
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 "§225P- 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 support 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



1 the commission shall award no more than \$ _____ to
2 an applicant; provided further that the 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; and

4 (5) Coordinate with the university of Hawaii and relevant
5 federal agencies to evaluate program outcomes.

6 (c) The commission shall prioritize financial and
7 technical assistance for agricultural projects of no more than
8 fifty acres for beginning farmers, Native Hawaiian farmers, and
9 socially disadvantaged farmers.

10 (d) The commission shall submit an annual report of its
11 findings and recommendations, including any proposed
12 legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior
13 to the convening of each regular session. The annual report
14 shall include equity and practice persistence metrics.

15 (e) The commission shall submit a comprehensive program
16 evaluation to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to
17 the convening of the regular session of 2028 and every three
18 years thereafter. The comprehensive program evaluation shall
19 include:

20 (1) Information detailing participation by farm type,
21 size, and demographics;



1 (2) Information detailing the adoption and maintenance
2 rate of any one-time establishment practice or annual
3 management practice;

4 (3) Economic and environmental outcomes;

5 (4) A review of the program, including recommendations for
6 program improvement and updates to any program
7 procedures; 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 the implementation
21 or installation of reforestation and agroforestry systems,



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

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

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

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

18 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

19 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



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 7/1/3000. (HD1)

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