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Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2025
9:30 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1393
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS**

Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1393. This bill aims to revitalize and strengthen the agricultural statistics program by collecting valuable data on local agricultural interests and allocating appropriate funding. The Department of Agriculture (Department) is in strong support of this important initiative.

The Department acknowledges the significance of providing timely, accurate, and relevant statistics to support agricultural producers and policy makers with essential data for both short-term decision making and long-term strategic planning. Specifically, the Department seeks to provide critical insights into the market arrivals of agricultural commodities, detailing volume and price by source, including various islands, the continental U.S., and foreign countries.

Furthermore, as food systems continue to evolve within the islands and regional food production centers are established, the Department remains deeply committed to supporting these positive developments to enhance food security across the state. This initiative, which aims to modernize the collection, compilation, analysis, and



HB 1393 (02-07-2025)

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dissemination of market data, will provide valuable support to local farmers, ranchers, and allied operators, helping them strengthen food production and improve their income levels.

Finally, the Department appreciates the Legislature's support in this bill to help establish and fund the essential positions dedicated to this important initiative.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRACTICES

STATE OF HAWAII
NO. 1 CAPITOL DISTRICT BUILDING
250 SOUTH HOTEL STREET, SUITE 107
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: 808-586-1400 FAX: 808-586-1412
EMAIL: oip@hawaii.gov

To: House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

From: Carlotta Amerino, Director

Date: February 7, 2025, 9:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

Re: Testimony on H.B. No. 1393
Relating to Agricultural Statistics

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill, which would establish and fund an agricultural statistics program. The Office of Information Practices (OIP) offers **comments and a proposed amendment** for the proposed section 148-__, HRS, titled Exemption, starting at bill page 5 line 8.

Subsection (a) of the Exemption section makes all data and information the Department of Agriculture collects through the agricultural statistics program exempt from public disclosure under the Uniform Information Practices Act (UIPA), chapter 92F, HRS. Subsection (b) goes on to reiterate that all data collected by the program is confidential, but provides an exception: it is confidential “unless the information has been transformed into a statistical or aggregate form that does not allow the identification of the person who supplied particular information.” Thus, even though subsection (b) does not bar disclosure of information in statistical or aggregate form confidential, subsection (a) arguably exempts that information from public disclosure under the UIPA.

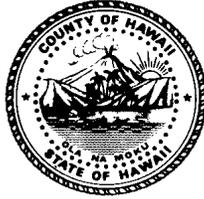
To avoid the potential conflict between subsections (a) and (b) and to clarify that statistical or aggregated information should not allow identification of any

individual person or entity (not limited to those who supplied information), **OIP respectfully recommends that this Committee amend** the Exemption section starting at bill page 5, line 8, by replacing it with the following:

§148- Exemption. Data and information collected by the department of agriculture for the purposes of this part or collected, compiled, and stored in the agricultural statistics program shall be confidential and shall not be subject to discovery or to disclosure under chapter 92F; provided that nothing in this section shall preclude disclosure of such information in a statistical or aggregate form that does not allow the identification of an individual person or entity. Unauthorized review, use, disclosure, or distribution of data shall be strictly prohibited. The State shall not be liable for any dissemination of information collected, compiled, or stored for use in the agricultural statistics program.

Thank you for considering OIP's testimony.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



Benson Medina
Director

Dennis Lin
Deputy Director

County of Hawai'i

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

25 Aupuni Street, Room 1301 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720-4252
(808) 961-8366 • Fax (808) 935-1205
E-mail: chresdev@co.hawaii.hi.us

February 5, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

FRIDAY, February 7, 2025
9:30 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325

TESTIMONY ON HB 1393
Relating to Agricultural Statistics

Aloha Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch and Members of the Committee,

I am Benson Medina, Director of the Department of Research and Development, County of Hawai'i. One of the agricultural objectives of this department is to "support research, development, control, and education that improves agricultural production, quality, resilience, and producer viability."

The County of Hawai'i provides written testimony in **SUPPORT of HB1393**, to revitalize and enhance the Department of Agriculture's agricultural statistics program to collect data on local agricultural interests.

Access to comprehensive agricultural statistics and market data would have a significant positive impact on Hawai'i's agriculture industry. The 2021 Hawai'i County Agriculture and Food Systems Study identified the need for increased market research and value chain analysis to better understand consumer demand and guide marketing efforts for producers. Stakeholders expressed frustration over the lack of available data on market demand, which makes it difficult for farmers to plan production. At the same time, without accurate and timely data, State and County agencies are unable to track statewide progress towards key local food systems goals.

Ultimately, this initiative strengthens the economic stability of Hawai'i's agricultural sector by equipping producers with actionable data to optimize their business strategies. Additionally, HB1393 provides State and County policymakers and decision-makers with information needed to direct public resources to benefit the agricultural sector and the public and track progress on statewide goals. This increased efficiency helps ensure that agriculture remains a reliable source of income; HB1393 supports both the agricultural community and the broader economic well-being of Hawai'i.

Thank you for championing agriculture in Hawai'i and for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB1393.

May 1, 2023

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Respectfully,

Benson Medina
Director, Research and Development
County of Hawai'i



Email: communications@ulupono.com

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS
Friday, February 7, 2025 — 9:30 a.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports HB 1393, Relating to Agricultural Statistics.

Dear Chair Kahaloa and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mariah Yoshizu, and I am the Government Affairs Associate at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food, renewable energy and clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

Ulupono supports HB 1393, which requires the Department of Agriculture to revitalize and enhance the agricultural statistics program to collect data on local agricultural interests.

Local farmers and ranchers have faced many challenges in recent years — from pandemic-related market disruptions to inflation and rising operational costs. To help agricultural businesses survive and grow, we support improving access to crucial data, as proposed in this bill.

Recognizing its pivotal role, the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture last year launched a massive statewide outreach effort — its most extensive in recent memory — to identify the industry's top priorities and long-standing challenges. Through this process, Hawai'i's agricultural producers and affiliated organizations shared intimate experiences and insights on the most pressing needs. A recurring theme was the pressing need for accessible, current data.

This bill relating to agricultural statistics seeks to drive forward a key initiative supporting Hawai'i's agricultural community and advancing the state's broader goals for sustainable and economically viable agriculture.

Ulupono supports this bill because having accurate, timely data is essential for informed decision-making and will provide invaluable support to farmers to scale up their operations. The enhanced agricultural statistics program will provide the data framework needed to support the growth and sustainability of Hawai'i's agricultural sector for years to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Mariah Yoshizu
Government Affairs Associate

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 7, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 1393
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:30 AM

Aloha Chair Kahaloa, Vice-Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports HB 1393, which requires the Department of Agriculture to revitalize and enhance the agricultural statistics program to collect data on local agricultural interests. Accurate and up-to-date agricultural statistics are essential for effective policy development, informed decision-making, and the long-term success of Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers.

Reliable agricultural data is essential for informed decision-making, policy development, and ensuring the success of Hawai'i's farmers and ranchers. Accurate and up-to-date agricultural statistics provide critical insights into crop production, market trends, land use, and economic contributions of the agricultural sector. This information is vital for farmers, policymakers, researchers, and industry stakeholders to plan effectively, allocate resources, and respond to emerging challenges such as supply chain disruptions, climate variability, and market fluctuations.

HB 1393 ensures that Hawai'i has a consistent and credible source of agricultural data by modernizing and expanding the agricultural statistics program. The bill strengthens the Department of Agriculture's role in gathering and analyzing data, helping to identify trends in crop production, livestock numbers, farm technology use, and other key factors that impact the agricultural sector. The bill also prioritizes information on agricultural theft, aquaculture, and other areas that have lacked sufficient data collection in the past.

In addition to benefiting individual farmers, improving agricultural data collection will allow the state and counties to allocate public resources more effectively, develop policies that support local food production, and create economic opportunities in agriculture. Enhanced data collection will also support programs such as Farm to School and Farm to State by providing better insights into local production capacity and supply chain logistics.

To ensure the success of this effort, we encourage the Department of Agriculture to collaborate with national and local entities, including the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience, and agriculture organizations. Expanding partnerships and leveraging modern electronic data collection methods will enhance the program's ability to provide timely and actionable information for Hawai'i's agricultural community.

We urge the committee to pass HB 1393 to revitalize and enhance Hawai'i's agricultural statistics program, supporting informed decision-making and the continued growth of local agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



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Aloha Chair Kahaloe, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House Agriculture & Food Systems Committee,

The Hawaii Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFU supports HB1187.**

HB1187 aligns with the mission to bolster local agriculture and support Hawaiian farmers by phasing out the purchase of imported flowers and lei by state departments and agencies. By prioritizing the procurement of locally grown flowers, this bill reduces the carbon footprint associated with importing flowers from other regions. This legislation will also have positive economic impacts, stimulating job creation and economic growth within the agricultural sector. The transition to local purchasing acts as an investment in Hawaii's future agriculture, encouraging younger generations to engage in farming and agricultural entrepreneurship.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawaii Farmers Union



February 5 2025

To: Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Kusch , and Members of the House Committee Agriculture and Food System

Subject: **HB 1393** - Relating agricultural statistics

I strongly **support** this bill to revitalize the Department of Agriculture's agricultural statistics program and its appropriation. This legislation is crucial for Hawaii's agricultural future and its timely passage is essential.

Hawaii's agricultural sector faces complex challenges that require a unified vision and strategic approach. Accurate and timely data is fundamental to sound decision-making and this bill directly addresses the critical need for improved agricultural statistics. Modernizing data collection, analysis, and dissemination through electronic methods, is vital for gaining insights into agricultural goods movement in Hawai'i, including production, sales, and market trends. This modernized system will complement existing resources like the valuable data already provided by the Department of Agriculture's website (<https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/add/market-analysis-news-branch/>) and allow for more specific and targeted data collection that is useful for a wide range of stakeholders.

A strong agricultural statistics program will provide numerous benefits including:

- **Empowered Producers:** Access to reliable data on production, distribution, and sales empowers producers to make informed decisions about planting, scaling, and market opportunities, optimizing strategies and expanding market reach.
- **Informed Policymakers:** Crucial data enables evidence-based policymaking, allowing for better resource allocation to support agriculture and the community.
- **Support for "Go B.I.G. for Agriculture":** This bill directly supports the initiative by the Department of Agriculture by providing actionable data to boost local product availability and expand market capacity.

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2025, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



The appropriation is essential for program implementation, supporting key positions, resources, and contracted specialty surveys to address critical data gaps. Investing in this program is an investment in Hawaii's agricultural future.

I propose one amendment to Section 148- Collaboration. The current "may collaborate" should be changed to "shall collaborate." Effective data collection and analysis require the participation and expertise of all stakeholders including national and local agencies, universities, and industry partners. Mandating collaboration ensures a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of Hawaii's agricultural sector. The department cannot fully capture all data unless all stakeholders take part of the solution.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to favorably pass this bill with the proposed amendment and approve its appropriation. This is a vital step towards strengthening Hawaii's agricultural sector, promoting food security and building a more resilient and sustainable future.

Mahalo,
Lea iaea & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

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HB-1393

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 10:48:56 AM

Testimony for AGR on 2/7/2025 9:30:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| penny levin | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

In support.