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# 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 sector faces increasing challenges from climate  
3 change, soil degradation, and the need for enhanced food  
4 security and economic resilience. Furthermore, the department  
5 of agriculture and biosecurity has expressed concern regarding  
6 its capacity to administer conservation agriculture and soil  
7 health incentive programs due to limitations in technical  
8 expertise and staffing.

9 The legislature also finds that the Hawaii climate change  
10 mitigation and adaptation commission possesses land management  
11 expertise, conservation planning capacity, and stewardship  
12 responsibilities that align with the administration of  
13 agricultural conservation and soil health programs.

14 Consolidating existing conservation programs under the Hawaii  
15 climate change mitigation and adaptation commission will  
16 eliminate structural barriers that prevent small farms and  
17 socially disadvantaged farmers from accessing conservation



1 incentives and improve administrative efficiency and the  
2 coordination of statewide agricultural conservation efforts.

3 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish the  
4 conservation agriculture and soil health incentive program under  
5 the Hawaii climate change mitigation and adaptation commission.

6 SECTION 2. Chapter 225P, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
7 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated  
8 and to read as follows:

9 "S225P- Conservation agriculture and soil health  
10 incentive program; established; requirements; annual report.  
11 (a) There is established within the commission a conservation  
12 agriculture and soil health incentive program to provide  
13 financial assistance and incentives, technical assistance, and  
14 education that supports the adoption of science-based  
15 conservation practices that improve soil health, water  
16 retention, and climate resilience; increase the content of  
17 organic matter in soil and carbon sequestration; reduce erosion,  
18 nutrient runoff, and reliance on external inputs, including  
19 synthetic fertilizers, imported feed, fossil fuels, and  
20 globally-sourced raw materials; and support local food  
21 production and economic viability. The program shall support:



- 1       (1) Equitable access for small farms and socially  
2       disadvantaged farmers;
- 3       (2) First-time adopters of a one-time establishment  
4       practice or annual management practice;
- 5       (3) Systemic agroecological transitions rather than input  
6       substitution;
- 7       (4) Long-term maintenance and knowledge transfer of  
8       farming practices that promote agricultural  
9       conservation and soil health;
- 10      (5) Projects that incorporate traditional Native Hawaiian  
11      ecological knowledge and ecocultural restoration; and
- 12      (6) Projects that generate co-benefits, including jobs,  
13      food security, water security, biodiversity gains, and  
14      invasive species management.

15      (b) In administering the program, the commission shall:

- 16      (1) Subject to available funding, issue awards and other  
17      financial incentives to promote the adoption,  
18      application, and maintenance of a one-time  
19      establishment practice and annual management practice  
20      that advances conservation agriculture; provided that  
21      the commission shall award not more than



1           \$ to an applicant; provided further that the  
2           commission:  
3           (A) Shall require an applicant to adopt and maintain  
4           a one-time establishment practice or annual  
5           management practice for at least one year;  
6           (B) May award enhanced assistance to first-time  
7           adopters of a one-time establishment practice or  
8           annual management practice; and  
9           (C) May issue an award or other financial incentive  
10           to an applicant providing farmer-to-farmer  
11           mentorship;  
12           (2) Subject to available funding, contract a public,  
13           nonprofit, or private partner to provide technical  
14           assistance to a program participant; provided that the  
15           commission shall give priority to a partner who is  
16           experienced in the State's farming conditions;  
17           provided further that pre-application technical  
18           assistance shall be available to a farmer at no cost;  
19           (3) Upon the request of an applicant, furnish an  
20           application in the applicant's primary language;



- 1        (4) Develop and maintain a database to track eligible
- 2        agricultural conservation practices, practitioners,
- 3        acres, and outcomes;
- 4        (5) Coordinate with the university of Hawaii and relevant
- 5        federal agencies to evaluate program outcomes; and
- 6        (6) Beginning January 1, 2028, review and update program
- 7        procedures every three years.
- 8        (c) The commission shall prioritize financial and
- 9        technical assistance for agricultural projects of not more than
- 10       fifty acres for beginning farmers, Native Hawaiian farmers, and
- 11       socially disadvantaged farmers.
- 12       (d) The commission shall submit an annual report of its
- 13       findings and recommendations, including any proposed
- 14       legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior
- 15       to the convening of each regular session. The annual report
- 16       shall include equity and practice persistence metrics.
- 17       (e) The commission shall submit a comprehensive program
- 18       evaluation to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to
- 19       the convening of the regular session of 2028 and every three
- 20       years thereafter. The comprehensive program evaluation shall
- 21       include:



- 1        (1) Information detailing participation by farm type,
- 2        size, and demographics;
- 3        (2) Information detailing the adoption and maintenance
- 4        rate of any one-time establishment practice or annual
- 5        management practice;
- 6        (3) Economic and environmental outcomes;
- 7        (4) Recommendations for program improvement; and
- 8        (5) A comparison of the program to similar programs in
- 9        other states.
- 10      (f) The commission shall adopt rules pursuant to
- 11      chapter 91 for the purposes of this section.
- 12      (g) For the purposes of this section:
- 13      "Annual management practice" means cover cropping; crop
- 14      rotation and diversification; organic matter amendments,
- 15      including compost, biochar, and local inputs; rotational grazing
- 16      systems, including efficient nutrient and water management;
- 17      integrated pest management; conservation tillage; and
- 18      traditional Native Hawaiian agricultural practices, including
- 19      loi kalo restoration.
- 20      "One-time establishment practice" means reforestation and
- 21      agroforestry systems, including windbreaks, living barriers,



1 silviculture, and silvopasture; traditional Native Hawaiian  
2 farming restoration; invasive species control and ecosystem  
3 restoration; organic waste management and composting  
4 infrastructure; water conservation systems; and soil and water  
5 conservation structures.

6        "Program" means the conservation agriculture and soil  
7 health incentive program."

8        SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
9 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                   or so  
10 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for  
11 the Hawaii climate change mitigation and adaptation commission  
12 to establish the conservation agriculture and soil health  
13 incentive program.

14        The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii  
15 climate change mitigation and adaptation commission for the  
16 purposes of this Act.

17        SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

18        SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



**Report Title:**

Hawaii Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption Commission; Conservation Agriculture and Soil Health Incentive Program; Agriculture; Technical Assistance; Reports; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes a Conservation Agriculture and Soil Health Incentive Program within the Hawaii Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission. Requires an annual report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

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