

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I SYSTEM

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



**SB2924 Making an Appropriation to the University of Hawai‘i
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources**

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs
Senate Committee on Education

February 8, 2008 at 1:15 p.m.

by
Virginia S. Hinshaw, Chancellor
Presented by
Andrew G. Hashimoto, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

Testimony Presented before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs
Senate Committee on Education

February 8, 2008 at 1:15 p.m.

by
Virginia S. Hinshaw, Chancellor
Presented by
Andrew G. Hashimoto, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2924: Making an Appropriation to the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

Chair Tokuda, Chair Sakamoto, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on SB 2924, which appropriates funds to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) for additional researchers and specialists to support organic agriculture research and teaching programs. Unfortunately, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa can only support the intent of SB 2924 at this time because of our pressing priorities, such as our tremendous need for repairs and maintenance and health and safety issues, which are critical to our ability to perform our core mission for the State of Hawai'i. We are grateful to the Legislature's attention to these needs. We recognize that you have many priorities and issues to weigh for the state, so the following substantive information on this program is provided to assist you in your decision-making process.

The popularity of agricultural products grown using organic agriculture practices has increased remarkably in recent years. According to the Organic Trade Association's 2006 Manufacturer Survey, U.S. retail sales of organic food are growing at close to 20 percent per year, from \$3.6 billion in 1997 to \$13.8 billion in 2005. Hawai'i's organic agriculture industry has an estimated value of between \$5 and \$10 million and produces a variety of fruit, vegetable, and specialty crops.

Here in Hawai'i, consumer demand for organic goods outpaces supply. Because organic farmers can use only a proscribed set of pest control options, imported organic produce is an important route by which new pests and diseases organisms can enter the state. Replacing those imports with locally grown organic goods will lessen this risk of introducing new invasive species. Expansion of organic agriculture production in Hawai'i will also promote improved soil health, provide consumers with the freshest organic produce, and enable local farmers to benefit from consumer demand for organic goods by receiving a price premium for their crops.

CTAHR is committed to supporting Hawai'i's organic farming community. An in-depth analysis of the state's organic agriculture industry is currently underway. Input from stakeholders on five islands was gathered last year during listening sessions, and completion of the industry analysis report is anticipated later this year. Between September 2006 and January 2007, workshops for 250 farmers interested in organic agriculture practices were held on Maui, O'ahu, Moloka'i, the Big Island, and Kaua'i. Additional workshops are planned for 2008. An introductory manual has been developed for Hawai'i growers who want to learn more about organic and sustainable agriculture, and a CTAHR organic agriculture website offers numerous resources including more than 20 free college publications that can assist organic agriculture operations. An organic agriculture working group has brought together more than 30 faculty and staff engaged in research, instruction, and outreach relevant to organic agriculture. Field days for farmers and outreach events for gardeners have been held on O'ahu, Maui, and the Big Island, and the first in a series of virtual (on-line) field days is now available. Visiting scholars have shared diverse expertise in organic agricultural practices. An academic course in organic agriculture has been offered to students. Land at the Waimānalo Research Station is being certified for organic production, and a plot at the station is being made available for student use. Through work with the Hawai'i Cooperative of Organic Farmers (HICOF), the Agribusiness Incubator Program is supporting the continued growth of organic farming in the state.

These activities have been conducted with limited human resources. Despite CTAHR having recently added faculty positions, the college's faculty FTE levels are only 75 percent of what they were 15 years ago, and CTAHR has only two faculty members whose major emphasis is on organic agriculture: one tenure-track extension specialist and one grant-funded researcher. Additional personnel would enable expansion of CTAHR's support for our state's organic agriculture industry, promoting economic growth and environmental stewardship.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We appreciate all interest in the University, and want to emphasize that we will be able to perform better in all arenas and best serve the state with support of the current campus priorities approved by the Board of Regents.