

JAN 28 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO REGIONAL AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds the State's long-term
2 food security, rural economic resilience, and institutional
3 procurement strategies depend on a clear, data-driven
4 understanding of what crops can be grown profitably, at scale,
5 in different regions of the State. Current food systems plans
6 frequently rely on assumptions regarding production capacity,
7 supply readiness, and labor availability, rather than
8 comprehensive agricultural feasibility assessments.

9 The legislature further finds that comprehensive
10 agricultural feasibility assessments require a coordinated,
11 multi-agency, evidence-based planning framework that integrates
12 agro-ecological science, economic modeling, workforce analysis,
13 and infrastructure feasibility to ensure food systems plans are
14 adequate to support agriculture in the State. A working group
15 is therefore necessary to produce the necessary data and
16 information to support farmers at all scales; strengthen
17 neighbor island food system development; align production



1 capacity with institutional demand; and guide state investment
2 in agricultural infrastructure, regional kitchens, and
3 procurement initiatives.

4 The purpose of this Act is to establish the regional
5 agricultural feasibility and food systems production studies
6 working group to provide coordinated, region-specific
7 agricultural production and crop feasibility analysis across the
8 State.

9 SECTION 2. (a) The department of agriculture and
10 biosecurity shall establish and implement a two-year regional
11 agricultural feasibility and food systems production studies
12 working group to conduct island and region-specific agricultural
13 feasibility studies to inform statewide food system planning,
14 public procurement strategies, and agricultural investment.

15 (b) The working group shall be conducted through a multi-
16 agency framework that shall consist of the following members:

17 (1) A representative from university of Hawaii at Manoa
18 college of tropical agriculture and human resilience
19 who shall be responsible for agro-ecological analysis,
20 crop suitability, soil health, assessments, climate



- 1 and elevation modeling, and production systems
2 research;
- 3 (2) A representative from the department of business,
4 economic development, and tourism who shall be
5 responsible for economic modeling, cost-of-production
6 analysis, institutional demand alignment, regional
7 market feasibility, and integration with economic
8 development strategies;
- 9 (3) A representative from the agribusiness development
10 corporation who shall be responsible for feasibility
11 analysis of state agricultural lands, irrigation and
12 water systems, processing and aggregation
13 infrastructure, and other relevant agricultural
14 facilities relevant to projected production scenarios;
- 15 (4) A representative from the department of agriculture
16 and biosecurity who shall be responsible for statewide
17 agricultural policy coordination and alignment with
18 food security and agricultural development
19 initiatives; and
- 20 (5) A representative from the department of land and
21 natural resources who shall serve in an advisory



1 capacity to provide information on land
2 classification, water resource availability, and
3 constraints relevant to agricultural suitability.

4 (c) The regional agricultural feasibility and food systems
5 production studies working group shall conduct island- and
6 region-specific agricultural feasibility studies that assess:

7 (1) Crop feasibility and production potential, including:

8 (A) Crops that can be grown profitably by island,
9 region, elevation, and climate zone;

10 (B) Expected production volumes under real-world
11 conditions; and

12 (C) Production risks associated with pests, water
13 constraints, weather variability, and market
14 volatility;

15 (2) Infrastructure constraints and requirements,
16 including:

17 (A) Processing, aggregation, and cold storage
18 capacity;

19 (B) Access to land, water, electricity, and
20 transportation corridors; and



- 1 (C) Regional gaps in equipment, technology, and
- 2 shared-use facilities;
- 3 (3) Labor and mechanization needs, including:
- 4 (A) Current and projected agricultural labor gaps by
- 5 crop and production systems;
- 6 (B) Opportunities to improve labor efficiency through
- 7 mechanization or automation; and
- 8 (C) Workforce development needs, training capacity,
- 9 and barriers to entry for new growers;
- 10 (4) Controlled environment agriculture opportunities,
- 11 including:
- 12 (A) Identification of crops best suited for vertical
- 13 farming, aquaponics, and other controlled
- 14 environment systems;
- 15 (B) Feasibility of locating controlled environment
- 16 systems in industrial areas or enterprise zones;
- 17 and
- 18 (C) Strategies to reduce pressure on arable lands
- 19 while expanding local production capacity; and
- 20 (5) Alignment of agricultural supply with institutional
- 21 demand, including:



1 (A) Comparison of cost-of-production to institutional
2 price points;

3 (B) Compatibility with regional kitchen and farm-to-
4 school procurement forecasts; and

5 (C) Capacity for small-, mid-, and large-scale farms
6 to supply institutional buyers, including off-
7 grade products.

8 (d) The regional agricultural feasibility and food systems
9 production studies working group shall prioritize neighbor
10 island needs by:

11 (1) Conducting island-specific studies that reflect
12 regional conditions, infrastructure gaps, and market
13 access constraints;

14 (2) Developing recommendations that do not assume Oahu-
15 level economies of scale; and

16 (3) Providing tailored strategies for infrastructure,
17 procurement readiness, and production scaling.

18 (e) The working group may consult with:

19 (1) County agricultural offices;

20 (2) Farmers, ranchers, processors, and agricultural
21 cooperatives;



1 (3) Institutional buyers, including the department of
2 education, university of Hawaii, and healthcare
3 institutions;

4 (4) The Hawaii emergency management agency, for climate
5 resilience considerations; and

6 (5) Any other community or technical partners the working
7 group deems relevant.

8 (f) The working group shall submit an interim report of
9 its preliminary findings, recommendations, and any identified
10 data gaps, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to
11 the convening of the regular session of 2027.

12 (g) The working group shall submit a final statewide
13 agricultural feasibility and food systems production report,
14 including island-specific feasibility assessments, policy
15 recommendations, and proposed investment strategies to the
16 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
17 the regular session of 2028.

18 (h) Each report identified in subsections (f) and (g)
19 shall include:

20 (1) Region-by-region crop feasibility maps and production
21 scenarios;



- 1 (2) Infrastructure investment priorities;
- 2 (3) Workforce and mechanization needs assessments;
- 3 (4) Controlled-environment agriculture recommendations;
- 4 (5) Institutional procurement alignment analyses; and
- 5 (6) Strategies to support small-, mid-, and large-scale
- 6 farmers.

7 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
 8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
 9 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for
 10 the department of agriculture and biosecurity to implement the
 11 regional agricultural feasibility and food systems production
 12 studies working group.

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

15 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026, and
 16 shall be repealed on June 30, 2028.

17

INTRODUCED BY: Mike Gabbard



S.B. NO. 3258

Report Title:

DAB; Agriculture; Regional Agriculture Feasibility; Food Systems Planning; Study; Working Group; Reports; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the Regional Agricultural Feasibility and Food Systems Production Studies Working Group within the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to provide coordinated, region-specific agricultural production and crop feasibility analysis across the State. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Repeals 6/30/2028.

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

