

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 24 , 2026

RE: S.B. No. 2153
S.D. 2
H.D. 1

Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura
Speaker, House of Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2026
State of Hawaii

Madame:

Your Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems, to which was referred S.B. No. 2153, S.D. 2, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO AGRICULTURE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to require the Board of Agriculture and Biosecurity to:

- (1) Develop and adopt a multi-tiered, matrix-based assessment framework to develop definitions for the terms "bona fide farmer" and "bona fide agricultural activity" to be codified into the Hawaii Revised Statutes;
- (2) Collaborate with stakeholders to draft the terms "bona fide farmer" and "bona fide agricultural activity"; and
- (3) Report to the Legislature on the drafted definitions for the terms "bona fide farmer" and "bona fide agricultural activity" and periodically review and submit any proposed amendments to the definitions or framework.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.; Hawai'i Farm Bureau; and



two individuals. Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity and Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Your Committee finds that agricultural lands in the State are a finite and vital resource, with zoning laws distinguishing agricultural use from residential or commercial development. Your Committee further finds that inconsistent definitions of "bona fide farmer" can lead to misuse of agricultural zoning, reducing available agricultural land and undermining efforts to preserve the land for commercial agricultural purposes. Your Committee believes that careful consideration must be given in defining "bona fide farmer" and "bona fide agricultural activity" in ways that recognize the diversity of agricultural operations in the State while discouraging misuse of agricultural designations.


Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Deleting its substantive contents and inserting language that requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to convene a Bona Fide Farmer Working Group to develop multi-tiered, matrix-based definitions for the terms "bona fide farmer" and "bona fide agricultural activity";
- (2) Amending the preamble to reflect its amended purpose;
- (3) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (4) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2153, S.D. 2, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2153, S.D. 2, H.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Finance.



Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Agriculture & Food
Systems,



CORY CHUN, Chair



