
HOUSE RESOLUTION

URGING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM AND THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO CONVENE A STUDY GROUP IN CONJUNCTION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COFFEE INDUSTRY FROM ALL THE ISLANDS OF THE STATE WHERE COFFEE IS GROWN, TO DELINEATE AND DISCUSS THE VARIOUS CHALLENGES TO THE HAWAII COFFEE INDUSTRY, AND TO PROPOSE A SYMPOSIUM FOR FURTHER INTENSE DISCUSSION OF THOSE ISSUES IN THE SUMMER OF 2019.

1 WHEREAS, the Department of Agriculture's Plant Industry
2 Division Plant Quarantine Branch prevents the introduction and
3 spread of harmful pests and diseases into the State, certifies
4 plants for export out of the State, and is also the State's
5 primary resource for information on importing plants, insects,
6 microorganisms, and non-domestic animals to Hawaii; and
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8 WHEREAS, the Department of Agriculture's Plant Quarantine
9 Program began more than one hundred years ago when, in 1888,
10 King David Kalakaua decreed that in order to protect the coffee
11 industry in Hawaii, new coffee plants would not be allowed into
12 the islands, and two years later, laws were enacted to prevent
13 the introduction of injurious insect pests and plant diseases;
14 and
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16 WHEREAS, the Plant Quarantine Branch is the State's first
17 line of defense in keeping pests out of the islands by
18 monitoring whether eggs of harmful insects hatch on imported
19 plants or if diseases that could jeopardize the health of other
20 plants, which may appear only after significant growth of plants
21 imported into the State; and
22

23 WHEREAS, the quarantine process differs based on the plant
24 being imported and procedurally, coffee germplasm and coffee
25 plants are required to go through a one-year quarantine process
26 to ensure that the significant and crucial coffee industry of
27 Hawaii is protected; and



1 WHEREAS, the State's process for acquiring an exemption
2 from the plant quarantine rules is a rigorous process, which is
3 overseen by numerous experts in multiple scientific fields, and
4 requires approval by the Board of Agriculture and the Governor;
5 and

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7 WHEREAS, from 2016 to 2017, according to the United States
8 Department of Agriculture, Hawaii produced more than 36,000,000
9 pounds of coffee cherry, nearly 2,000,000 pounds more than in
10 the previous year; and

11
12 WHEREAS, according to the United States Department of
13 Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Association, the
14 value of Hawaii's coffee crop stands at more than \$62,000,000,
15 with coffee cherry selling at \$1.71 per pound; and

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17 WHEREAS, Kona coffee is world renowned for its excellence
18 and it is one of Hawaii's most iconic commercial exports; and

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20 WHEREAS, the average Kona coffee farm is less than five
21 acres in size and approximately 5,000,000 trees currently
22 comprise the entire Kona coffee industry; and

23
24 WHEREAS, Kona Hills, LLC is financed by the Atlanta-based
25 investment company Domain Capital Advisors; and

26
27 WHEREAS, Kona Hills, LLC is seeking to establish an almost
28 1,900-acre coffee farm in Kealahou on which to plant 2,000,000
29 trees, which would be the largest coffee farm in the Kona region
30 of Hawaii Island; and

31
32 WHEREAS, Kona Hills, LLC plans to grow at least six
33 varieties of coffee, five of which are not currently farmed in
34 the Kona coffee district and would produce different flavor
35 profiles from the heritage Kona coffee profile which has been
36 developed by generations of Kona farmers; and

37
38 WHEREAS, Kona Hills, LLC had requested an exemption to the
39 Department of Agriculture's mandatory one-year quarantine period
40 to import 1,500,000 in-vitro coffee embryos from Costa Rica; and



1 WHEREAS, coffee rust is a prevalent agricultural disease
2 found on Costa Rican coffee farms; and
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4 WHEREAS, an outbreak of coffee rust could cripple the Kona
5 coffee industry; and
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7 WHEREAS, the original import plan and quarantine exemption
8 sought by Kona Hills, LLC could endanger the crop yields and
9 financial security of local Kona coffee farmers, but on March
10 21, 2018, representatives of Kona Hills, LLC indicated at a
11 public committee hearing of the House of Representatives
12 Committee on Agriculture that the company was no longer
13 requesting an exemption from the one-year quarantine period; and
14

15 WHEREAS, the Department of Agriculture in its written
16 testimony failed to mention that Kona Hills, LLC's request for
17 exemption had been withdrawn; and
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19 WHEREAS, at least two issues are raised by examining the
20 testimony and the discussion about the need for a quarantine of
21 coffee plants in any form being brought into Hawaii from another
22 state or another country; and
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24 WHEREAS, the Department of Agriculture is viewed as the
25 entity protecting the trademark of coffee produced and sold as
26 Kona Coffee; and
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28 WHEREAS, the definition of what constitutes "Kona Coffee"
29 has been raised by the existing use and proposed use of coffee
30 varieties other than the traditional coffee plants known as Kona
31 Typica which is allegedly a varietal originating in Guatemala;
32 and
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34 WHEREAS, *Coffea arabica* has been molecularly characterized
35 as a tetraploid species containing four sets of eleven
36 chromosomes and is reportedly the only species of the genus
37 *Coffea* to have forty-four chromosomes; and
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39 WHEREAS, the coffee industry is severely threatened by the
40 worldwide spread of a fungus *Hemilia vastatrix*, commonly
41 referred to as coffee rust; and



1 WHEREAS, to date the Hawaiian coffee industry has been free
2 of coffee rust; and

3
4 WHEREAS, it is anticipated that it is likely that coffee
5 rust will be present in the Hawaiian archipelago in the not too
6 distant future; and

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8 WHEREAS, attempts have been made to selectively breed
9 strains of different *Coffea arabica* varietals to be resistant to
10 *Hemilia vastatrix*; and

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12 WHEREAS, testimony at the March 21, 2018, hearing of the
13 Committee on Agriculture indicated that varietals at least
14 partially resistant to coffee rust are among the varietals
15 proposed to be imported to Hawaii by Kona Hills, LLC; and

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17 WHEREAS, it is not yet known how the flavor profiles of
18 coffee rust-resistant varietals might differ from Kona Typica
19 coffee; and

20
21 WHEREAS, new tools of genetic manipulation commonly grouped
22 under the term CRISPR, are viewed as a remarkable breakthrough
23 tool for genetic manipulation of the plant and animal genomes;
24 and

25
26 WHEREAS, the precision of the CRISPR system could enable
27 precise insertion of genetic elements conferring resistance to
28 coffee rust into coffee plants while preserving the genetic
29 elements which confer a specific flavor profile; and

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31 WHEREAS, there is strong resistance to utilizing such a
32 system on coffee plants in Hawaii because the coffee would be
33 viewed as a genetically modified organism; and

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35 WHEREAS, these many elements of the coffee industry bear
36 further urgent discussion; now, therefore,

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38 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
39 Twenty-ninth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
40 of 2018, that the University of Hawaii System and the Department
41 of Agriculture are requested to convene a study group in
42 conjunction with representatives of the coffee industry from all



1 the islands of the State where coffee is grown, to delineate and
2 discuss the various challenges to the Hawaii coffee industry,
3 and to propose a symposium for further intense discussion of
4 those issues in the summer of 2019; and
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6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a proposal for such a
7 symposium, including funding mechanisms and any requests for
8 funding, be presented by the University of Hawaii and Department
9 of Agriculture before December 1, 2018, to the Legislature for
10 the 2019 Regular Session; and
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12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Agriculture
13 is urged to reject any proposals for exemptions to its
14 quarantine rules regarding coffee until the proposed symposium
15 has convened and a report issued of the findings; and
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17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
18 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, President of the
19 University of Hawaii, Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture,
20 the manager of the Department of Agriculture's Plant Quarantine
21 Branch, all members of the Department of Agriculture Plant
22 Quarantine Branch Advisory Committee on Plants and Animals.

