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State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2026
10:00 AM
CONFERENCE ROOM 308**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1616, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1616, House Draft 1. This bill does not include a preamble specifying its intent but appears to be designed to expressly allow for the care and production of swine and swine products using Korean natural farming in certain agricultural parks managed by the Department regardless of whether the county approves of such use. The Department respectfully offers comments.

Section 166-3.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), already allows the Department to approve two lots in any agricultural park to be used for "the processing, marketing, and displaying of agricultural crops or commodities, which shall include any product created through value-added processes as defined by rules adopted by the board." House Bill 1616, House Draft 1, proposes to add a sentence at the end of this section to provide that the Department can allow for commercial activity on two lots of an agricultural park "regardless of whether the legislative body of the county in which the agricultural park is situated approved plans and specifications for" such commercial activity. The Department reads that language to mean that county council approval is not required for plans and specifications for any improvements to be constructed on such lots, unless prohibited by the "final plans and specifications for the agricultural park."

House Bill 1616, House Draft 1, further proposes to amend Section 166-6(a)(1), HRS, to allow the Department to issue leases for "the care and production of swine and swine products only using Korean natural farming." However, such use would only be permitted in agricultural parks containing more than 50 lots and located in a county with

Testimony of Sharon Hurd

March 4, 2026

Page 2

a population of more than 200,000 but less than 300,000. The only location that fits the limitations set in this measure is the Department's Pahoia Agricultural Park.

The Department is aware of one organization who expressed interest in the past about leasing land in the Pahoia Agricultural Park for a piggery. The Department notes that piggeries and similar swine operations can generate odors, noises, and other nuisances far more impactful to the community than those of typical agricultural park uses, even though Korean natural farming can reduce some of these issues. Accordingly, it may be prudent to ensure that piggeries and other swine operations comply with all State and county laws and regulations designed to mitigate odors, noises, and other impacts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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March 4, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

TESTIMONY ON HB 1616, HD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 308 & Videoconference
10:00 AM

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate, and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports the intent of HB 1616, HD1, which seeks to strengthen agricultural parks by allowing greater flexibility for agricultural production and value-added activities.

HB 1616, HD1 addresses practical challenges that have emerged in agricultural parks over time. While existing law allows limited commercial uses within agricultural parks, such as processing, marketing, displaying agricultural products, and value-added agricultural activities, those uses were often required to be identified during the initial park development process. In practice, this has limited flexibility as agricultural parks evolve and as farmers' operational needs change. This measure clarifies that the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity may approve up to two agriculture-based commercial lots within an agricultural park after initial development, unless such uses were expressly prohibited in the park's final plans. Importantly, these activities must remain agricultural in nature, be operated by agricultural park lessees in good standing, and support agricultural production. Allowing limited sales to the general public in this context can further support farm viability without converting agricultural parks into commercial zones.

HFB also recognizes the bill's narrow authorization for swine production in specific agricultural parks. Livestock production, including hog farming, is a legitimate agricultural activity, and increasing local hog production supports Hawai'i's goal of doubling local food production while strengthening supply for the Farm to School program, DOE's Regional Kitchens, and other institutional food programs. At the same time, agricultural parks are

shared environments, and it is important that livestock operations be properly sited, managed, and overseen to avoid unintended impacts on neighboring farms.

HFB believes that DAB, through its agricultural park leasing authority and the oversight of the Board of Agriculture, plays a critical role in reviewing, approving, and enforcing agricultural uses within state agricultural parks. Clear approval authority and consistent enforcement are essential safeguards to ensure that expanded agricultural activities support, rather than undermine, existing farming operations within a park.

Finally, HFB emphasizes the importance of continued coordination between the State and county planning departments. While agricultural parks are a state program under Chapter 166, alignment with county land-use requirements and ongoing communication will be important to ensure consistent and effective implementation.

HFB appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony and supports the intent of HB 1616 to allow more farming, support agricultural viability, and strengthen the functionality of agricultural parks while maintaining appropriate oversight and protection.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Date of Hearing: 4 March, 2026

To: Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and the House Committee on Finance

Subject: **HB1616 HD1**, Relating to Agriculture

Aloha,

Hawai'i Food+ Policy is writing in **support** of **HB1616 HD1**. This measure clarifies that commercial activities may take place within agricultural parks after initial development, even if not approved by the county, and allows the care and production of swine in certain agricultural parks under specific conditions.

Hawai'i imports approximately 85-90% of its food and many local producers struggle to remain financially viable when limited to selling unprocessed raw products. By allowing value-added processing, marketing, and direct sales within agricultural parks, it can help farmers to retain more value locally, reduce reliance on distributors, and strengthen local food supply chains. Such opportunities are important for small and mid-scale farmers who can significantly improve farm income and long-term viability through on-site processing and selling directly to consumers.

We do have concerns regarding the provision that allows new commercial activity within agricultural parks to be approved without county involvement. Counties play a critical role in representing local communities and understanding place-specific impacts related to land use, infrastructure, and environmental health. We continue to advocate for counties to retain a role in approval to ensure that smaller communities continue to have a meaningful voice in decisions that directly affect their lands and livelihoods. County legislative bodies are valuable in reflecting the communities' needs and concerns.

We support HB1616 HD1 and propose the above suggested amendments allowing for continued county involvement, which can preserve county involvement in decisions regarding commercial activity within agricultural parks while maintaining the goal of supporting a resilient and locally grounded agricultural system.

Mahalo,
Brandon Kinard & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2026, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.

Aloha my name is Brandon Koskie and I am in support of HB1616. This bill will assist Hawaii in the future with food security and the challenges farmers face with acquiring land. It allows commercial activities such as packing, processing, and sales to proceed after being developed which helps speed up the production of food. This creates an increase in income and makes farming more sustainable and efficient on leasehold land. The next generation of farmers will increase due to an easier entry into agriculture with lower costs and less red tape to discourage them. The approval of swine products would be a great support towards Hawaii's food security. It will lower the cost of imports to the state, reduce environmental impact, and keep food affordable for locals. The Korean farming style is also a low risk method to reduce odors and biosecurity issues since it is a progressive and eco-friendly approach to raising livestock. If this bill does go into effect, I encourage strong DLNR/DOA rules and monitoring to ensure success and address biosecurity.