



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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House Committee on Agriculture
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by
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HCR 170, Requesting the Department of Agriculture to Establish a Task Force to Develop Long-term Solutions to Effectively Protect the Livestock Industry in Hawai'i

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

The purpose of HCR 170 is to request that the Department of Agriculture establish a task force to develop long-term solutions to effectively protect the livestock industry in Hawai'i. The University supports HCR 170.

The cost of feeding livestock in Hawai'i is significantly higher than on the mainland and threatens our local livestock producers, including cattle ranches, egg and poultry farms, dairies, and hog farms. Cattle, milk, swine, and egg production have all declined significantly since the early 1990s. We recently lost two egg farms and one dairy to increases in production costs resulting largely from the rapidly rising cost of imported feed. Many additional producers remain threatened by the high cost of livestock feed.

Beef, eggs, milk, chicken, and pork are important staples that contribute to our food security. If our remaining cattle ranches, dairies, poultry farms, and hog farms are put out of business by the high cost of feed, we will become more dependent on imported foods and will lose the option of buying these perishable goods at their freshest. Once these producers go out of business, it will be much more expensive to restart the businesses with new facilities and replacement animals.

The livestock revitalization program proposed in HB 1221 and SB 1307 is a valuable temporary measure to help Hawai'i's livestock producers cope with the high costs of imported feed through partial reimbursement by the Department of Agriculture. However, permanent solutions are required to ensure continued livestock production in Hawai'i. CTAHR stands ready to participate in the task force proposed by HCR 170 to examine the current policies, procedures, and operations of livestock farms in Hawai'i; explore and identify best practices and other available options to develop long-term solutions to protect Hawai'i's livestock industries; and establish findings and identify and recommend solutions to issues surrounding livestock feed requirements, including the transportation costs of feed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.