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To: House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

From: Carlotta Amerino, Director

Date: February 12, 2025, 9:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

Re: Testimony on H.B. No. 858
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 4 line 11.

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, stating that it “shall be confidential and protected from discovery, production, and disclosure.” These provisions would thus make all the data collected and all the agricultural statistics generated under the program confidential, not just the information specific to identifiable farms or farmers. OIP understands a UIPA exception for data identifiable to an individual farm or business, but there appears to be no reason to exempt the aggregated data (i.e., not individually identifiable) collected through the new program, and the statistics generated from it, from public disclosure. Indeed, given the bill’s intent

for this program to provide agricultural producers with better information and provide decisionmakers with analyses related to agricultural production, it would be counterproductive to make all the information and analysis resulting from the program confidential.

OIP respectfully recommends that this Committee amend the Exemption section starting at bill page 4, line 11, 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.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Wednesday, February 12, 2025 at 9:30 a.m.

By

Parwinder Grewal, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience

And

Michael Bruno, Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 858 – RELATED TO AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 858 which establishes the agricultural statistics program in statute and appropriates funds for the program.

First, we respectfully offer an amendment on page 5, lines 11-12, to correct the name of the college to University of Hawaii college of tropical agriculture and human resilience (CTAHR). The renaming of the college was approved in October 2024 to better align CTAHR's name to its land-grant mission of improving the human condition and human use of natural resources through research, education and Cooperative Extension.

Second, 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 the 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.

We support the intent of HB 858 with the suggested amendment. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

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
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512
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TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025
9:30 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325

HOUSE BILL NO. 858
RELATING AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 858. 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

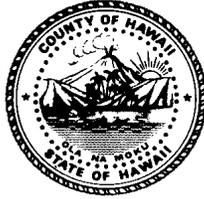


supporting these positive developments to strengthen food security across the state.

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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February 10, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

WEDNESDAY, February 12, 2025
9:30 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 325

TESTIMONY ON HB 858
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 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**, 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 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 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**.

Respectfully,

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



Email: communications@ulupono.com

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS
Wednesday, February 12, 2025 — 9:30 a.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports HB 858, 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 858, which establishes the agricultural statistics program in statute.

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



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e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

February 12, 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HB 858
RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:30 AM

Aloha Chair Kahaloe, 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 858, 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.



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2025**

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS
Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Chair
Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 12, 2025 9:30 AM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street**

RE: HB 858 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

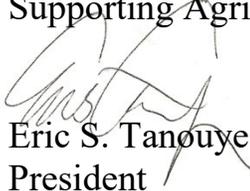
My name is Eric S. Tanouye and I am the President for the Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association. HFNA is a statewide umbrella organization with approximately 350 members. Our membership is made up with breeders, hybridizers, propagators, growers, shippers, wholesalers, retailers, educators, and the allied industry, which supports our efforts in agriculture.

The Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association (HFNA) **SUPPORTS House Bill 858**

It is important to have statistics and information to understand the current state of agriculture and what is needed. It helps us to understand what we need to improve and where we need help.

If you have any questions at this time, I would be happy to discuss them and can be reached by phone at 808-959-3535 ext 22, cell 960-1433 and email eric@greenpointnursery.com.

Supporting Agriculture and Hawaii,


Eric S. Tanouye
President

Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association



February 11 2025

To: Chair Kirstin Kahaloa, Vice Chair Matthias Kusch, and the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

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

Aloha,

I am testifying in **support** for HB 858 which asks to revitalize the Agricultural Statistics department within the Department of Agriculture (DOA). 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.

Mahalo,

Lea iaea & the Food+ Policy Team

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
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#fixourfoodsystem

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