

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

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Lt. Governor



SHARON HURD
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2025
2:00 p.m.
CONFERENCE ROOM 329 AND VIDEOCONFERENCE

HOUSE BILL NO. 496 HD1
RELATING TO MAMAKI TEA

Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Chun and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 496 HD1. This bill imposes labeling requirements for mamaki tea grown in the State.

The Department of Agriculture (DOA) strongly supports this bill. The growing demand for Hawaiian mamaki tea as a brand should be protected and promoted. This bill provides mamaki tea the protection afforded to other valuable agricultural crops like coffee and macadamia nuts.

DOA respectfully requests that funds be added to this bill to support a Measurement Standards Inspector V SR-19 \$65,000, to support and restore enforcement capability for labeling regulations for Hawaii products such as mamaki tea, coffee, and macadamia nuts. The inspector will inspect and enforce the new laws.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



HB-496-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 1:55:05 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/11/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
RICHARD COHEN	State Of Hawaii Dept. of Agriculture	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Testimony submitted separately by The Dept. of Agriculture on behalf of Chairperson Sharon Hurd.

I am available to answer questions from the Measurement Standards Branch.



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February 11, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

TESTIMONY ON HB 496, HD1
RELATING TO MĀMAKI TEA

Conference Room 329 & Videoconference
2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Chun, 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 496, HD1, which prohibits the use of certain words that can be used on the label of a consumer package that contains or includes tea or dried leaves from the plant *Pipturus albidus*, unless one hundred per cent of the tea or dried leaves were grown in the State.

Māmaki, a Hawaiian endemic shrub, is only found in Hawai'i which makes it uniquely Hawaiian. It can be found as a bush, shrub, or tree and its leaves are used to make herbal tea. Māmaki has cultural and medicinal significance and is growing in popularity in local and global markets for its health benefits.

The Māmaki tea industry is fairly new, so we must protect this culturally important agricultural crop from deceptive or misleading labels. Hawai'i's Māmaki growers work hard to cultivate this unique crop, often on small-scale farms that contribute to the local economy and preserve agricultural traditions. Proper labeling requirements ensure that the benefits of Hawai'i's māmaki tea industry go to these dedicated farmers, not misleading competitors.

This measure is an important step in preserving the integrity of Hawai'i's agricultural products, protecting local farmers, and ensuring that consumers can make informed decisions about the origins of the products they purchase.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



February 7, 2025

Subject: Testimony on HB496 HD1 – Relating to Māmaki Tea Labeling

Aloha, Chair Kahaloa, Vice Chair Chun, and Members of the House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce,

Hawai'i Food+ Policy **strongly supports HB496**, which establishes clear and enforceable labeling requirements for māmaki tea to ensure that products marketed as containing Hawaiian-grown māmaki are authentically sourced from the state. This bill is essential for protecting local farmers, ensuring consumer transparency, and preserving the cultural and economic integrity of Hawai'i's growing māmaki tea industry.

Māmaki (*Pipturus albidus*), a plant endemic to Hawai'i, holds significant cultural, medicinal, and ecological value. Its unique properties have led to a surge in demand in both local and global markets. However, the absence of precise labeling requirements has allowed non-Hawaiian māmaki tea products to be falsely marketed as locally grown, posing a direct threat to the integrity of the industry.

The Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) has testified that protecting Hawai'i-grown agricultural products is critical to ensuring their value is not diluted by misleading labeling practices (HDOA, 2025). Similar concerns have arisen with other high-value Hawaiian crops, such as coffee and macadamia nuts, where imported products have been falsely marketed under Hawaiian branding—deceiving consumers and undermining the efforts of local farmers.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB) has emphasized that small-scale farmers cultivating māmaki rely on the authenticity of their products to sustain their businesses (2025). Without proper labeling protections, the industry faces economic harm, loss of market trust, and unfair competition from companies blending imported tea leaves while misleadingly using Hawaiian branding.

Beyond economic concerns, this bill strengthens Hawai'i's agricultural sustainability efforts by reinforcing the state's commitment to supporting local industries, enhancing food security, and protecting Native Hawaiian crops from commercial exploitation. Ensuring that consumers can trust that products labeled as Hawaiian-grown are truly sourced from Hawai'i will bolster the

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.



credibility of the local agricultural sector and encourage investment in sustainable farming practices.

While HB496 HD1 is necessary, its success will depend on effective enforcement. We recommend allocating funding for an enforcement officer within the HDOA to ensure compliance, as requested in the previous testimony, supporting similar labeling laws. This will help prevent misuse, fraudulent marketing, and consumer deception, ultimately reinforcing the integrity of Hawai'i's agricultural products.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the legislature to pass HB496 HD1 to protect the integrity of Hawai'i-grown mānaki tea, support local farmers, and ensure honest labeling practices for consumers. We appreciate the time and consideration you are giving to this important matter.

Mahalo,
The Hawai'i Food+ Policy Team

References

Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA). (2025). Testimony on HB496 – Relating to Mānaki Tea Labeling. Submitted to the House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems on January 29, 2025.

Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). (2025). Economic Impact of Labeling Laws on Specialty Crops in Hawai'i. Internal Report.

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LATE

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Chun, and Members of the House Consumer Protection & Commerce Committee,

The Hawai'i 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 strongly supports HB496.**

Hawaii's specialty crops, including māmaki (*Pipturus albidus*), hold cultural, ecological, and economic significance. Establishing clear labeling requirements aligns with global best practices in agricultural branding and food authenticity. Just as Kona coffee must meet strict origin requirements, māmaki tea deserves similar protections to prevent misleading marketing and preserve its value. Labeling laws prevent deception, ensure authenticity, and protect the market value of locally grown crops.

Preserving the Integrity of Hawaii-Grown Māmaki

Māmaki is endemic to Hawaii and deeply rooted in Hawaiian traditions. A 100% Hawaii-grown requirement ensures that only authentic, locally sourced māmaki can be labeled as "Māmaki Tea," just as appellation laws protect other specialty crops.

Preventing Deceptive Marketing Practices

Many tea companies add minimal amounts of māmaki to blends yet still market them as "Māmaki Tea." This misleads consumers while allowing processors and out-of-state businesses to profit from the Hawaiian name at the expense of local farmers. Restricting the use of "Māmaki," "Hawaii," and "Hawaiian" to 100% Hawaii-grown products ensures truth in labeling and fair competition.

Ensuring Farmers, Not Just Processors, Benefit from Māmaki's Growth

As demand for māmaki rises, it is crucial that farmers—not just processors—profit from its success. Without protections, processors and value-added product makers could dominate the industry, leaving growers with minimal returns. By securing clear origin labeling now, H.B. 496 ensures that Hawaii's māmaki farmers remain the primary beneficiaries of this burgeoning industry.

HB496 HD1 is a proactive measure that protects Hawaii's māmaki farmers, strengthens agricultural branding, and prevents deceptive labeling. HFU strongly supports this bill and urges its passage to safeguard authenticity, support local farmers, and uphold Hawaii's reputation for premium specialty products.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin

Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union