



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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House Committee on Agriculture
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by

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HB 900, Relating to Agriculture

Chair Tsuji, Vice Chair Brower, and Members of the Committee:

The purpose of HB 900 is to appropriate funds to the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources to develop a long range plan for a food innovation and security center for the development and promotion of safe, high-quality, and high-value agricultural products. The University supports the intent of HB 900, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities expressed in our Board of Regents approved Biennium Budget request.

Agriculture and its value-added products contribute \$2.4 billion to our state's economy and employ more than thirty-eight thousand people. Agriculture complements and supports our tourism industry by conserving green, open space that visitors to Hawai'i expect and enjoy.

The value of diversified agriculture has more than doubled during the past 25 years. This growth in diversified agriculture improves our food security by lessening our dependence on food imports. For example, about 40 percent of the fresh vegetables we consume are now grown locally.

A Food Innovation and Security Center can aid in this important expansion of diversified agriculture. The Food Innovation and Security Center will help Hawai'i's agricultural and value-added businesses bring to market products whose quality and value offset our state's high costs of land, labor, water, and transportation. It will offer expert assistance to entrepreneurs developing new products from Hawai'i produce. The Center will also help food growers and processors produce safe, wholesome foods that meet Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Health Approved Safety Standards Protection (HASSP) certification standards. By promoting the production of high-quality, high-value, safety-certified food products for both local and export markets, the Food Innovation and Security Center will support the continued growth of Hawai'i's diversified agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.