
HOUSE RESOLUTION

URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO ESTABLISH A KONA AREA
AGRICULTURAL WORKING GROUP TO PROMOTE AGRICULTURE, ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT, AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

1 WHEREAS, a thriving and sustainable agriculture industry
2 serves as a critical component of Hawaii County's rural
3 lifestyle, character, and economy by producing food, fiber,
4 energy, and ornamentals for local consumption and export; and
5

6 WHEREAS, Hawaii island agriculture will continue to be a
7 stabilizing foundation of the local economy for the foreseeable
8 future; and
9

10 WHEREAS, agriculture exports to neighbor islands and the
11 North American and Asian continents provide a critical infusion
12 of money originating off-island; and
13

14 WHEREAS, the agriculture industry on the island of Hawaii
15 would greatly benefit from the availability of services that are
16 not currently being provided, such as improving food security by
17 encouraging the consumption of locally produced agricultural
18 goods, developing county-provided services to the agriculture
19 producers or processors at economically viable rates, and
20 creating other programs to encourage and more fully develop this
21 important industry on Hawaii island; and
22

23 WHEREAS, the Kona area provides a plethora of singular
24 ventures that can improve agriculture, economic development, and
25 affordable housing opportunities by working together with state
26 and county agencies; and
27

28 WHEREAS, the construction of the Keahole Agricultural Park
29 was intended to strengthen diversified agriculture through a
30 plan that consolidates and concentrates agricultural activities
31 in a centralized location to improve production and
32 distribution; and



1 WHEREAS, the one hundred seventy-nine acre Keahole
2 Agricultural Park is in consonance with state policy and
3 complements the existing rural environment, provides employment,
4 and stimulates the agricultural economy in the area; and
5

6 WHEREAS, due to constraints in water availability, the
7 agricultural park has been implemented in phases, and over one
8 hundred acres of state-owned land immediately mauka of the
9 agricultural park remain undeveloped and unproductive; and
10

11 WHEREAS, the close proximity of the Palamanui Campus of
12 Hawaii Community College to the Keahole Agriculture Park offers
13 opportunities for courses in landscape agriculture and
14 engineering; and
15

16 WHEREAS, energy and ocean-related research, education, and
17 commercial aquaculture are centered at the Natural Energy
18 Laboratory of Hawaii Authority (NELHA) on three hundred
19 twenty-two acres at Keahole Point, and NELHA provides an
20 opportunity to expand production of fresh aquaculture food
21 products, promote marketing of locally grown aquaculture
22 products, provide stable cash flow for aquaculture farmers, and
23 create a varied and large market for local aquaculture; and
24

25 WHEREAS, currently, the County of Hawaii hauls its west
26 side green waste to Hilo for processing; however, these
27 nutrient-rich waste products can be mixed with West Hawaii's
28 abundant green waste to produce a nitrogen-rich and valuable
29 compost for agricultural park farmers, who struggle to operate
30 on volcanic lands; and
31

32 WHEREAS, for the last decade, the Kealakehe Wastewater
33 Treatment Plant has treated and disposed of sewage collected
34 from the North Kona Sewerage system, which extends across the
35 greater Kailua-Kona region; and
36

37 WHEREAS, current flows, rich in nitrogen and phosphorus, to
38 the plant are approximately 1,800,000 gallons per day migrating
39 through groundwater and delivered directly above Honokohau
40 Harbor through the adjacent porous shorelines, thereby resulting
41 in West Hawaii's coastal waters being rated as impaired by the
42 Department of Health; and



1 WHEREAS, treating and reusing the water to irrigate the
2 Keahole Agricultural Park, NELHA, and resorts and homes in
3 between the two locations can reduce the demand for freshwater,
4 which will help relieve high demand on high-elevation wells and
5 reduce irrigation costs; and

6
7 WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation's Keahole Airport
8 has its own wastewater treatment plant that produces an excess
9 of recycled water to irrigate its airport facilities and may
10 also help irrigate neighboring state facilities, including the
11 Keahole Agricultural Park; and

12
13 WHEREAS, a 2015 report by the Department of Business,
14 Economic Development, and Tourism titled "Measuring Housing
15 Demand in Hawaii, 2015-2025" projected that Hawaii County's
16 population will grow by twenty-nine per cent by 2025, creating a
17 forecast demand for 18,610 additional housing units, which is
18 approximately thirty per cent of the total projected demand of
19 64,700 housing units needed across the State; and

20
21 WHEREAS, the County of Hawaii lacks a comprehensive plan
22 that defines strategies and target deadlines to create more
23 housing over the short- and long-term, as well as the type and
24 location of housing needed, how to fund critical infrastructure,
25 ways to foster public-private partnerships, recommendations to
26 leverage state and federal policy tools and funding streams, and
27 policy changes to reduce barriers to address the island's
28 housing crisis with a clearly defined purpose, vision, and
29 values; and

30
31 WHEREAS, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands owns
32 six hundred acres in the Keahole Agricultural Park area, with
33 four hundred vacant acres zoned for residential development,
34 one hundred acres zoned for agricultural development, and
35 one hundred acres zoned for commercial development; and

36
37 WHEREAS, development in this area can contribute to
38 creating a significant number of homes for Hawaiians on Hawaii
39 island; and

40
41 WHEREAS, the Hawaii Opportunity Zones Program provides
42 incentives for investors to re-invest realized capital gains



1 into Opportunity Funds in exchange for temporary tax deferral
2 and other benefits; and

3
4 WHEREAS, the Opportunity Funds are then used to provide
5 investment capital in certain economically distressed
6 communities called Opportunity Zones; and

7
8 WHEREAS, the Kona area is home to Opportunity Zone 215.4
9 and 216.1; and

10
11 WHEREAS, the Opportunity Zone designation makes them
12 extremely attractive to private investors, so these
13 opportunities do not necessarily require state funding due to
14 the presence of federal infrastructure development financing;
15 now, therefore,

16
17 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
18 Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
19 of 2021, that the Department of Agriculture is urged to form an
20 inter-governmental Kona Area agricultural working group to help
21 navigate opportunities of agriculture, economic development, and
22 affordable housing; and

23
24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group is requested
25 to develop a framework to:

- 26
27 (1) Improve communication to increase efficiency and
28 strengthen partnerships between Hawaii County, the
29 agriculture industry, landowners, and the Hawaii
30 island community;
31
32 (2) Increase profitability of Hawaii island's agricultural
33 businesses through cost reduction strategies and
34 greater market share for local products;
35
36 (3) Increase the availability and quality of agricultural
37 education on Hawaii island;
38
39 (4) Secure affordable land with long-term tenure for
40 farming and ranching and allow for the production of
41 residential units on Hawaiian home lands;



- 1 (5) Provide adequate and affordable agricultural water for
2 farmers, livestock producers, and food processors;
3
- 4 (6) Reduce the cost of energy and fuel for agricultural
5 producers;
6
- 7 (7) Maximize transportation infrastructure resources and
8 minimize transporting green waste within the Kona
9 area;
10
- 11 (8) Promote environmental conservation and minimize
12 discharges of wastewater;
13
- 14 (9) Facilitate practical, applied research that will
15 assist farmers in crop and livestock production using
16 sustainable techniques and establish Hawaii island as
17 a center for tropical agricultural research; and
18
- 19 (10) Promote investment opportunities in areas in the
20 federal Opportunity Zone designation and maximize
21 opportunities to realize federal infrastructure
22 development; and
23

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group's membership
25 is requested to consist of the following members:
26

- 27 (1) One member of the Senate, to be appointed by the
28 President of the Senate;
29
- 30 (2) One member of the House of Representatives, to be
31 appointed by the Speaker of the House of
32 Representatives;
33
- 34 (3) One representative of the Department of Agriculture;
35
- 36 (4) One representative of the Department of Business,
37 Economic Development, and Tourism;
38
- 39 (5) One representative of the Department of Hawaiian Home
40 Lands;
41
- 42 (6) One representative of the Department of Health;



- 1 (7) One representative of the Department of
- 2 Transportation;
- 3
- 4 (8) One representative of Hawaii Community College;
- 5
- 6 (9) One representative of the Office of the Mayor of the
- 7 County of Hawaii;
- 8
- 9 (10) One representative of the Hawaii County Department of
- 10 Environmental Management; and
- 11
- 12 (11) One representative of the Hawaii County Department of
- 13 Water Supply; and
- 14

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chairperson of the Board of
 16 Agriculture is requested to serve as the chair of the working
 17 group; and

18
 19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group, with the
 20 administrative assistance of the Department of Agriculture, is
 21 requested to submit a report of its findings and
 22 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the
 23 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
 24 the Regular Session of 2022; and

25
 26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
 27 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of
 28 Agriculture; Director of Business, Economic Development, and
 29 Tourism; Director of Health; Chairperson of the Hawaiian Homes
 30 Commission; Director of Transportation; President of the
 31 University of Hawaii System; Mayor of the County of Hawaii;
 32 Director of the Hawaii County Department of Environmental
 33 Management; and Manager of the Hawaii County Department of Water
 34 Supply.

