

JAN 23 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO FARM TO FAMILIES.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that one in three
2 households in Hawaii is struggling to secure consistent access
3 to food. This data paints a sobering picture of families in
4 distress, underscoring the need for immediate action to restore
5 the basic dignity of nourishment to every household across the
6 islands.

7 The legislature further finds that the crisis
8 disproportionately affects the most vulnerable in Hawaii, the
9 keiki. Nearly thirty per cent of children in Hawaii are growing
10 up in food-insecure homes, some enduring entire days without a
11 meal. When experiencing hunger, keiki can face increased risk
12 of cognitive issues, aggression, anxiety, behavioral problems,
13 depression, and suicide ideation. For families facing hunger,
14 fresh, healthy produce is often one of the first things to fall
15 off grocery lists, negatively affecting long-term health.

16 The legislature also finds that this emergency
17 disproportionately impacts Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders



1 the most, with more than forty per cent of households
2 experiencing hunger, a reflection of longstanding inequities in
3 access to resources, economic opportunity, and essential
4 services. The legislature believes that the State's communities
5 should not bear this burden alone.

6 The legislature recognizes that Hawaii's food banks worked
7 with over five hundred agency partners, such as schools,
8 community-based nonprofits, churches, community centers, and
9 food pantries, to distribute more than twenty-seven million
10 meals in 2023, collectively serving two hundred forty thousand
11 individuals each month, in every community across the State.
12 These numbers are nearing the numbers served during the height
13 of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the support systems available
14 during the COVID-19 pandemic are no longer there.

15 The legislature additionally finds that to try to bridge
16 the gap between the State's food banks and their partners to
17 bring fresh, Hawaii-grown produce to families, the food banks
18 have partnered with five hundred seventy-five local farms and
19 food hubs to create a consistent market for Hawaii agriculture
20 producers, strengthening the State's community food systems and
21 creating a healthier, more resilient Hawaii. For example, the



1 Hawaii Foodbank invested over \$11,000,000 in Hawaii-grown
2 produce over the last five years, which using the local foods
3 economic multiplier, equates to an investment of nearly
4 \$19,000,000 in our local economy.

5 The legislature notes that as the cost of importing food
6 continues to rise, increasing the State's reliance on local
7 agriculture is not only a sustainable solution but also a
8 necessary one. Farmers across Hawaii have the potential to grow
9 more fresh, nutritious food that can directly serve those most
10 in need. By strengthening the connection between local farms
11 and community food systems, the State can reduce its dependence
12 on imports and ensure that more families have access to Hawaii-
13 grown produce like Okinawan sweet potato, choy sum, bok choy,
14 long beans, breadfruit, kalo, and more.

15 The legislature further finds that programs that encourage
16 partnerships between farmers and food assistance programs can
17 make a profound impact. By investing in Hawaii-grown
18 agriculture producers, the State can support not only local
19 farmers but also the communities they feed. This approach
20 aligns with the values of mālama 'āina, caring for the land, and
21 ensures that the State honors the deep connection between the



1 land and the people of Hawaii. Uplifting local farmers will
2 also uplift the entire community, fostering a more resilient
3 food system that can withstand future challenges.

4 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish and
5 appropriate funds for the Hawaii farm to families program to
6 fund food banks in the State to purchase, store, and transport
7 fresh, Hawaii-grown or -produced food to food insecure
8 communities. This program will serve the State's food needs,
9 provide Hawaii's agriculture producers with a market to support
10 their operations, and keep moneys circulating within the State
11 to boost the local economy.

12 SECTION 2. Chapter 141, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
13 amended by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and
14 to read as follows:

15 **"PART . HAWAII FARM TO FAMILIES PROGRAM**

16 **§141- Definitions.** For the purposes of this part:

17 "Department" means the department of agriculture.

18 "Food bank" has the same meaning as in title 7 United
19 States Code section 7501(5).

20 "Fresh, Hawaii-grown or -produced food" means fruits,
21 vegetables, nuts, coffee, eggs, poultry and poultry products,



1 livestock products, milk and milk products, aquacultural and
2 maricultural products, and horticultural products that are one
3 hundred per cent grown, raised, and harvested in Hawaii.

4 **§141- Hawaii farm to families program.** (a) There is
5 established the Hawaii farm to families program to be
6 administered by the department. Under the program, the
7 department shall relieve food shortages by providing funds to
8 food banks located in the State to facilitate consistent supply
9 chains of fresh, Hawaii-grown or -produced food to food insecure
10 communities.

11 (b) Food banks that receive support pursuant to this
12 section shall use the funds to purchase, store, and transport
13 fresh, Hawaii-grown or -produced food in the State to recipients
14 at no cost to the recipients.

15 **§141- Rules.** The department shall adopt rules pursuant
16 to chapter 91 necessary for the purposes of this part."

17 SECTION 3. The department of agriculture shall submit a
18 report to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the
19 convening of the regular sessions of 2026 and 2027 that contains
20 a summary of the activities of the Hawaii farm to families
21 program established under section 2 of this Act, including:



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- 1 (1) The amount of funds expended by the program;
- 2 (2) Food banks participating in the program, broken out by
- 3 county;
- 4 (3) Amount of food purchased and distributed; and
- 5 (4) Any other findings and recommendations, including any
- 6 proposed legislation.

7 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$2,000,000 or so much
9 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and the
10 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
11 2026-2027 for the Hawaii farm to families program.

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

14 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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INTRODUCED BY: *Scott M. Puler*



S.B. NO. 1250

Report Title:

Department of Agriculture; Hawaii Farm to Families Program;
Reports; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the Hawaii Farm to Families Program to alleviate food shortages in the State. Requires reports to the Legislature prior to the Regular Sessions of 2026 and 2027. Appropriates funds.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

