
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 the
14 State'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
2 projects, and aina restoration and stewardship organizations.

3 (e) Applications for grants shall be made to the
4 department of agriculture and biosecurity and contain the
5 information as shall be required by rules adopted to administer
6 the pilot program. At a minimum, the applicant shall:

7 (1) Be licensed or accredited, in accordance with federal,
8 state, or county statutes, rules, or ordinances, to
9 conduct the activities or provide the services for
10 which a grant is awarded;

11 (2) Provide a detailed plan outlining the scope,
12 objectives, and projected impact of the project or
13 projects, including a clear breakdown of how grant
14 funds will be expended;

15 (3) Agree to use state funds exclusively for the purposes
16 of the program;

17 (4) Indicate the capability and capacity to properly carry
18 out the proposed project and properly administer grant
19 funds; provided that the department of agriculture and
20 biosecurity shall prescribe the applicant
21 qualifications for each grant;



- 1 (5) Comply with all applicable federal and state laws
2 prohibiting discrimination against any person on the
3 basis of race, color, national origin, religion,
4 creed, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, or
5 any other characteristic protected under applicable
6 federal or state law;
- 7 (6) Agree not to use state funds for purposes of
8 entertainment or perquisites;
- 9 (7) Comply with any additional requirements prescribed by
10 the department of agriculture and biosecurity;
- 11 (8) Comply with all applicable federal, state, and county
12 statutes, rules, and ordinances;
- 13 (9) Agree to indemnify and hold harmless the State and its
14 officers, agents, and employees from and against any
15 and all claims arising out of or resulting from
16 activities carried out or projects undertaken with
17 grant funds provided hereunder and procure sufficient
18 insurance to provide this indemnification if requested
19 to do so by the department of agriculture and
20 biosecurity; and



1 (10) Agree to make available to the department of
2 agriculture and biosecurity all records the applicant
3 may have relating to the grant, to allow state
4 agencies to monitor the applicant's compliance with
5 this section."

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

- 12 (1) The number and types of participants;
- 13 (2) Acres and areas impacted by conservation
14 implementation;
- 15 (3) Types of conservation practices funded and completed;
- 16 (4) Environmental, social, and cultural outcomes,
17 including soil health improvements, compost use, water
18 efficiency, and other documented benefits, community
19 participation, education, and awareness about
20 conservation and agriculture; and



1 (5) Recommendations regarding expansion, modification, or
2 continuation of the program.

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

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

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

13 SECTION 6. New statutory material is underscored.

14 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050, and
15 shall be repealed on June 30, 2028; provided that the department
16 of agriculture and biosecurity shall retain the authority to
17 complete reporting requirements and close-out activities.



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.
Appropriates funds. Repeals 6/30/28. Effective 7/1/2050.
(SD1)

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not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

