



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture
and

Senate Committee on Water and Land
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by

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SB 2038 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairs Nishihara and Solomon, Vice Chairs Kouchi and Galuteria, and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Senate Committee on Water and Land, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 2038, which to address important issues relating to farming sufficiency in conservation, water and energy management, soil science, and food safety.

We strongly support this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents Approved Executive Biennium Budget.

SB 2038 will provide the means for the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) to provide necessary research and training in two major areas of concern to both the agricultural sector and the public at large that impact food self-sufficiency in Hawai'i: (1) Organic agriculture and soil health, and (2) Good agricultural practices (GAPS) and food safety.

Organic agriculture is the fastest growing segment of food production nationally, and of great interest in Hawai'i due to the high costs of inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides, concerns over soil health and possible environmental contamination of limited water resources, and the need for innovative and self-sufficient approaches to on-farm energy generation and use, and waste management. SB 2038 will allow specialists to address organic pest management needs, define the impact of microorganisms on soil health and subsequent effects on crop growth, and support active training in safe and effective organic farming techniques. These efforts will expand and complement the Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Program in CTAHR, and integrate with an organic agriculture certificate program currently in development.

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) impacts food production and food safety certification nationwide. The food safety coaching program offered by CTAHR, and supported by extramural funds, prepares local farms for Good Agricultural Practices (GAPS) certification. Pesticide safety is also addressed by CTAHR in courses required by the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, and in on-farm training and workshops throughout the state. SB 2038 will allow continuation of these training and coaching programs that are essential to assist Hawai'i's farmers in meeting food safety standards.