
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the State's
2 agricultural lands, watersheds, and working landscapes are
3 essential to the State's long-term food security, climate
4 resilience, and environmental health. Farmers and land stewards
5 face persistent barriers to adopt conservation agricultural
6 practices including limited access to technical assistance,
7 underinvestment in farm-level conservation infrastructure, and a
8 lack of coordinated statewide support for soil health,
9 regenerative agriculture, and climate-smart stewardship.

10 The legislature further finds that although federal
11 conservation programs provide important resources nationally,
12 many of these programs were developed for large-scale,
13 continental agricultural systems and do not align well with
14 Hawaii's small, diversified farms or Indigenous and community-
15 based aina restoration practices. The United States Natural
16 Resources Conservation Service's practice standards, timelines,
17 and engineering requirements often reflect temperate-climate,



1 acreage-intensive farming models and can be difficult for the
2 State's producers to access or implement within tropical
3 agroecosystems, mixed land-tenure arrangements, and culturally
4 grounded stewardship methods. As a result, Hawaii lacks a
5 conservation agriculture support structure tailored to the
6 State's unique ecological conditions, production systems, and
7 aina-based restoration needs. While individual state-level
8 programs currently offer elements of training, cost-share, and
9 conservation support, Hawaii lacks a unified, statewide system
10 that integrates conservation agriculture training, on-the-ground
11 implementation, and infrastructure development. A coordinated
12 statewide approach will strengthen environmental stewardship,
13 expand local food production, reduce greenhouse gas emissions,
14 improve soil and water health, and build long-term resilience in
15 the State's food systems.

16 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a
17 conservation and agriculture environmental stewardship pilot
18 program.

19 SECTION 2. Chapter 141, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
20 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
21 and to read as follows:



1 "§141- Conservation and agriculture environmental
2 stewardship pilot program; established. (a) There is
3 established within the department of agriculture and biosecurity
4 a conservation and agriculture environmental stewardship pilot
5 program to expand access to funding and technical assistance for
6 training incentives, infrastructure support, and cost-share
7 incentives for farmers, ranchers, land managers, and
8 conservation partners with the goal of supporting agricultural
9 production.

10 (b) The pilot program shall include but not be limited to:

11 (1) Training incentives and capacity building that shall
12 include:

13 (A) Small stipends for farmers and stewards who
14 complete conservation and planning trainings; and

15 (B) Workshops on topics including but not limited to,
16 soil health, climate-smart agriculture,
17 agroforestry, composting, water conservation, and
18 farm planning;

19 (2) Stewardship implementation cost-share that provides:

20 (A) Direct support for implementing conservation
21 practices, including but not limited to cover



1 cropping, soil amendments, erosion control,
2 nutrient management, compost use, riparian
3 buffers, and biodiversity improvement; and

4 (B) Cost-share availability to working farms,
5 ranches, cooperatives, and community-based
6 conservation partners; and

7 (3) Infrastructure development funding for small-scale
8 conservation infrastructure, including but not limited
9 to composting systems, improved irrigation efficiency,
10 stormwater management features, equipment for soil
11 health implementation, and other projects that advance
12 regenerative practices.

13 (c) The department of agriculture and biosecurity may
14 contract with or award grants to a nonprofit, or a consortium of
15 nonprofits with experience in administering statewide food
16 systems funds, agriculture and conservation cost-share programs,
17 and delivering conservation agriculture training and technical
18 assistance.

19 (d) Eligible participants shall include Hawaii-based
20 farmers, ranchers, producers, landowners, cooperatives,



1 conservation organizations, community-based agriculture projects
2 and aina restoration and stewardship organizations."

3 SECTION 3. The department of agriculture and biosecurity
4 shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations,
5 including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later
6 than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session
7 of 2027, regarding the conservation and agriculture
8 environmental stewardship pilot program, which shall include:

- 9 (1) The number and types of participants;
10 (2) Acres and areas impacted by conservation
11 implementation;
12 (3) Types of conservation practices funded and completed;
13 (4) Environmental, social, and cultural outcomes,
14 including soil health improvements, compost use, water
15 efficiency, and other documented benefits, community
16 participation, education, and awareness about
17 conservation and agriculture; and
18 (5) Recommendations regarding expansion, modification, or
19 continuation of the program.



1 SECTION 4. The department of agriculture and biosecurity
2 may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes,
3 to effectuate the purposes of this Act.

4 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$3,000,000 or so much
6 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 to
7 implement the conservation and agriculture environmental
8 stewardship pilot program.

9 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
10 agriculture and biosecurity for the purposes of this Act.

11 SECTION 6. New statutory material is underscored.

12 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026, and
13 shall be repealed on June 30, 2028; provided that the department
14 of agriculture and biosecurity shall retain the authority to
15 complete reporting requirements and close-out activities.

16
INTRODUCED BY: _____



JAN 23 2026



H.B. NO. 1953

Report Title:

DAB; Conservation and Agriculture Environmental Stewardship
Pilot Program; Report; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the Conservation and Agriculture Environmental
Stewardship Pilot Program within the Department of Agriculture
and Biosecurity. Requires a report to the Legislature. Repeals
6/30/28. Appropriates funds.

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not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

