



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

S.B.#649

RELATING TO GENETIC ENGINEERING

Testimony Presented Before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT, AND INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, AND AGRICULTURE

February 10, 2005

By

Andrew G. Hashimoto
Dean, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
University of Hawai'i

Testimony for
Senate Bill 649

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Senate Committee on Water, Land, and Agriculture

The Twenty-third Legislature
State of Hawai'i
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Dr. Andrew G. Hashimoto, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
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I am pleased to contribute the expertise of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) to the decision-making process on Senate Bill 649, which prohibits the planting of a genetically engineered seed or plant part in an open field. The bill allows the chairperson of the Board of Agriculture to grant an exception for planting in a controlled environment.

Genetically engineered (GE) crops are regulated by three federal agencies: the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). During the development of a GE crop, USDA regulates its interstate movement and field testing. For a GE crop to be deregulated, USDA must find that its release will not adversely affect non-target (i.e., non-pest) organisms or the environment. For GE crops that produce biological pesticides, EPA establishes the level of pesticide that is safe for the environment and for human consumption. If the GE crop is to be consumed by people or animals, FDA participates in the regulatory process, determining whether the GE crop is substantially equivalent to conventional varieties of the same crop in terms of nutritional value and toxicity.

SB649's blanket prohibition makes no distinction between regulated crops that are undergoing field testing and crops that have been deregulated and approved for sale in the U.S. This bill would prohibit the planting of genetically engineered papaya, which has been found to be safe, is deregulated, and has helped Hawai'i's papaya industry rebound from crippling losses caused by papaya ringspot virus. It would also prevent research institutions from developing new pest- and disease-resistant cultivars and would harm Hawai'i's seed industry.

We oppose SB649. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.