

REPORT TO THE TWENTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2006
RELATING TO DIVERSIFIED AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY



Prepared by

THE STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
PLANT INDUSTRY DIVISION

In response to Senate Concurrent Resolution 208, Session Laws of Hawaii 2005

Honolulu, Hawaii
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RELATING TO DIVERSIFIED AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

PURPOSE

This report complies with Senate Concurrent Resolution 208, SD1, HD1, Session Laws of Hawaii (SLH) 2005, and presents the findings of efforts taken towards successful co-existence among the organic, conventional & biotech sectors within Hawaii's agricultural community. Senate Concurrent Resolution 208, SD1, HD1 established that the Legislature supports the agricultural industry's promotion of choice of farming methods, practices, and crops; and recognizes the important economic role of diversified agriculture and co-existence among its sectors.

BACKGROUND

Agriculture is an important contributor to the State's overall economic health. In order to sustain the growth of agriculture, the industry must continue to evolve and expand its markets. Successful diversification of agriculture in Hawaii requires that farmers be given the opportunity to make choices regarding crops and production methods used to be competitive in chosen markets. Each farmer must make the most productive use of resources to attain success.

In response to concern that production systems in agriculture may not be compatible (i.e., conventional farming versus organic farming), the 2005 Legislature requested that a dialogue be established between the sectors to promote understanding; and that a process be developed to provide a framework of successful co-existence. The goal of this effort is the mutual success and prosperity for agricultural producers including organic, conventional, and biotech farmers in Hawaii.

SUMMARY

Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation brought stakeholders together to initiate a dialogue, the purpose of which was to develop best practices for coexistence and management plans. The following is a summary of their efforts:

- A planning committee was formed to outline discussion topics and desirable outcomes for six meetings with farmers and interested parties. These meetings are scheduled to take place from September 2005 until July 2006.
- The first two meetings were held on September 9, 2005 and October 27, 2005.
- Lily Bloom Domingo was contracted to facilitate and record the meetings. She has kept the group on track and accurately recorded the group's discussions.

- This report describes the planning process and progress of the coexistence discussions. Details and content of the discussions will be publicly disclosed at a later date upon review and approval of the meeting participants.

Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) participated in the planning of discussion sessions and provided funding and resources to support this process. Federal funds were received by HDOA from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS), to pay for the facilitation of these meetings. HDOA also requested administrators of the federal programs involved in the regulation of organic and biotech agriculture to participate in the forum.

PROJECT DETAILS

1. Purpose

The purpose of these meetings is to initiate conversations that will identify common ground among organic, conventional and biotechnology farmers that will allow the industry to forge a strong voice for agriculture and work together to preserve and develop Hawaii's agricultural industry. Farmers in Hawaii were invited to participate in the discussions, and other interested parties were invited to observe.

2. Progress

- a. A planning committee was formed to organize and steer the coexistence discussions. The planning meeting included representatives from the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, the Hawaii Agriculture Research Center (HFBF), The College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA), and other members of the agriculture industry.

Lily Bloom Domingo, Director of Training and Consulting Services at the Hawaii Community Services Council, was contracted to moderate and record the discussions among the farmers. Funding for Ms. Domingo was secured from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) via HDOA. Meredith Berry was contracted to help organize the meetings and relay information and announcements to meeting participants. Funding for Dr. Berry is covered by the HFBF. Meeting facilities and equipment have been provided by the HDOA and CTAHR.

- b. Six meetings were planned to conduct the coexistence discussions. The meetings were designed to focus on the following topics:

Meeting 1: Purpose - participants representing organic, conventional, and biotech farming practices shared information on several topics for the purpose of informing each other of issues that are important to each farming practice so that common ground among them may be identified. The topics addressed included:

The definition of each growing method
The challenges of each method
The benefits of each method
The marketing and business challenges of each method
The marketing and business benefits of each method
The marketing projections of each method and what is needed to reach those projections

Meeting 2: Purpose – Speakers from the USDA discussed the regulations of biotech and organic farming practices, as well as food safety regulations that affect all farmers.

Meeting 3: To be determined.

Meeting 4: To be determined.

Meeting 5: To be determined.

Meeting 6: Optional

- c. The first meeting (Phase 1) was held on September 9, 2005 at the Plant Quarantine Station.
1. Farmers using organic, conventional, and biotech farming practices in attendance included Routh Bolomet, Melanie Bondera, Kimberly Clark, Una Greenaway, Grant Hamachi, Adolf Helm, Ken Kamiya, Paul Koehler, Doug MacClure, Vincent Mina, Loren Mochida, Myrone Murakami, Dean Okimoto, Roy Oyama, Richard Spiegel, Sarah Styan, and Warren Watanabe.
 2. Observers and committee members in attendance included Meredith Berry, Steve Fukuda, Joy Gold, Cindy Goldstein, Jason Knoble, Brian Miyamoto, Mae Nakahata, Carol Okada, Bob Osgood, Neil Reimer, Alan Takemoto, Hector Valenzuela, Ania Wieczorek.
 3. This meeting allowed farmers to understand the methods and challenges of other farming practices and to identify issues that all farmers face. Farmers were able to openly present and discuss their methods. The purpose was to inform, and not debate, each other. Additionally, issues that required more information before they could be discussed in depth were documented in a “wall safe.” These topics will be researched and discussed at Meeting 3.
- d. The second meeting (Phase 2) was held on October 27, 2005 at CTAHR, UHM. This meeting covered the USDA policies and regulations concerning biotech and organic farming practices and food safety regulations.

1. Farmers in attendance included Routh Bolomet, Melanie Bondera, Una Greenaway, Adolf Helm, Paul Koehler, Doug MacClure, Vincent Mina, Loren Mochida, Myrone Murakami, Delan Perry, Al Santoro, Warren Watanabe.
2. Observers and committee members in attendance included Meredith Berry, Robert Boesch, Donna Ching, Sandra Kunimoto, Matthew Loke, Brian Miyamoto, Carol Okada, Alan Takemoto, Hector Valenzuela, Doug Vincent, Stephanie Whalen, Ania Wieczorek.
3. Speakers from the USDA included Dr. John Turner and Keith Jones.
 - a. Dr. John Turner is the Director of the Policy Coordination Division, Biotechnology Regulatory Services, United States Department of Agriculture – Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS), located in Riverdale, Maryland. Dr. Turner discussed factors used to determine potential hazards and risk assessments of biotech crops. Dr. Turner also gave an overview of the regulatory roles of the FDA, EPA, and USDA – including the USDA’s Biotechnology Regulatory Services. Dr. Turner also outlined the application process for field testing and obtaining non-regulated status for biotech crops.
 - b. Keith Jones is the Director of Program Development, National Organic Program, United States Department of Agriculture, located in Washington, D.C. Mr. Jones discussed some of the requirements and allowances involved in organic certification.
 - c. Albert Louie is the Seed Certification Director and Food Safety Coordinator, Quality Assurance Division, Hawaii State Department of Agriculture. Mr. Louie described the seed certification and inspection process for the Association of Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA). Mr. Louie also outlined the process and benefits of the voluntary food safety program in Hawaii.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 208, SD1, HD1, was crafted with the intention of bringing together farmers in Hawaii to promote the choice of farming methods, practices and crops. The issues are complex but not unique to agriculture in Hawaii. The dialogue is important as agriculture in Hawaii transition to more diversified production statewide to meet local and as well as export market demands. A public informational briefing will be scheduled at the completion of this review and discussion process.

This report describes the content and participation of meetings one and two. Currently, the planning committee is identifying possible best management practice (BMP) issues that can be discussed in further detail in the third meeting scheduled for January 2006. The committee is also planning to research questions that arose in the first two

meetings for further discussion in January. In meetings 4 and 5, participants are expected to identify BMPs that will allow successful coexistence of farming practices in Hawaii. Finally, a minority report will be written to include views differing from the majority of the group. A public hearing to announce the results of this process will be held upon the completion of the discussions. Agreement among farmers on how to grow their products using methods of their choice without feeling impeded by a neighboring business is a challenge. The issues are complex but not unique to agriculture in Hawaii. The dialogue is important as agriculture in Hawaii transitions to more diversified production statewide to meet local and as well as export market demands. Determining these best management practices is important for the future success of the agriculture in Hawaii.