
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL CRIMES.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that in 2019, the United
2 States Department of Agriculture recorded a total estimated loss
3 of \$14.4 million nationwide from theft and vandalism within the
4 agricultural sector. Trespass and the theft of farm equipment,
5 agricultural products, commodities, livestock and cattle, and
6 other related resources, in addition to illegal hunting and
7 poaching, are some of the traditionally reported crimes in the
8 agricultural sector. However, recent reports of violent crimes
9 and fatal shootings on agricultural land on Oahu's leeward coast
10 have highlighted the severity of the challenges facing the State
11 in how to effectively mitigate and prevent agricultural crimes.

12 The legislature additionally finds that the State lacks a
13 dedicated law enforcement unit designed and equipped to address
14 the unique and specific types of crimes that occur within the
15 agricultural sector. Often, these crimes occur in rural and
16 geographically isolated locations, making it challenging to
17 timely respond to and adequately address reports of the crimes.



1 Moreover, it can be burdensome, if not impossible, for large
2 tracts of land, farms, and ranches to implement traditional
3 crime deterrence methods, such as adequate lighting and fencing,
4 alarm systems, surveillance, and private security or increased
5 police presence. Low police staffing and watch strength in
6 rural locations can exacerbate already existing limitations in
7 security measures for farmers and adds to the vulnerability of
8 these agricultural properties.

9 The legislature recognizes that, while agricultural lands
10 are included as a category in many of the State's laws
11 establishing certain crimes, limited resources make it difficult
12 to respond to these crimes effectively. Further, due to these
13 limited resources, traditional enforcement efforts tend to
14 prioritize more high-profile violent crimes, resulting in a low
15 prosecution rate for agricultural crimes. This is evidenced by
16 the fact that agricultural crimes are typically included in
17 general crime statistics reported by various law enforcement
18 agencies, which often makes it challenging to gather important
19 data pertinent specifically to agricultural crimes. Despite
20 statistics that have been made available through self-reporting,
21 prosecution rates for agricultural crimes remain low.



1 The legislature further finds that certain counties in
2 California with large agricultural-based economies have had
3 success in implementing crime prevention programs to address the
4 issues related to agricultural crimes through targeted
5 enforcement and prevention strategies, including the utilization
6 of a centralized database to track incidents of agricultural
7 crime, analyze trends, and share intelligence among agencies to
8 enable a swift response to emerging threats. These programs
9 have also contributed to efforts in advocating for legislative
10 changes to strengthen agricultural laws and penalties and
11 shaping policies that reflect the importance of protecting the
12 agricultural industry.

13 It is therefore the legislature's intent to establish a
14 similar program through the creation of the Hawaii agricultural
15 crimes council to help the State address resource limitations
16 and enforcement capabilities, enhance data collection, identify
17 and mitigate criminality, provide education and awareness, and
18 restore public trust in law enforcement to adequately prosecute
19 agricultural crimes.

20 The legislature finds that there is no existing consistent
21 and reliable funding mechanism in place to support the efforts



1 of an independent agency to enforce laws related to agricultural
2 crimes, such as the Hawaii agricultural crimes council. The
3 legislature further finds that secure funding for the Hawaii
4 agricultural crimes council is necessary to ensure its continued
5 operation and functions, including but not limited to the
6 purchase of necessary equipment and appropriation for position
7 salaries.

8 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 9 (1) Establish the Hawaii agricultural crimes council;
- 10 (2) Require the department of agriculture to collaborate
11 with and support the council; and
- 12 (3) Provide dedicated funding through the animal industry
13 special fund for the council's establishment and
14 continued operations.

15 SECTION 2. The Hawaii Revised Statutes is amended by
16 adding a new chapter to be appropriately designated and to read
17 as follows:

18 "CHAPTER

19 HAWAII AGRICULTURAL CRIMES COUNCIL

20 § -1 Definitions. In this chapter, unless the context
21 otherwise requires:



1 "Council" means the Hawaii agricultural crimes council.

2 "Department" means the department of agriculture.

3 § -2 Hawaii agricultural crimes council; establishment;

4 composition; executive director. (a) There is established the

5 Hawaii agricultural crimes council for the special purpose of

6 developing agricultural crime prevention, problem solving, and

7 crime control recommendations and implementing related programs

8 to encourage timely reporting of agricultural crimes and to

9 evaluate the results of these activities.

10 (b) The council shall be placed within the department for

11 administrative purposes only and shall comprise:

12 (1) The chairperson of the board of agriculture;

13 (2) The attorney general;

14 (3) The prosecuting attorney of each county;

15 (4) The director of law enforcement;

16 (5) The chief of police of each county;

17 (6) individuals with experience as an agricultural

18 producer in the State, to be appointed by the governor

19 without regard to section 26-34, Hawaii Revised

20 Statutes;



1 (7) individuals who represent environmental
2 organizations, to be appointed by the governor without
3 regard to section 26-34, Hawaii Revised Statutes; and

4 (8) individuals who serve as community
5 representatives, to be appointed by the governor
6 without regard to section 26-34, Hawaii Revised
7 Statutes.

8 (c) The members shall serve for four-year terms. The
9 council shall select a chairperson from among its members. The
10 members shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed
11 for expenses, including travel expenses, necessary for the
12 performance of their duties.

13 (d) The council shall appoint, exempt from chapters 76 and
14 84, an executive director, who shall serve at the pleasure of
15 the council. The executive director shall oversee the
16 operations, strategic planning, and coordination with
17 stakeholders in the State's agricultural community.

18 § -3 **Hawaii agricultural crimes council; duties.** (a)
19 The Hawaii agricultural crimes council shall provide policy
20 level direction, coordination, and planning among appropriate
21 state and county departments to provide for the protection and



1 safety of the State's agricultural industry by creating
2 statewide standards and methods of detecting and tracking
3 agricultural crimes.

4 (b) The council shall develop an agricultural crime
5 prevention program that includes a system for reporting
6 agricultural crimes that enables the swift recovery of stolen
7 goods and the apprehension of criminal suspects for prosecution.
8 The council may develop computer software and use communication
9 technology to implement the reporting system; provided that the
10 council shall not be limited to the use of these means to
11 achieve its stated goals.

12 (c) The council shall develop a uniform procedure for all
13 counties to collect, and each county shall collect, data on
14 agricultural crimes. The council shall also establish a central
15 database for the collection and maintenance of data on
16 agricultural crimes. The counties shall adopt ordinances for
17 the implementation and administration of this section.

18 (d) The council shall examine existing state laws
19 concerning agricultural crimes and consider proposed legislation
20 to strengthen laws and penalties.



1 (e) The council shall create a public awareness campaign
2 for agricultural producers to promote education concerning:

- 3 (1) How to report agricultural crimes and the importance
4 of reporting all crimes;
5 (2) Laws specific to agricultural crimes;
6 (3) Good business practices; and
7 (4) Crime prevention.

8 (f) The council shall make recommendations and provide
9 training to county law enforcement agencies to promote awareness
10 of specific agricultural crime laws, including:

- 11 (1) How to understand agricultural crime victims;
12 (2) Appointing designated points of contacts within county
13 law enforcement agencies to handle reports of
14 agricultural crimes; and
15 (3) The establishment of a task force to educate producers
16 and consumers about agricultural crimes, crime
17 prevention for agricultural producers, and how to
18 conduct follow up investigations on reports of
19 agricultural crime.

20 (g) The council may consult with experts from the United
21 States military, state department of defense, Department of



1 Justice, other law enforcement agencies, and various other state
2 and private organizations as deemed necessary to maximize the
3 effectiveness of the council.

4 (h) The council shall ensure necessary funding for
5 agricultural crime suppression programs.

6 (i) The council may solicit media and community support to
7 promote its programs.

8 (j) The council shall meet not less than times
9 annually to discuss and assess progress and recommended changes
10 to its programs based on the results of its assessments and
11 other relevant data. Notwithstanding any law to the contrary:

12 (1) A simple majority of the members of the council shall
13 constitute a quorum to do business; and

14 (2) Any action taken by the council shall be by a simple
15 majority of the members.

16 (k) The council may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 to
17 effectuate this chapter.

18 (l) The council shall submit annual reports to the
19 legislature, no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
20 each regular session, detailing:



- 1 (1) The progress of its duties as established in this
- 2 chapter;
- 3 (2) Recommended initiatives and strategies, as well as a
- 4 plan for implementation; and
- 5 (3) Any recommendations or proposed legislation.

6 § -4 **Agricultural crimes control; investigators; powers;**
7 **duties.** The council shall appoint and commission one or more
8 investigators as required to investigate agricultural crimes.
9 Persons appointed and commissioned under this section may
10 exercise all the powers and authority of a law enforcement
11 officer or of a deputy sheriff; provided that the persons so
12 appointed and commissioned shall not carry any firearms. An
13 investigator appointed under this section shall focus their
14 efforts on agricultural crimes and work with the counties as
15 partners to address and prevent agricultural crime on a state
16 and local basis."

17 SECTION 3. Section 141-1, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
18 amended to read as follows:

19 "§141-1 **Duties in general.** The department of agriculture
20 shall:



- 1 (1) Gather, compile, and tabulate, from time to time,
2 information and statistics concerning:
- 3 (A) Entomology and plant pathology: Insects, scales,
4 blights, and diseases injurious or liable to
5 become injurious to trees, plants, or other
6 vegetation, and the ways and means of
7 exterminating pests and diseases already in the
8 State and preventing the introduction of pests
9 and diseases not yet in the State; and
- 10 (B) General agriculture: Fruits, fibres, and useful
11 or ornamental plants and their introduction,
12 development, care, and manufacture or
13 exportation, with a view to introducing,
14 establishing, and fostering new and valuable
15 plants and industries;
- 16 (2) Encourage and cooperate with the agricultural
17 extension service and agricultural experiment station
18 of the University of Hawaii and all private persons
19 and organizations doing work of an experimental or
20 educational character coming within the scope of the
21 subject matter of chapters 141, 142, and 144 to 150A,



1 and avoid, as far as practicable, duplicating the work
2 of those persons and organizations;

3 (3) Enter into contracts, cooperative agreements, or other
4 transactions with any person, agency, or organization,
5 public or private, as may be necessary in the conduct
6 of the department's business and on any terms the
7 department may deem appropriate; provided that the
8 department shall not obligate any funds of the State,
9 except the funds that have been appropriated to the
10 department. Pursuant to cooperative agreement with
11 any authorized federal agency, employees of the
12 cooperative agency may be designated to carry out, on
13 behalf of the State the same as department personnel,
14 specific duties and responsibilities under chapters
15 141, 142, and 150A, and rules adopted pursuant to
16 those chapters, for the effective prosecution of pest
17 control and animal disease control and the regulation
18 of import into the State and intrastate movement of
19 regulated articles;

20 (4) Secure copies of the laws of other states,
21 territories, and countries, and other publications



1 germane to the subject matters of chapters 141, 142,
2 and 144 to 150A, and make laws and publications
3 available for public information and consultation;

4 (5) Provide buildings, grounds, apparatus, and
5 appurtenances necessary for the examination,
6 quarantine, inspection, and fumigation provided for by
7 chapters 141, 142, and 144 to 150A; for the obtaining,
8 propagation, study, and distribution of beneficial
9 insects, growths, and antidotes for the eradication of
10 insects, blights, scales, or diseases injurious to
11 vegetation of value and for the destruction of
12 injurious vegetation; and for carrying out any other
13 purposes of chapters 141, 142, and 144 to 150A;

14 (6) Formulate and recommend to the governor and
15 legislature additional legislation necessary or
16 desirable for carrying out the purposes of chapters
17 141, 142, and 144 to 150A;

18 (7) Publish at the end of each year a report of the
19 expenditures and proceedings of the department and of
20 the results achieved by the department, together with



1 other matters germane to chapters 141, 142, and 144 to
2 150A and that the department may deem proper;

3 (8) Administer a program of agricultural planning and
4 development, including the formulation and
5 implementation of general and special plans, including
6 but not limited to the functional plan for
7 agriculture; administer the planning, development, and
8 management of the agricultural park program; plan,
9 construct, operate, and maintain the state irrigation
10 water systems; plan, design, construct, operate,
11 manage, maintain, repair, demolish, and remove
12 infrastructure or improvements on any lands under the
13 jurisdiction of the department; review, interpret, and
14 make recommendations with respect to public policies
15 and actions relating to agricultural land and water
16 use; assist in research, evaluation, development,
17 enhancement, and expansion of local agricultural
18 industries; and serve as liaison with other public
19 agencies and private organizations for the above
20 purposes. In the foregoing, the department shall act
21 to conserve and protect agricultural lands and



1 irrigation water systems, promote diversified
2 agriculture, increase agricultural self-sufficiency,
3 and ensure the availability of agriculturally suitable
4 lands; [~~and~~]

5 (9) Manage, administer, and exercise control over any
6 public lands, as defined under section 171-2, that are
7 designated important agricultural lands pursuant to
8 section 205-44.5, including but not limited to
9 establishing priorities for the leasing of these
10 public lands within the department's jurisdiction[~~-~~];

11 (10) Collaborate with the Hawaii agricultural crimes
12 council established pursuant to section -2 to
13 enhance the investigation, prevention, and prosecution
14 of agricultural-related crimes by:

15 (A) Sharing relevant information and data related to
16 agricultural crimes, such as theft, fraud, animal
17 cruelty, environmental violations, and other
18 offenses that impact agriculture in the State;

19 (B) Providing technical assistance and expertise in
20 identifying and responding to emerging threats
21 and criminal activities that affect the



1 agricultural industry, and fostering
2 intergovernmental relationships between
3 departments and agencies that are tasked with
4 regulating and enforcing agricultural laws in the
5 State;

6 (C) Assisting in the development of policies,
7 strategies, and educational programs that raise
8 awareness of agricultural crimes and prevent
9 illegal activities in the agricultural industry;

10 (D) Designating a liaison within the department to
11 serve as the primary point of contact for the
12 Hawaii agricultural crimes council and coordinate
13 joint efforts between the department and the
14 council;

15 (E) Supporting joint task forces or initiatives that
16 focus on high priority agricultural crime issues
17 and cases, as directed by the Hawaii agricultural
18 crimes council; and

19 (F) Providing resources and funding to facilitate the
20 operations of the Hawaii agricultural crimes



- 1 council that strengthen statewide agricultural
2 crimes enforcement efforts, as appropriate;
- 3 (11) Partner with other state and federal agencies, law
4 enforcement, and stakeholders to address agricultural
5 crimes and ensure that a full range of resources and
6 expertise is available to protect Hawaii's
7 agricultural industry; and
- 8 (12) Periodically report to the governor and the
9 legislature on the progress and outcomes of the
10 department's collaboration with the Hawaii
11 agricultural crimes council, including any proposed
12 legislation or policy recommendations."

13 SECTION 4. Section 142-3.6, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
14 amended to read as follows:

15 "**§142-3.6 Animal industry special fund.** There is
16 established the animal industry special fund to be administered
17 by the board of agriculture. Moneys received by the board of
18 agriculture from:

- 19 (1) The use or rental of the division of animal industry's
20 properties or facilities, including the animal



1 quarantine property or facilities pursuant to section
2 142-3.5;

3 (2) Revenue from fees for diagnostic, surveillance, and
4 other work by the animal industry division veterinary
5 laboratory and animal disease control branch; ~~and~~

6 (3) Moneys, revenue, and fines received and processed by
7 the Hawaii agricultural crimes council; and

8 ~~[-(3)]~~ (4) Appropriations or other moneys made available,
9 shall be deposited into the special fund.

10 All interest earned or accrued on moneys deposited in the
11 special fund shall become part of the special fund. Moneys in
12 the special fund shall be expended to cover costs of the
13 division of animal industry~~[-7]~~ and the Hawaii agricultural
14 crimes council, including the costs of salaries, fringe
15 benefits, operating expenses, equipment, motor vehicles,
16 contract with any qualified person or entity for livestock
17 handling services, improvements to laboratory capabilities and
18 operations, and operating and maintenance of the animal industry
19 facilities; provided that moneys in the special fund may be used
20 to fund the department's resource management and planning
21 programs. A reserve shall be maintained in the special fund to



1 cover contingency costs, including accrued vacation leave,
2 unemployment insurance, and workers' compensation."

3 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$2,000,000 or so much
5 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the
6 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
7 2026-2027 for the establishment and operation of the Hawaii
8 agricultural crimes commission, to be expended as follows:

9 (1) \$ to establish one full-time equivalent
10 (1.0 FTE) executive director position;

11 (2) \$ to establish one full-time equivalent
12 (1.0 FTE) staff assistant position;

13 (3) \$ to establish two full-time equivalent
14 (2.0 FTE) deputy inspector positions; and

15 (4) \$ for the establishment of a preliminary
16 operating budget for the Hawaii agricultural crimes
17 council.

18 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
19 of agriculture for the purposes of this Act.

20 SECTION 6. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
21 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.



1 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

2

INTRODUCED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristi Jal", written over a horizontal line.

JAN 17 2025



H.B. NO. 498

Report Title:

DOA; Hawaii Agricultural Crimes Council; Establishment; Animal Industry Special Fund; Appropriations

Description:

Establishes the Hawaii Agricultural Crimes Council. Expands the duties of the Department of Agriculture to collaborate with and support the Council. Authorizes the Council to withdraw and deposit moneys, revenues, and fines into and out of the Animal Industry Special Fund. Appropriates funds.

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