficacy and applicability to multiple growing systems (e.g. wetland conventional, organic, forage crops, etc.) statewide.

CTAHR assumes that this refers to how the new equipment is used in different systems.

7. Conduct education and training workshops statewide to update agriculture producers on available technology.

This is the mission of Cooperative Extension in CTAHR. It is one of the charges being given that CTAHR has the capacity to do and which meets our mission.

Limitations of HB 1717 HD1 in its current form and comments on changes:

1. CTAHR does not currently have the staff expertise to accomplish most of this.
2. The goals as stated are multi-year operation goals and a one-year budget will not meet the stated objectives. It is not clear if the plan is to provide a multi-year budget in subsequent legislatures.
3. The bill identifies CTAHR and mentions the inclusion of a community college, but does not identify the community college that has an appropriate program. The bill needs to be specific about the community college. That would allow the community college to provide input to the bill's language and budget needs. It also needs to highlight the duties that the community college has relative to this bill.
4. A budget is not proposed to accomplish those goals.

The goals outlined in this bill would require a budget that includes the following categories:

1. Adequate staff for a multi-year program in CTAHR and in the community college once the community college and its role are identified; or more appropriately the option to subcontract a consulting firm to do this.
2. Significant funding for the purchase of equipment and its shipping to Hawai'i.
3. Significant funding for the retrofitting of the equipment either here or in the country of origin.
4. Travel funds (assuming COVID-19 does not become a limitation of travel) in order to find and evaluate the applicability of equipment in foreign countries.
5. Training for CTAHR personnel in the operation of the equipment, probably in the country of origin.
6. Funding for the community college that will participate in the program once their involvement is defined. A successful program would require that individuals receive training in the repair and maintenance of such equipment if it's distinctly different from what is currently available in Hawai'i.
7. Additional operating expenses necessary to meet this goal.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 1717 HD1, but notes that there is much to be concerned with in its present form. Its objectives are well beyond a one-year budget. A more reasonable approach would be to define a bill that does a survey of the

needs, identifies the location of equipment, investigates the issues related to bringing equipment into the state, and develops the overall plan to accomplish the overall objective. The actual process could be left to a budget from next year's legislature.

In addition, we support the intent, but not the current form of this bill, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.