



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance

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Senate Bill 1899 SD1, HD1– RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Takamine, Vice Chair Kawakami, and Members of the Committee:

The purpose of the bill is to appropriate funds to (1) Provide the scientific information to support the deregulation process which will allow the genetically engineered Hawaiian 'Rainbow' papaya to be introduced into the Japanese market; and (2) Initiate the development and implementation of a marketing plan to promote transgenic and non-transgenic Hawaiian papaya in Japan and in future markets, including China and the European Union.

I support the intent of SB 1899 SD1, HD1. Papaya is Hawai'i's second most valuable fruit crop. The appearance of the papaya ringspot virus on the Big Island in 1992 and the subsequent rapid spread of this disease caused dramatic declines in the size of the papaya harvest and in papaya yields per acre. The ringspot virus-resistant, genetically engineered 'Rainbow' papaya was developed to prevent the loss of the state's papaya industry. 'Rainbow' papaya is now grown on more acres than any other cultivar in Hawai'i. It is the principal papaya we export to the mainland and Canada. The high acreage in 'Rainbow' papaya has reduced the load of ringspot virus in the environment, enabling growers to produce virus-susceptible papaya cultivars as well.

Japan, which accounts for about 40 percent of Hawai'i's papaya exports, does not accept the genetically engineered 'Rainbow' papaya at this time. Discussions are ongoing with the government of Japan to open that market to 'Rainbow' papayas. SB 1899 SD1, HD1 will fund scientific investigations, including the sequencing of the 'Rainbow' papaya genome, which will address concerns posed by regulators in Japan and accelerate the introduction of 'Rainbow' papaya to the Japanese market. Acceptance of the 'Rainbow' papaya by Japan may also enable its introduction in other markets, including China and the European Union. My concern about this portion of the bill is that most of the research data on the 'Rainbow' papaya has already been presented to the Japanese regulators, and the more pressing need is the marketing funds. If there are additional research data needed by Japan, the more appropriate source of funding would be HB 2774, which appropriates funds to the Hawai'i Farm Bureau Federation to conduct agricultural research and market development.

SB 1899 SD1, HD1 will also fund the development and implementation of a marketing plan to promote export of all Hawai'i papayas—including non-genetically engineered cultivars grown conventionally or organically—to the benefit of all the state's papaya growers. I fully support this portion of the bill.

For these reasons, I support the intent of SB 1899 SD1, HD1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.