
SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO CONSIDER AMENDING
THE ELIGIBILITY QUALIFICATIONS AND LEASE TERMS FOR ITS
AGRICULTURAL LOTS TO AID SMALL FARM BUSINESSES.

1 WHEREAS, Hawaii annually spends an estimated \$3,000,000,000
2 to import approximately ninety percent of its food and pays food
3 costs that are eighty-two percent higher than the national
4 average; and

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6 WHEREAS, dependence on food imports threatens the
7 sustainability of food producers on the islands and places the
8 entire population directly at risk of food shortages in the
9 event of pandemics, natural disasters, and economic disruptions;
10 and

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12 WHEREAS, increasing local food production is essential for
13 the health and vitality of the State and despite the State's
14 natural resources and goals for increased local food production,
15 production has remained slow to develop; and

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17 WHEREAS, Hawaii has the fifth highest projected percentage
18 of residents experiencing food insecurity (17.5 percent) and has
19 the tenth highest rate of projected child food insecurity (29.9
20 percent); and

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22 WHEREAS, due to the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and
23 the resulting unprecedented rate of unemployment, between April
24 and October 2020, there has been a fifteen percent increase in
25 the number of recipients of government assistance programs, like
26 the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; and

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28 WHEREAS, an increase in the production and sale of Hawaii-
29 grown food would contribute to significant job creation and
30 replacing ten percent of current food imports with locally grown
31 food would create a total of two thousand three hundred jobs and
32 could keep hundreds of millions of dollars circulating within



1 Hawaii's economy, stimulate growth, and create thousands of new
2 jobs, ensuring that Hawaii has stable food sources; and
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4 WHEREAS, Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 69, S.D. 1,
5 Regular Session 2014, established the Aloha+ Challenge which, in
6 part, specified that local production is to double by 2030 with
7 a goal of twenty to thirty percent of food being grown locally;
8 and
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10 WHEREAS, research has found that the State needs to be
11 growing at least fifty percent of its staple crops to be
12 considered self-sufficient; and
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14 WHEREAS, the State has many natural resources and vast
15 agricultural lands that lend themselves to increasing local food
16 production; and
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18 WHEREAS, farmers are facing difficulty in obtaining long-
19 term leases and reasonable lease rents because there is pressure
20 on the use of important agricultural land for higher value
21 purposes, resulting in accelerated agricultural decline near
22 urban areas due to farmers' disinvestment in their farm
23 operations in an anticipation of development; and
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25 WHEREAS, the agricultural parks program administered under
26 the Department of Agriculture seeks to encourage the
27 continuation or initiation of agricultural operations and lands
28 that are acquired, developed, and leased to farmers with the
29 objective of providing long-term tenured lands that are not
30 subject to reclassification or rezoning, further subdivision,
31 lack of monitoring of activities, or introduction of non-
32 agricultural uses, available to small farmers at a reasonable
33 cost; and
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35 WHEREAS, the agricultural parks program utilizes a thorough
36 qualification process to ensure potential lessees will undertake
37 substantial activity and that most of the total annual income of
38 lessees comes from agricultural activities; and
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40 WHEREAS, lease rents in agricultural parks are lower than
41 privately owned lands; and
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1 WHEREAS, Act 90, Session Laws of Hawaii 2003, established
 2 the non-agricultural park lands program to provide for the
 3 transfer of certain public lands from the Department of Land and
 4 Natural Resources to the Department of Agriculture, in which the
 5 lands are to be used for the purposes of article XI, section 10,
 6 of the Hawaii State Constitution to develop farm and
 7 homeownership on a widespread basis. The Board of Land and
 8 Natural Resources approved 5,186.843 acres for transfer and the
 9 transfer for 4,072.783 acres have been completed; and

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 11 WHEREAS, the Agricultural Development Corporation is tasked
 12 with protecting the future of agriculture by facilitating its
 13 transformation from a dual-crop economy of sugar and pineapple
 14 to a multi-crop industry and is authorized to lease or sell its
 15 lands to agricultural enterprises and farmers without having to
 16 go through a public auction process; and

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 18 WHEREAS, the Department of Agriculture has several
 19 eligibility requirements that make it difficult for small
 20 farmers to qualify and obtain leases for these agricultural
 21 lots; now, therefore,

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 23 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first
 24 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021,
 25 that the Department of Agriculture is requested to consider
 26 amending the eligibility qualifications and lease terms for
 27 agricultural lots to aid small farm businesses; and

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 29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Agriculture
 30 is requested to consider different solutions to encourage more
 31 affordable long-term leases including encouraging small farmers
 32 to obtain financing for affordable long-term leases and allow
 33 for public comment regarding the matter; and

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 35 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Agriculture
 36 is requested to submit a report of its findings and
 37 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the
 38 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
 39 the Regular Session of 2022; and

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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this
2 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of
3 Agriculture.

