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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TARO.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii imports  
2 eighty-five per cent of its food and is considered highly  
3 vulnerable in issues of food security as a state. Climate  
4 change significantly increases this vulnerability with sea level  
5 rise and intensified weather patterns in the Pacific, such as  
6 droughts, hurricanes, and floods. In 2016, the governor pledged  
7 to double food production in Hawaii by 2030 at the  
8 International Union for Conservation of Nature World  
9 Conservation Congress, as part of Hawaii's commitments to the  
10 world and the State and in order to begin to address this  
11 import inequity.

12           The legislature further finds that small farms on ten  
13 acres or less in Hawaii produce a significant portion of  
14 locally-grown and locally-consumed food on each island. The  
15 small farm sector of agriculture is growing, yet the 2017  
16 census of agriculture reports that the average small-scale  
17 farmer in Hawaii makes less than \$40,000 per year, with losses



1 of almost \$10,000 annually due to the high costs of farming,  
2 including land and water. To accomplish the State's 2030 goal  
3 for local food production, there is an urgent need to better  
4 support small farmers including through small economic  
5 incentives to build a larger market.

6 The legislature additionally finds that the department of  
7 agriculture has identified staple starches as the greatest  
8 food security risk in the State. Taro is a hypoallergenic  
9 complex carbohydrate that plays a critical role in the health  
10 of families, particularly Native Hawaiians. Yet, the cost of  
11 poi remains inaccessible to families most in need of this  
12 important staple starch food. Taro is one of Hawaii's highest  
13 yielding staple starch food crops, producing ten thousand and  
14 twenty thousand pounds per acre per annum under wet and dry  
15 cultivation, respectively; however, taro is severely  
16 underproduced in the State. The 2017 census of agriculture  
17 reported two hundred seven farms and four hundred ninety-five  
18 acres of taro in wetland and dryland production. An estimated  
19 two hundred to three hundred additional acres are unreported  
20 or in subsistence taro cultivation. Annual reported



1 production averages four million tons; however, taro imports  
2 are estimated to soon exceed local production.

3 The legislature also finds that loi kalo, or wetland taro  
4 systems, are additionally recognized for their potential to  
5 mitigate other impacts of climate change by functioning as  
6 riparian buffers and sediment retention basins. Underground  
7 foods, such as taro, can often survive hurricanes or flood  
8 events and can be harvested to address immediate food  
9 shortages where the capacity to store and cook food can be  
10 retained.

11 The legislature further finds that the report of the taro  
12 security and purity task force to the 2010 legislature  
13 recommended a number of supports to make taro farming  
14 affordable, including access to land, water, mentoring, and  
15 economic incentives. The counties of Maui and Kauai have  
16 enacted ordinances that exempt kuleana lands in active taro  
17 production from county taxes. These ordinances provide  
18 limited relief to some taro farms but are not available in  
19 all counties and are insufficient for young farmers to offset  
20 typically low incomes experienced by taro growers or mitigate  
21 the effects of competition from imports.



1           The legislature additionally finds that, in 1901, the  
2 first legislature of the Territory of Hawaii recognized the  
3 role that taro played in feeding the nation by passing Senate  
4 Bill No. 87 to encourage the cultivation of taro by exempting  
5 taro and the cultivation of taro from all state taxes. While  
6 Senate Bill No. 87 was never signed into law, its intentions  
7 were clear in encouraging the production of more taro.

8           The legislature also finds that, in recognition of the  
9 critical importance of protecting and perpetuating the  
10 traditional practice of taro farming as part of Hawaii's  
11 cultural identity and its role in local food security, there  
12 is a compelling interest in enacting a law in present day that  
13 is similar to Senate Bill No. 87.

14           The purpose of this Act is to create stronger economic  
15 incentives for new taro farmers, improve the livelihoods of  
16 existing taro farmers, and reduce the cost of poi for local  
17 residents by exempting the gross proceeds or income from the  
18 sale of any product resulting from the cultivation and  
19 production of unprocessed taro from the general excise tax.



1 SECTION 2. Chapter 237, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
2 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated  
3 and to read as follows:

4 "§237- Exemption for the cultivation and production of  
5 unprocessed taro. There shall be exempted from, and excluded  
6 from the measure of, the taxes imposed by this chapter all of  
7 the gross proceeds or income received from the sale of any  
8 product resulting from the cultivation and production of  
9 unprocessed taro, or of any value-added product of which the  
10 primary ingredient is taro or taro leaf. This exemption shall  
11 not apply to bulk buyers or shippers of raw or value-added taro  
12 products, supermarkets, or big box stores.

13 As used in this section, "primary ingredient" means the  
14 ingredient of highest percentage in a product and listed first  
15 on the product's label."

16 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

17 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval,  
18 and shall be repealed on June 30, 2027.



H.B. NO. 2466  
H.D. 2  
S.D. 1  
C.D. 1

**Report Title:**

Unprocessed Taro; Cultivation and Production; General Excise  
Tax; Exemption

**Description:**

Exempts the gross proceeds or income received from the sale of  
any product resulting from the cultivation and production of  
unprocessed taro from the general excise tax. Repeals  
6/30/2027. (CD1)

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not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

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