

LINDA LINGLE
Governor



SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

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State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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**TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2008
9:00 A.M.
ROOM 325**

**HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 326
HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 270
REQUESTING THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE CONVENE A TASK FORCE
TO DEVISE A PLAN WITHIN ONE YEAR TO TIMELY EXPEDITE THE INTRODUCTION AND
DELIVERY OF HAWAIIAN CACAO TO THE MARKETPLACE**

Chairperson Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Concurrent Resolution No. 326 and House Resolution No. 270. The purpose of these resolutions is to request the Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) to convene a task force to devise a plan within one year to timely expedite the introduction and delivery of Hawaiian Cacao to the marketplace. The HDOA offers the following comments.

The cacao industry in Hawaii is in its infancy stage. We currently have about a dozen growers with total acreage of approximately 50 acres. The biggest producer, Dole Plantation in Waialua, has about 20 acres. Each acre generally produces between 800 and 1,000 pounds of dry seed.

The state recognizes the potential of this industry and had funded some \$100,000 in cacao-related research. Much of this research relates to growing and processing techniques to pursue high quality cacao production. Additionally, the Original Hawaiian Chocolate Company in Kona had received over \$400,000 in federal grants to expand chocolate production.

Hawaii cacao has great market potential, especially for the high-end culinary industry. Hawaii can become one of the unique locations in the world, in which the major infusion beverages – coffee, tea and cacao are grown. If a task force is being proposed, resources should be appropriated for this purpose.



Hawaii Farm Bureau

F E D E R A T I O N

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PH: (808)848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921

March 28, 2008

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

TESTIMONY ON
HCR 326 / HR 270

Chair Tsuji and committee members:

My name is Alan Takemoto, Executive Director, of the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, which is the largest non-profit general agriculture organization representing approximately 1,600 farm and ranch family members statewide.

The Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation (HFBF) supports HCR 326 / HR 270 requesting that the Department of Agriculture convene a task force to devise a plan within one year to timely expedite the introduction and delivery of Hawaii Cacao to the marketplace.

The cacao industry is a niche crop that has great potential in Hawaii. However, it does need additional support and guidance from the State and the entire agricultural industry for it to further expand and develop. Creating a task force to help organize the growers to improve research, market development and communication is needed. Our organization is willing to assist in this task force's effort to strengthen the cacao industry in Hawaii.

Thank you.



Food Company Hawaii

1116 Whitmore Avenue Wahiawa, Hawaii 96786

Honorable Cliff Tsuji, Chair, Committee on Agriculture
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 325
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HCR 326/HR 270 – Requesting that the Department of Agriculture Convene a Task Force to Devise a Plan within One Year to Timely Expedite the Introduction and Delivery of Hawaiian Cacao to the Marketplace – SUPPORT

House Committee on Agriculture, March 28, 2008, 9AM – Conference Room 325

Aloha Chair Tsuji and Members of the Committees:

I am Michael Conway, Manager of Agriculture for Dole Food Company Hawaii (“Dole”). Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of HCR 326/HR 270, to establish a Cacao Task Force.

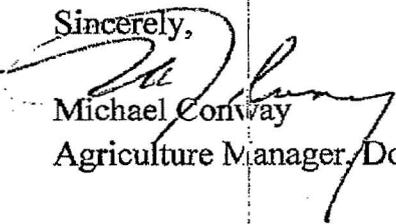
The establishment of a Cacao Task Force would be helpful in identifying problems and overcoming barriers that keep farmers out of production. These challenges include dissemination of knowledge required to economically cultivate, process and distribute cacao. Additionally regulations need to be established to protect the industry against introduction of cacao pests and diseases. There is also a need to establish and identify quality standards for certification to assist marketing cacao as a speciality product.

We are pleased to note that Waialua Chocolate, at 20 acres, is the largest commercial cacao farm in the country producing a world class chocolate. At the present time we are unable to process cocoa bean into chocolate due to a lack of critical mass. It is estimated that a minimum 300 producing acres is required to justify construction of a chocolate manufacturing facility here in the Islands. And while Dole is considering expansion of existing acreage it is felt that a growers program might be the best approach to rapidly expand a cacao industry. Waialua Chocolate has received high praise from world class chefs like Alan Wong and chocolatiers such as Stanton Ho and Felipe Padovani. The limited quantity of Waialua Chocolate has made it one of the most sought after local products.

Dole is fortunate to enjoy continuous agricultural operations in Hawai'i for more than 100 years. At one point in our history we were one of the largest sugar growers in the State. Today, in addition to cacao, Dole is one of Hawaii's largest pineapple growers and Waialua Coffee is also being farmed and processed on our North Shore properties. We also continue to lease much of our land to diversified agriculture farmers.

For these reasons we respectfully ask for your committee's favorable support of these resolutions. As always, we are grateful for the opportunity to share our views with you.

Sincerely,



Michael Conway

Agriculture Manager, Dole Food Company Hawaii