

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
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**  
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD**  
**CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2025**  
**1:01 P.M.**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM 224**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 858, H.D. 1**  
**RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS**

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 858, H.D. 1. This bill aims to establish the agricultural statistics program in statute and allocate appropriate funding. The Department of Agriculture (Department) **strongly supports** this important initiative.

The Department acknowledges the significance of providing timely, accurate, and relevant statistics to support agricultural production, marketing, logistics, investment, planning, and executive decision-making, with the goal of revitalizing and reversing the decline in value of Hawai'i's agricultural industries.

Due to the inherently high risks associated with agricultural activities, a greater amount of data and information is essential to help mitigate, if not fully manage, these challenges. As Peter Drucker, widely regarded as the "father of modern management," famously stated, "*You can't manage what you don't measure.*"

Furthermore, as food systems continue to evolve within the counties and regional food production centers are established, the Department remains committed to



supporting these positive developments to strengthen food security across the state. This initiative, which facilitates the collection, compilation, analysis, and dissemination of market data at the country level, will provide valuable support to local farmers and ranchers, helping them enhance food production, and improve their income levels.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.  
Mayor



Benson Medina  
Director

Dennis Lin  
Deputy Director

## County of Hawai'i

### DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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March 7, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

MONDAY, March 10, 2025  
1:01 PM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 224

TESTIMONY ON HB 858 HD1  
Relating to Agricultural Statistics

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards 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 or reduces the impact of pests or disease on agricultural crops, livestock, forests, or the community."

The County of Hawai'i provides written testimony in **SUPPORT of HB858 HD1**, to establish the agricultural statistics program in statute and appropriate funds for the program.

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 in Hawai'i County. 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, HB858 HD1 provides State and County policymakers and decision-makers with information needed to track statewide goals and direct public resources to benefit the agricultural sector and the public. This increased efficiency helps ensure that agriculture remains a reliable source of income; HB858 HD1 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 HB858 HD1**.

Respectfully,

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



Email: [communications@ulupono.com](mailto:communications@ulupono.com)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
Monday, March 10, 2025 — 1:01 p.m.

**Ulupono Initiative supports HB 858 HD 1, Relating to Agricultural Statistics.**

Dear Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

My name is Micah Munekata, and I am the Director of Government Affairs 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 858 HD 1**, 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,

Micah Munekata  
Director of Government Affairs

*Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i*



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759  
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March 10, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

**TESTIMONY ON HB 858, HD1**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Conference Room 224 & Videoconference  
1:01 PM

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice-Chair Richards, 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 858, HD1**, which establishes the agricultural statistics program in statute and appropriates funds for its implementation.

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.

A formalized agricultural statistics program within the Department of Agriculture will ensure that Hawai'i has a consistent and credible source of data to support agricultural growth. This will help:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



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Kaua'i

Aloha Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Environment Committee,

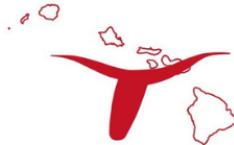
The Hawai'i Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFU supports HB858.**

HB858 marks a significant advancement for Hawaii's agricultural sector by revitalizing and enhancing the agricultural statistics program within the Department of Agriculture. This initiative aims to systematically gather, analyze, and report data on local agricultural activities, thereby empowering stakeholders with the critical insights needed to advance our local food systems and bolster sustainable agriculture practices. By establishing a robust framework for data collection, this bill has the potential to transform how agricultural policy and investment decisions are made in Hawaii, ensuring they are grounded in comprehensive and accurate information.

While the bill's focus on transportation data currently emphasizes fresh fruits and vegetables, there is a compelling need to expand this scope to encompass other vital agricultural products such as livestock, aquaculture, and traditional Hawaiian crops. This broader coverage would provide a more holistic understanding of the state's agricultural landscape, enabling a comprehensive approach to strategic planning. Furthermore, the allocation of significant resources—including funding for personnel and infrastructure—warrants the inclusion of periodic audits to maintain transparency and efficiency. Encouraging partnerships with local agricultural organizations and cooperatives could also enhance data collection efforts, aligning them with the needs of farmers and fostering a collaborative approach to knowledge sharing. By making these enhancements, HB858 can further solidify its role in supporting sustainable agricultural practices and empowering Hawaii's farmers with the data-driven insights they need to thrive.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin  
Advocacy Director  
Hawai'i Farmers Union



Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

**HB858 HD1**  
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Monday, March 10, 2025, 1:01PM  
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **supports HB585 HD1** which requires the Department of Agriculture to revitalize and enhance the agricultural statistics program to collect data on local agricultural interests.

Comprehensive, up-to-date data is essential for both agricultural producers and our state's decision makers. This allows us to ensure we are making the best decisions to support agriculture and able to maneuver in the right direction when faced with challenges such as supply chain disruption, weather events, or market variability. Understanding the landscape of agriculture in Hawaii is critical in directing the limited resources available. HCC has often searched for information that is not available, and we support a revitalization of the agricultural statistics program at DOA.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Our member ranchers represent over 60,000 head of beef cows; more than 75% of all the beef cows in the State. Ranchers are the stewards of over 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

Nicole Galase  
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council  
Managing Director





March 9, 2025

To: Chair Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair Tim Richards III, and the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Subject: **HB 858 HD1**, Relating to Agricultural Statistics

Aloha,

I am testifying in **support** for **HB 858 HD1** which asks to revitalize the Agricultural Statistics department within the Department of Agriculture (DOA) and asks to collaborate with local (and national) entities such as the University of Hawai'i CTAHR and University of Hawai'i economic research organizations. The measure states that DOA shall collect and maintain data and provide a report on intra- and inter-island transportation related to agriculture as well as key agricultural activities such as agricultural tourism, aquaculture, agricultural theft, and others.

Farmers are not only involved in farming. They are businessmen/women, owners, marketers, environmental stewards, scientists, researchers, cooks, and so much more. Agricultural statistics serve as a resource and information that helps farmers make informed decisions about their daily financial matters. These decisions impact multiple agencies within the food system at varying levels.

Hawai'i's unique geographical location, which consists of multiple islands within the State, poses a unique challenge for agriculture. According to reports published by the [Market Analysis and News Branch](#), the Department of Agriculture does not collect data on intra- and inter-island agriculture-related transportation, nor do they have any updates or reports on several of the key agricultural activities listed in the measure. These reports will impact Hawai'i society and Hawai'i Aloha Plus Challenge for local production goals, zero hunger, climate action, responsible consumption and production, and labor resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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**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.

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# HAWAI'I FOOD+ POLICY

Honolulu, HI 96813  
food@purplemaia.org

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

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# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

#### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Agriculture & Environment  
March 10, 2025 at 1:01 p.m.

By

Parwinder Grewal, Dean  
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience

And

Michael Bruno, Provost  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### HB 858 HD1 – RELATED TO AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony offering comments on HB 858 HD1 which requires the Department of Agriculture (HDOA) to revitalize and enhance the agricultural statistics program to collect data on local agricultural interests. Appropriates funds for the program.

We respectfully offer the following comments that CTAHR has increased its capacity in agricultural economics with two new agricultural economists hired last year and a third food and agricultural marketing faculty under recruitment currently. CTAHR already had two agricultural economists. With this expanded expertise and the opportunity to involve Extension Agents and undergraduate and graduate students in targeted data collection and analysis, CTAHR is planning to build a center on Food and Agricultural Marketing, Business and Economic Systems. CTAHR Dean has briefly discussed with HDOA Board Chair the possibility of collaborating. HDOA and CTAHR will work together to identify specific roles for each in building a comprehensive and impactful agricultural statistics program for the state.

CTAHR believes that the unique climate and agricultural practices of Hawai'i make it critical to collect specific agricultural data. Accurate and up-to-date ag statistics are crucial for all stakeholders in the Hawaiian agriculture sector to make informed decisions, develop effective policies, and monitor effective programs that will have large and far-reaching impacts.

A revitalized and enhanced Agricultural Statistics program could allow CTAHR to better respond to and serve the following needs of Hawaii's agricultural sector.

1. **Pest and Invasive Species Control:** Data on crop, livestock and forestry losses could guide research and extension priorities to address issues facing Hawaiian farmers such as crop diseases and pests.
2. **Productivity Analysis:** Yield data could allow researchers to identify ways in which yields could be sustained and increased.
3. **Weather Impact:** Impact on weather changes can be assessed to provide information for CTAHR to focus research and extension priorities for sustainability.
4. **Risk Management:** Consistent statistics help in identifying potential risks such as pests, diseases, and climate change impacts, enabling proactive measures to mitigate these risks.
5. **Resource Allocation:** Accurate data helps in the proper distribution of resources and funding.
6. **Crop Management:** Understanding which crops thrive in which geographic areas can guide farmers in crop selection and management practices.
7. **Unpredictability Management:** Data on pest outbreaks and management techniques can be shared, helping farmers across the state.
8. **Market Analysis:** Accurate data provides insights into market trends, consumption and supply, and price fluctuations, which help farmers plan their production and marketing strategies effectively.
9. **Research and Innovation:** Consistent data supports agricultural research and innovation, leading to the development of new technologies and practices that enhance productivity and sustainability.
10. **Market Planning:** Knowledge of what's grown and harvested can help in market planning and export strategies.
11. **Labor Market:** Analysis on labor supply and demand to mitigate labor shortage and cost of production.

In essence, consistent agricultural statistics are the backbone of a thriving agricultural sector, ensuring that all stakeholders have the information they need to drive progress and sustainability. As Hawai'i strives to increase food security within the islands, having accurate data on Hawaii's agricultural production will be key to achieving greater food security as we will need up-to-date production and consumption data.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

**HB-858-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/9/2025 10:19:23 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/10/2025 1:01:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kelcy Durbin        | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

I support HB858 HD1 to require the Department of Agriculture to revitalize and enhance the agricultural statistics program to collect data on local agricultural interests