



‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAI‘I

Legislative Testimony

Hō‘ike Mana‘o I Mua O Ka ‘Aha‘ōlelo

LATE

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
Wednesday, April 8, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

By

Parwinder Grewal, Dean
College of Agriculture and Human Resilience

and

Vassilis Syrmos, PhD
Interim Provost
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

HCR 31/HR 31 – RECOGNIZING 2026 AS THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS IN HAWAII.

Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HCR 31/HR 31 recognizing 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in Hawai‘i, in solidarity with the United Nations.

HCR 31/HR 31 encourages state agencies, the University of Hawai‘i, and organizations across the State to engage in activities that promote education, research, and outreach related to rangeland management and adopt policies that will further conserve rangelands and protect the livelihoods of the State’s ranchers.

The University of Hawai‘i College of Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) recognizes the value of Hawai‘i’s rangelands and the ranchers that steward them. Through research and Extension initiatives CTAHR is committed to working with ranchers and private and public land management agencies to assure the ecological, economic, and cultural significance of rangelands in Hawai‘i are sustained. Our faculty, through a diversity of program areas, conduct research and provide Extension outreach across many areas directly aligned with the purpose of HCR 31/HR 31 to engage in activities that promote education, research, and outreach related to rangeland management. CTAHR appreciates the contributions by ranchers, pastoralists and land managers to the state economy, paniolo culture and ecological stewardship of rangelands.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HCR 31/HR 31.



P.O. Box 253, Kunia, Hawai'i 96759
Phone: (808) 848-2074; Fax: (808) 848-1921
e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

April 8, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON HCR 31 & HR 31
RECOGNIZING 2026 AS THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RANGELANDS AND
PASTORALISTS IN HAWAII

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
10:00 AM

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice-Chair Kusch, 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 HCR 31 & HR 31, which recognizes 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in Hawai'i.

Rangelands play a critical role in Hawai'i's agricultural landscape, supporting livestock production, watershed health, soil stability, and open space across the State. As noted in the resolution, over one million acres of Hawai'i's land are classified as rangelands, reflecting their significance to both our economy and environment.

Hawai'i's ranchers are stewards of these lands, managing over 750,000 acres of rangelands while contributing to local food production and the State's rural economy. Their work supports not only livestock production, but also the preservation of open space, protection of natural resources, and continuation of Hawai'i's paniolo heritage.

HFB appreciates that this measure recognizes the important connection between working lands, environmental stewardship, and cultural traditions. Rangelands provide a wide range of benefits, including water resource protection, biodiversity, carbon storage, and wildfire risk management, all of which are increasingly important for Hawai'i's long-term resilience.

We also support the resolution's encouragement of education, research, and outreach related to rangeland management. Continued collaboration between state agencies, the University of Hawai'i, and the agricultural community will be important to ensure that these lands remain productive and sustainable for future generations.

HCR 31 and HR 31 appropriately recognizes the contributions of ranchers and pastoralists in Hawai'i and aligns the State with the global recognition of their role in sustaining rangeland ecosystems.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of these measures.

LARRY JEFTS FARMS, LLC
PO BOX 27
KUNIA, HAWAII 96759
(808) 688-2892

HCR31/HR31

Recognizing 2026 As the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in Hawaii
House Agriculture & Food Systems (AGR) Hearing – 10:00 AM
Wednesday, April 8, 2026

Testimony By: Larry Jeffs
Position: Support

Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House AGR Committee:

I am Larry Jeffs, owner and operator of Larry Jeffs Farms, LLC. We have more than 40 years of Hawaii farm experience on Molokai and Oahu. Our family farms grow about 1 million pounds weekly of import replacement produce. I am a volunteer director, serving as Chair of the West Oahu Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). I have been an officer of the Hawaii Farm Bureau for many years.

In Hawaii, more than 1,000,000 acres are classified as rangelands. Of that, Hawaii ranchers raise livestock on over 750,000 acres and contribute more than \$50 million annually to the State's economy. Ranchers, also known as pastoralists, are stewards of these lands. As stewards, they have deep knowledge of the terrain, environment and a practical approach to managing their livestock.

Hawaii's pastoralists share a rich history and legacy with global pastoral communities, emphasizing sustainable rangeland management through technology and hard work. Rooted in and continuing the paniolo tradition, Hawaii's pastoralists merit recognition by this Legislature in alignment with the United Nations' designation of 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration of this important recognition.



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS
Rep. Cory M. Chun, Chair
Rep. Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair

HCR 31/HR 31
RECOGNIZING 2026 AS THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS IN HAWAII.

April 8, 2026, 10:00 AM
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **strongly supports HCR31/HR31** which recognizes 2026 as the International Year of the Rangelands and Pastoralists in Hawaii.

Supporting rangeland stewardship and uplifting the role of ranchers means we are supporting food production, land stewardship, and the paniolo culture. Here in Hawaii, we promote legislation and programs that keep ranchers on agricultural land because of the many benefits of well-managed rangelands – fire fuel reduction, invasive species control, increased groundwater filtration, improved soil and carbon sequestration, and ultimately, the production of a high-quality protein for our community. Throughout these systems, the boots on the ground that manage them across many generations include paniolo of all ages and backgrounds. They all hold similar high-priority values – love of the land, responsibility to the animals and families they serve, and hard work.

The benefits of rangelands and ranchers are revered across the globe, as we celebrate the International Year of the Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) in 2026. We highlight the role that these systems play in food security, land stewardship, and community resilience across the world. Management may look different in different regions, but the same principles apply in caring for the land and the animals. Currently 102 countries support the IYRP. This is an opportunity to learn across regions, share challenges and successes, and uplift the next generation who seeks to contribute to utilizing livestock to manage land.

As part of the IYRP, and with support from a USDA grant, two high school students, Saige Imig and Maria Kimitch, represented Hawaii at the Society for Range Management's Annual Meeting



in Monterey, CA. Maria presented "From pastures to pavement: The loss of Rangelands and agriculture." Saige presented "Tiny Pest, Tremendous Problem" about the Two-lined Spittlebug and won first place for her presentation and was voted to be President of the 2027 High School Youth Forum in Wichita Kansas. Both students gave compelling, well-prepared presentations and we're proud that they were able to represent us.

We are proud of these students for representing Hawaii so well, and ask that the legislature assist us in continuing to celebrate the positive role of rangelands by passing this resolution to recognize the International Year of the Rangelands and Pastoralists. More info can be found at <https://iyrp.info>

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Ranchers produce a high-quality protein and are the stewards of almost 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or nearly 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

Nicole Galase
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Managing Director

HR-31

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 5:23:34 AM

Testimony for AGR on 4/8/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alex Franco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HR31.

HR-31

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 6:26:40 AM

Testimony for AGR on 4/8/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Douglas Beaton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of this bill

Ranchers are stewards of 20% of Hawaii lands

mansging wildlife, native forest and our watershed. Their support of Hawaii ecosystem is something they do on a daily basis .

mahalo

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HR-31

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 10:17:25 AM

Testimony for AGR on 4/8/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jimmy Gomes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support and stand with HCC tesimony.

LATE

HR-31

Submitted on: 4/7/2026 2:08:46 PM

Testimony for AGR on 4/8/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Fox	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the Committee. I strongly support HCR31/HR31 recognizing 2026 as the International Year of the Rangelands and Pastoralists in Hawai'i. Hawai'i ranchers and their well-managed rangelands contribute to local food security, a healthy economy, watershed protection, fresh water recharge, flood mitigation, invasive species prevention and control, and wildfire prevention and mitigation. Generations of ranchers have been and continue to be steadfast stewards of Hawai'i lands. In addition to managing rangelands for livestock production, many ranchers steward other natural areas and native habitat, plants and animals found nowhere else on Earth. Thank you for recognizing their critical contributions to our collective wellbeing.

LATE

HR-31

Submitted on: 4/8/2026 8:20:58 AM

Testimony for AGR on 4/8/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Moore	Kealia Ranch	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important Bill for the future of divers agriculture in Hawaii.

I have been in Agriculture and the ranching industry for 45 years on Hawaii Island. We are stewards of the land, working to feed the people of Hawaii. It is not a high profit occupation, we do it for love of the land, the plants and animals we care for, and for the people we feed.

We need all the State support we can get in the trying times. The people of Hawaii need all the support we can give them.

Mahalo,

Sara Moore