HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE, 2008
STATE OF HAWAII

H.R. NO. 248

HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII TO CONDUCT A STUDY TO DEVELOP METHODS TO IDENTIFY NATURAL AND GENETICALLY-MODIFIED ORGANISMS.

WHEREAS, Hawaii's unique natural environment is critical to our way of life, serving as a pillar of our cultural heritage and legacy, as well as fueling the most important engine of our economy--our visitor industry; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the dangers posed by overdevelopment, urban sprawl, and the importation and spread of invasive alien species, one of the gravest threats to Hawaii's natural environment is the potential release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that may have devastating effects on Hawaii's fragile ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, the effort to incorporate GMOs into the environment and food supply is sometimes met with resistance from consumers and retailers; and

WHEREAS, the potential threat posed by GMOs must be balanced against the benefits that may be derived from GMOs and GMO-related research; and

WHEREAS, developing and implementing an effective and nondestructive means to identify GMOs in the field, the market, and the laboratory would help to mitigate concerns regarding the inability to distinguish GMOs from non-GMOs, and the consequences this may have on the proliferation of destructive GMOs across the ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, recent advances by researchers from the University of Hawaii (UH) in the development of green fluorescent protein (GFP) as a reliable marker, combined with sensor technology being developed by Maui Media Lab to detect organisms expressing fluorescent proteins, represent a potential breakthrough that, with legislative support, may provide a long-term solution to the problem of accurately identifying GMOs; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive study is needed to research GFPs and other methods available to identify GMOs and determine the best way to address this issue, including proposed legislation, if necessary; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-fourth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2008, that UH is requested to conduct a study to:

(1) Develop clear, objective, and authentic methods to identify natural organisms and genetically-modified organisms husbanded within, imported into, or exported out of, the state; and

(2) Develop an affordable and efficient means to stack genetically-modified organisms with genetic tags to be accurately identified wherever the organisms are located;

and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study also consider the impact of legislation that:

(1) Mandates the incorporation of one or more nonobtrusive, in situ-detectable genetic markers, such as those that express GFP, into any biological organism raised, created, designed, or engineered through any means other than traditional cross pollination or traditional grafting of plant tissue, imported or exported into or out of the state; and

(2) Establishes sanctions for violations of the requirement for genetic marker incorporation as described in the above paragraph; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study include proposed legislation to mandate the incorporation of GFPs into biological organisms, as described above, if deemed safe, feasible, and beneficial; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that UH is requested to submit a report on the study no later than 20 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2009; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the President of UH, Dean of the UH College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, and Director of Maui Media Lab.

OFFERED BY: _____

MAR 12 2008