
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the use of cover
2 crops increases agricultural productivity and aligns with the
3 State's integrated sustainability goals. Plants used for this
4 purpose, including grasses, legumes, and forbs, add nutrients to
5 the soil, act as windbreaks, assist with water retention,
6 provide habitats for beneficial insects, offset greenhouse gas
7 emissions through carbon sequestration, and help to prevent soil
8 erosion.

9 The legislature further finds that it is in the best
10 interests of the State to incentivize the use of management
11 practices that enhance the quality and sustainability of
12 Hawaii's agricultural lands.

13 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish and
14 appropriate moneys for a cover crop reimbursement pilot program
15 to reimburse farming operations in the State for the costs of
16 cover cropping.



1 SECTION 2. (a) The department of agriculture shall
2 establish and implement a three-year cover crop reimbursement
3 pilot program to reimburse farming operations in the State for
4 the costs of cover cropping.

5 (b) Applications for cost reimbursements shall be
6 submitted on a form furnished by the department of agriculture
7 and shall be accompanied by documentation of the costs incurred,
8 pursuant to subsection (c); provided that:

9 (1) The applicant shall indemnify and hold harmless the
10 State and its officers, agents, and employees from all
11 claims arising out of, or resulting from, cover
12 cropping; and

13 (2) The department may request that an applicant provide
14 additional information for the purposes of verifying
15 the costs claimed are directly related to cover
16 cropping.

17 (c) Applications for reimbursement under the cover crop
18 reimbursement pilot program shall be filed for costs incurred
19 within the fiscal year immediately preceding the filing and be
20 effective for the costs of cover cropping incurred after
21 June 30, 2022, and before July 1, 2025. The documentation shall



1 include a certification that the amount for which the applicant
 2 seeks reimbursement is not already covered by other governmental
 3 cover crop incentive programs, including the United States
 4 Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation
 5 Service's environmental quality incentives program or the
 6 conservation stewardship program.

7 (d) Reimbursement for cover cropping costs incurred after
 8 June 30, 2022, and before July 1, 2025, shall be as follows:

9 (1) For a single-species cover crop, the farmer or rancher
 10 shall be reimbursed \$ multiplied by the
 11 number of acres upon which the cover crop is planted;
 12 or

13 (2) For a multi-species cover crop, the farmer or rancher
 14 shall be reimbursed \$ multiplied by the
 15 number of acres upon which the cover crop is planted.

16 (e) Moneys shall be disbursed by the department to the
 17 farmer or rancher based on the United States Department of
 18 Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service's 2017
 19 Census of Agriculture's typology of farm size as follows:

20 (1) Sixty-three per cent to farms and ranches that are
 21 less than ten acres in size;



- 1 (2) Twenty-seven per cent to farms and ranches that are at
2 least ten acres and up to fifty acres in size;
- 3 (3) Six per cent to farms and ranches that are at least
4 fifty acres and up to one hundred eighty acres in
5 size;
- 6 (4) Two per cent to farms and ranches that are at least
7 one hundred eighty acres and up to five hundred acres
8 in size;
- 9 (5) One per cent to farms and ranches that are at least
10 five hundred acres and up to one thousand acres in
11 size; and
- 12 (6) One per cent to farms and ranches that are at least
13 one thousand acres in size.
- 14 (f) The department shall aggregate the total reimbursement
15 applications pursuant to this section and divide and distribute
16 the available moneys on a first come, first served basis;
17 provided that no farming operation shall receive a total
18 reimbursement of more than \$ per year.
- 19 (g) There is established within the department a cover
20 crop reimbursement pilot program manager position, which shall
21 be a full-time, temporary position exempt from chapters 76 and



1 89, Hawaii Revised Statutes. The cover crop reimbursement pilot
2 program manager shall receive a salary not to exceed \$50,000 per
3 year. The cover crop reimbursement pilot program manager shall
4 possess a requisite level of knowledge and expertise in the area
5 of program management necessary to carry out the duties of the
6 position. The cover crop pilot reimbursement program manager
7 shall:

8 (1) Facilitate the division and distribution of available
9 moneys for reimbursement; and

10 (2) Manage the day-to-day coordination of the cover crop
11 reimbursement pilot program.

12 (h) Any action taken by the department pursuant to this
13 section shall be exempt from the rulemaking requirements of
14 chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

15 (i) The department shall submit a report on the cover crop
16 reimbursement pilot program to the legislature no later than
17 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular sessions of
18 2023, 2024, and 2025. The report shall include:

19 (1) The number of acres of land upon which cover crops are
20 grown under the pilot program;



1 (2) The total amount spent by the pilot program, broken
2 down by category; and

3 (3) The department's recommendation on whether the pilot
4 program should be extended, with or without
5 modifications.

6 (j) As used in this section:

7 "Cover crop" means the plants listed in the cover crop
8 database maintained by the university of Hawaii college of
9 tropical agriculture and human resources. "Cover crop" does not
10 include any invasive or fast-growing grasses, or both, including
11 Bermuda grass.

12 "Department" means the department of agriculture.

13 "Farming operation" has the same meaning as in section
14 165-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

15 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
16 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
17 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for
18 the department of agriculture to establish, implement, and
19 administer a cover crop reimbursement pilot program; provided
20 that up to \$20,000 may be used for administrative costs.



1 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
2 agriculture for the purposes of this Act.

3 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



Report Title:

HDOA; Sustainable Agriculture; Cover Crops; Cover Crop Reimbursement Pilot Program; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes a 3-year cover crop reimbursement pilot program to provide reimbursements to farming operations in the State for costs related to cover cropping. Establishes a cover crop reimbursement pilot program manager position within the Department of Agriculture to administer the program. Requires an annual report to the Legislature. Appropriates moneys. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

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