



**BENJAMIN J. CAYETANO**  
GOVERNOR



Department  
of Agriculture  
State of Hawaii

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Governor Signs Two Bills to Spur Research and Economic Development**

Two bills designed to stimulate new business ventures for commercial aquaculture farming and biotechnology research in Hawaii were signed into law today by Governor Ben Cayetano.

"These landmark bills take a major step in responding to Hawaii's growing development of ocean aquaculture and biotechnology, two lucrative industries with unlimited potential," said the Governor.

ACT 176 allows the state to establish procedures to lease parts of the open ocean for commercial aquaculture farming. Meanwhile, Act 177 enables government to streamline the process for importing microorganisms into Hawaii with particular focus in making it easier for the research community to remain competitive with biotechnology research worldwide. Both measures were supported by the administration.

#### **ACT 176**

#### **OCEAN LEASING - Senate Bill 1321 (S.D. 2, H.D. 2, C.D. 1)**

This new ocean leasing law is a cooperative venture between the Departments of Agriculture (DOA) and Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). Approval of leases and site selections will fall under the jurisdiction of the Board of Land and Natural Resources. The State Department of Agriculture's Aquaculture Development Program will take the lead in developing Hawaii's ocean farming industry.

"We have so many advantages in being an island state," said Governor Cayetano. "We can optimize the use of natural resources and utilize our talents to become leaders in a growing ocean farming industry."

"In ocean aquaculture, we have already received interest from two companies that are looking to start-up commercial production of moi and black pearls in the open ocean," added James J. Nakatani, DOA Chairman. "And as progress is made in species development for onaga and opakapaka, the commercial production of these local favorites could be made possible in the very near future."

"Currently, ocean aquaculture is being done successfully, profitably and sustainably in many areas of the world. With our valuable marine resources and industry experts, we in Hawaii now have a valuable commodity to entice new businesses to the islands. This has the potential to be a multimillion dollar industry with positive economic impacts felt not only by sea going fish farmers, but by many persons in Hawaii who make their living on and under the ocean. There can be a fine balance between economic development and the safeguard of our environment," concluded Nakatani.

**ACT 177**

**STREAMLINING IMPORT PROCESS FOR MICROORGANISMS - House Bill 336 (H.D. 1, S.D. 1, C.D. 1)**

This new law will create a "Microorganism Import Certification Program" that allows a certified importer to bring in and use microorganisms without going through a permit process. These microorganisms have undergone federal and state review for entry into Hawaii. In addition, stringent penalties have been established for those who intentionally circumvents the requirements for certified importers. This program will be self-sustaining through the assessment of fees.

Another important provision of the law would allow the issuance of an emergency permit for a microorganism that would normally be prohibited in case of an emergency or disaster.

"This law is a breakthrough in developing a system that expedites the import permit process for microorganisms," said Governor Cayetano. "While at the same time, it protects the state from unwanted microorganisms. Changes to Hawaii's 25-year-old quarantine law are due in large part to the combined efforts of state lawmakers, the University of Hawaii, and the biotechnology industry."

"With increased flexibility to conduct research and development activities, this new process levels the plain field for local researchers to compete in advancing Hawaii's biotechnology industry," stressed Dr. H. Michael Harrington, Interim Dean for the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, University of Hawaii.

Media contact for ocean leasing: DOA Aquaculture Development Program Manager John Corbin at 587-0030; DLNR Land Division Administrator Dean Uchida at 587-0446.

Media contact for streamlining import process for microorganisms: DOA Plant Industry Administrator Dr. Lyle Wong at 973-9520; University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agricultural Interim Dean Dr. H. Michael Harrington at 956-8234.

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