



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

S.C.R.#224/S.R.#129

SUPPORTING THE EFFORTS OF THE HAWAII BIOTECH POLICY FORUM TO CONVENE
KEY STAKEHOLDERS ON THE USE OF GENETICALLY ENGINEERED CROPS IN HAWAII.

Testimony Presented Before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, AND AGRICULTURE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON MEDIA, ARTS, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

April 1, 2005

By

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

Testimony for
Senate Concurrent Resolution 224/Senate Resolution 129

SUPPORTING THE EFFORTS OF THE HAWAII BIOTECH POLICY FORUM TO
CONVENE KEY STAKEHOLDERS ON THE USE OF GENETICALLY ENGINEERED
CROPS IN HAWAII.

Presented before the
Senate Committee on Water, Land, and Agriculture
Senate Committee on Media, Arts, Science, and Technology

The Twenty-third Legislature
State of Hawai'i
April 1, 2005

by

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

I am pleased to contribute the expertise of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) to the decision-making process on Senate Concurrent Resolution 224 and Senate Resolution 129, which support the efforts of the Hawaii Biotech Policy Forum to convene key stakeholders on the use of genetically engineered crops in Hawai'i.

We support the intent of SCR224 and SR129. Creating mechanisms through which members of the public can obtain sound, fact-based information pertaining to genetically engineered crops is important and beneficial. A survey by the Food Policy Institute (Cook College, Rutgers, N.J.) recently found that although about three-quarters of Americans are aware of the existence of genetic engineering, more than 60 percent have never discussed this topic, and more than half are unaware that GE foods are currently sold in their local supermarkets, even though more than 70 percent of commercially available foods contain ingredients derived from GE crops. Increased public awareness of the agricultural, environmental, and health-related aspects of genetic engineering is clearly needed, and CTAHR is open to participating in the Hawaii Biotech Policy Forum's collaborative educational process.

At the same time, we wish to express reservations regarding the development of a "prevailing community consensus." The issue of GE crops is a polarizing one, and community consensus may be difficult to reach. We feel that the consensus-seeking process should not result in farmers' choices being constrained. The University of Hawai'i believes that conventional agriculture, organic farming, and biotechnology can coexist. Under the current regulatory framework, the appropriateness of producing a particular GE crop in Hawai'i is decided on a case-by-case basis that weighs benefits, costs, and risks. Approaches that meet this regulatory standard should be available to farmers who chose them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.