

JOSH GREEN M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION

Ka 'Oihana 'Auhau

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GARY S. SUGANUMA
DIRECTOR

KRISTEN M.R. SAKAMOTO
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**TESTIMONY OF
GARY S. SUGANUMA, DIRECTOR OF TAXATION**

TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. No. 2925, S.D.1, Relating to Coconut Trees

BEFORE THE:

House Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems

DATE: Wednesday, March 18, 2026

TIME: 9:30 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 325

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

The Department of Taxation (DOTAX) offers the following comments regarding S.B. 2925, S.D.1, for your consideration.

S.B. 2925, S.D.1, adds a new part to chapter 149A, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), to (1) recognize coconut trees as a source of food and water and as a cultural resource, (2) authorize coconut seed banks, (3) require labeling of pesticide-treated "landscape palms," and (4) direct the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to adopt related rules.

Section 2 of the bill creates a new refundable "natural management of the coconut rhinoceros beetle" income tax credit in chapter 235, HRS, for individual taxpayers who implement approved non-toxic management practices that result in "consumable coconut trees." The credit amount is based on an unspecified percentage of the qualified cost or an unspecified annual cap, whichever is less. Eligibility standards and cost certifications are to be determined and verified by DAB, including taxpayer certification that only approved natural management practices were used, and no prohibited pesticides were applied.

The refundable credit must be claimed within 12 months after the close of the taxable year and taxpayers are prohibited from claiming the credit for expenses used to claim any other tax credit.

The measure has a defective effective date of July 1, 2050, with the tax credit under section 2 applicable for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2026.

DOTAX defers to DAB regarding its ability to certify qualified costs, but requests that a third-party certification requirement be maintained.

Additionally, DOTAX recommends that the tax credit be made nonrefundable, as refundable credits are more susceptible to waste, abuse, and fraud.

Lastly, DOTAX notes that it can administer this new tax credit for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2026.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
Governor

SYLVIA LUKE
Lt. Governor



State of Hawai'i
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & BIOSECURITY
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SHARON HURD
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture & Biosecurity

DEAN M. MATSUKAWA
Deputy to the Chairperson

**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOSECURITY**

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2026
9:30 A.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 325 & VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 2925, SD1
RELATING TO COCONUT TREES**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2925, SD1 relating to coconut trees. This bill would establish coconut trees as a source of food and water, and as a cultural treasure. It would require the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to establish rules for coconut tree seed banks. It would also require owners or operators of properties with coconut trees to post and maintain a sign if the coconut tree is a landscape palm. The labeling standards for the landscape palms would be determined by the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity. The bill would also establish an income tax credit for consumable coconut trees managed through natural management practices. The Hawaii Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity ("Department") respectfully offers comments on this bill.

The Department appreciates the intent to promote pest management for coconut rhinoceros beetles, CRB. However, the Department is concerned that pesticides are not considered as one of the tools to combat CRB as it limits the options available to industry, agencies, and the public. The Department recommends the use of Integrated pest management, IPM, instead of "natural management." IPM is a concept of pest management that assesses the current situation based on the pest and takes advantage of all appropriate pest management options. Some suggested language for defining IPM are below.

"Integrated pest management" is an environmentally sensitive approach for pest management that takes advantage of all appropriate pest management strategies, such as, but not limited to monitoring pest levels, mechanical control, biological control,

habitat manipulation and the use of resistant varieties, and the judicious use of pesticides.

Chapter 149A of the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) relates solely to pesticides. Only proposed section 149A-F involves actual pesticide use so the other proposed sections to be added to HRS §149A, should be placed in another Chapter that is more appropriate to the topic. For example, Senate Bill No. 1582 HD1 (SLH 2025), Relating to the Coconut Tree, places support for coconuts in Chapter 141, HRS, and in Title 12, Subtitle 6, HRS. The Hawaii Seed Law, Chapter 150, HRS, already has provisions related to seeds (though limited to regulation of sales).

The Department disagrees with the definitions in proposed section 149A-B for “Coconut “Consumable coconut tree” and “Landscape palm.” These two definitions should not hinge on the application of pesticides or poisons since the purpose of Chapter 149A is specifically related to pesticide use, and the language should reflect common terminology used in pesticide labels. Definitions listed here would be applicable across all the terms used in pesticide labels. For example, an insecticide that is labeled for landscape use and used on an ornamental palm would be interpreted as use that can only be used on coconut trees “treated with pesticides or poison...that is maintained only for ornamental or landscaping purposes.” However, there are other landscape palms besides coconut trees such as the royal palm. Some suggested languages are provided below.

“Edible coconut tree” means a coconut tree that is grown and managed for food or feed use”.

“Landscape palm” means any plant in the family Arecaceae that is grown and managed solely for ornamental or landscaping purposes.

The Department requests definitions for the terms “non-toxic,” “minimally toxic,” “persistent,” and “poison.” This is to ensure clarity for end users and to better enforce these new statutes. There are pesticide products that are fungicides or contain biological microbes that are considered hazardous to varying degrees and are regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, EPA. Additionally, the EPA requires signal words that range from “Caution” to “Danger” on pesticide products to alert the user of the toxicity of the product.

The Department of Health has jurisdiction regarding the standards for potable water in the State. As such, the Department disagrees with establishing rules under HRS §149A-C regarding recognizing coconut trees as a natural source of potable water and recommends moving this provision to more a suitable Chapter.

The proposed section under HRS §149A-A(3) for “allowing the lawful production and banking of viable coconut seeds” is unnecessary. Seed banks are not prohibited by

any law, except to the extent affected by other laws, such as for biosecurity measures. Currently, seed banks are maintained by a variety of other organizations such as the Department of Land and Natural Resources, the University of Hawaii, and the Akaka Foundations. The Department already has the authority to adopt policies and/or rules for the items provided in subsection (c). Additionally, standards should not be voluntary if implemented in administrative rules and if standards are set, then the Department does not have the resources to enforce these standards on other seed banks that maintain coconut seeds.

Pesticides are regulated by the EPA to ensure their safe and effective use. Any coconut tree “treated with pesticides...that render the coconuts unsafe for human consumption” would be a violation of the Federal Insecticide, Rodenticide, and Fungicide Act, FIFRA, and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, FFDC. The Pesticides Branch at Department and the Food and Drug Branch at Department of Health would take action to enforce these federal laws. The Department recommends the following language regarding “Landscape palms, labeling. (a)” below.

“Any landscape palm shall be clearly identified by a sign”.

The Department expresses concern regarding the enforcement of the signage required for all landscape palms. The Department does not have the resources to enforce this law and subsequent rules for all property owners who have landscape palms. As such, the Department is requesting four environmental health specialist IV positions, one for each island, that would be dedicated to enforcing this provision.

The proposed bill includes amending the HRS, § 235, and this Chapter does not fall under the Department’s jurisdiction, but the Department of Taxation. The Department does not have the resources to conduct the inspections pertaining to the tax credit eligibility as provided in subsection (c). As such, the Department is requesting two environmental health specialist IV positions to cover all islands. The Department may request additional positions in the future should the tax incentive inspections increase beyond the capacity of the two staff requested. The Department may also request additional funds to accomodate any new positions allocated to the Department.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify to this measure.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2925 SD1

RELATING TO COCONUT TREES

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka ‘Oihana Mahi‘ai a me ka ‘Ōnaehana Mea‘ai

Malaki 18, 2026

9:30AM

Lumi 325

Aloha e Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB2925 SD1**, which responds to the devastating impacts of Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) on niu across ka Pae ‘Āina Hawai‘i by recognizing the importance of niu, creating a labeling system to identify niu trees treated with pesticides, and establishing a tax credit to offset the costs of managing CRB through natural methods.

Niu is part of a network of pilina (relationships) between Native Hawaiians and ‘āina that sustained communities since time immemorial. Recognizing niu as a food and water source and affirming its cultural significance ensures that these relationships to ‘āina are preserved and carried forward for future generations. Unfortunately, CRB has already had devastating impacts on our niu trees. Additionally, in managing CRB, many niu trees have been treated with toxic pesticides, rendering their niu unsafe for human consumption. The loss of our niu comes with the loss of an essential source of food and water as well as traditional and customary practices.

SB2925 SD1 introduces a framework around natural management of CRB: incentivizing treatment methods that are not toxic to humans, ensuring niu trees unsafe for consumption are labeled, and providing a tax credit to reimburse individuals for the costs related to CRB management. Transparency regarding pesticide use to treat niu protects access to safe, consumable niu. As communities face increasing pressures from climate change, rising food costs, and loss of traditional resources, ensuring trees that have been treated with pesticides are properly marked prevents unintended exposure to

harmful chemicals and promotes accountability in land and resource management practices to better support Hawai'i's long term food security.

Moreover, providing a tax credit to offset non-toxic and natural management of CRB encourages individuals to participate in the management of CRB and thus fosters innovation in approaches to treatment. While a tax credit will have some revenue loss to the state, recruiting everyone to support long-term, environmentally sustainable management of CRB that protect food and water sources will better assist the state in managing the devastating impacts of CRB over time as best management practices are shared among the community. Management strategies that rely less on pesticides address the threat of CRB while maintaining alignment with mālama 'āina to safeguard niu for subsistence and cultural purposes.

For the reasons stated above, OHA respectfully urges this committee to **PASS SB2925 SD1**.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this critical issue.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

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LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

9:30 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 325

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2925, SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO COCONUT TREES

Senate Bill 2925, Senate Draft 1 recognizes coconut trees as a source of food, water, and cultural importance. It requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to create rules for using coconut tree seed banks within the state. It mandates property owners or operators with coconut trees to post a sign indicating that the tree is a landscape palm, where applicable. Additionally, it calls for DAB to set labeling standards for non-consumable landscape palms and establishes an income tax credit for maintaining consumable coconut trees through natural management practices. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure, provided it does not replace or negatively impact priorities outlined in the Executive Supplemental Budget request.**

The niu (coconut palm) symbolizes resilience and sustainability in Hawaiian culture, closely tied to traditional practices, language, and daily life. Historically, coconut trees provided nourishment, medicine, building materials, and fiber for ropes and weaving. Recognizing niu as a dependable staple food is a step toward restoring and revitalizing its significance in our communities.

Hawai'i imports approximately 85–90 percent of its food, making the state very vulnerable to supply chain disruptions. Niu is a flexible and nutritious food source, providing coconut water, milk, meat, and oil—all of which can support local food production and decrease reliance on imports. Encouraging coconut cultivation enhances food sovereignty and provides accessible, nutrient-rich options for island residents.

Niu is an iconic tree that enhances Hawai'i's sense of place. As a drought- and salt-tolerant species, it plays a vital role in stabilizing coastlines, preventing erosion, and capturing carbon.

Promoting the planting and protection of coconut trees strengthens Hawai'i's natural and cultural identity while supporting local sustainability efforts.

The Department's Division of Forestry and Wildlife has a Community Coconut Project as part of the Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Program. The Community Coconut Project aims to cultivate "niu as a relationship rooted in community and aloha 'āina" and focuses on sharing 'ike niu (coconut knowledge) to revive Hawaiian coconut resources, including the Uluniu system and the Hawaiian niu gene banking practice, within our Hawai'i communities. The project aligns with this bill.

Hawai'i considers the coconut palm more than just a crop—it's a sacred and essential resource that supports our land, people, and cultural identity. This bill aligns with goals for food security, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation.

The Department recognizes the importance of protecting coconut consumers from pesticides. Labeling coconut trees that have been treated with pesticides or poisons would improve that protection.

The Department promotes active control of CRB using integrated pest management. All legally approved and scientifically proven methods should be incorporated.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.
Mayor

JOSIAH K. NISHITA
Managing Director



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WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
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TO: Representative Cory M. Chun, Chair
Representative Matthias Kusch, Vice Chair
Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair
Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor
Rogerene Arce, Director of Agriculture

DATE: March 2, 2026

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF SB2925 SD1, RELATING TO COCONUT TREES**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure.

The Act establishes recognition of coconut trees as a source of food and water, and as a cultural treasure. Requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to establish rules to allow the use of coconut tree seed banks in the State. Requires owners or operators of property where any coconut tree is located to post and maintain a sign that clearly indicates that the coconut tree is a landscape palm, when applicable. Requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to establish labeling standards for non-consumable landscape palms. Establishes an income tax credit for consumable coconut trees maintained through natural management practices.

We **SUPPORT** this measure for the following reasons:

1. SB2925 strengthens protection of coconut trees, which are a vital part of Hawaii's cultural heritage, traditional food systems, and coastal landscapes, helping ensure they remain for future generations.
2. Regulated coconut seed banks and biosecurity rules creates a safer, more reliable supply of healthy planting material, protecting communities and farmers from devastating pests like the coconut rhinoceros beetle.
3. Expanding and safeguarding coconut tree plantings supports diversified local agriculture and value-added cottage industries.

Mahalo for your consideration.



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e-mail info@hfbf.org; www.hfbf.org

March 18, 2026

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

TESTIMONY ON SB 2925, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Conference Room 325 & Videoconference
9:30 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 provides comments on SB 2925, SD1. HFB previously supported legislation that recognized coconut as an important food source, cultural resource, and component of Hawai'i's food security. We appreciate the continued legislative attention to the role coconut trees play in community resilience and local food systems.

HFB recognizes the serious threat posed by the coconut rhinoceros beetle and supports efforts to expand effective management tools, encourage replanting, and preserve coconut resources for future generations. Provisions related to seed banks and incentives for management practices acknowledge the real costs and challenges faced by those caring for coconut trees.

At the same time, SB 2925, SD1 introduces new regulatory distinctions, labeling requirements, and implementation details that would be established through future rulemaking. As this measure moves forward, HFB encourages careful consideration of how these provisions may apply to agricultural operations, mixed-use lands, and existing management practices, and the importance of maintaining flexibility for producers operating under diverse conditions.

HFB appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and looks forward to continued collaboration on approaches that support food security, cultural values, and practical, workable solutions for managing coconut trees and invasive species.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



March 16, 2026

To: Chair Cory M. Chun, Vice Chair Matthias Kusch, and the House Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems

Subject: **SB2925 SD1**, Relating to Coconut Trees

Aloha,

I am writing to support SB2925 SD1. This measure would establish recognition of coconut trees as a source of food and water, and emphasize its cultural significance. It requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to establish rules to allow the use of coconut tree seed banks to grow more coconut and establish labeling standards for non-consumable landscape palms. It would also incentivize non-toxic practices when maintaining coconut trees with regards to fighting against the coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) by establishing an income tax credit.

Coconut trees, or kumu niu, are culturally significant across the Pacific, and Hawai'i is no exception. They are often called the tree of life. From coconut we can get water, milk, oil, meat, sugar, and building and crafting materials. Coconut has been found to help stabilize coastlines through controlling erosion¹. They are a symbol of resilience and sustainability, and it's a shame that to some they are known only for their role in landscaping. Now more than ever, it is apparent that the coconut tree needs to be protected with the presence of CRB on our islands. Our coconut tree population is being significantly impacted by CRB, which have been detected on O'ahu, Hawai'i Island, Kaua'i, and Maui, and has affected the growth of many coconut trees.

Growing more coconut trees through seed banks can help compensate for the loss in trees due to CRB, and this measure would support seeds banks by ensuring there are appropriate rules in place to help mitigate the spread of CRB during the handling and transportation of seeds. When pesticides and poisons are used to manage pests it is no longer safe to consume the fruit, and organizations such as Aloha Organic have proved that the use of natural management practices can combat the insect without needing to use chemicals that are harmful to public health through their development of organic CRB deterrent. Economically incentivizing individuals to maintain their coconut trees using natural management practices would allow there to be more coconut trees available for consumption, and as mentioned earlier, the ways in

¹ *Pick the Right Plant*. (n.d.). Retrieved March 2, 2026, from <https://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/rnre/downloads/plants%20%20control.pdf>

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.



which coconut can be consumed is numerous, so doing so would help increase Hawai'i's ability to be self-sustainable.

I urge the committee to pass SB2925 SD1 to recognize the significance of coconut trees regarding food sovereignty, sustaining traditional Hawaiian culture, and ecological resource protection and preservation.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this measure and thank you for your consideration.

Mahalo,
Sydney Haas & 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.

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
Supporting SB2925 SD1, Relating to Coconut Trees
Committee on Agriculture & Food Systems
March 18, 2026 at 9:30 am
Conference Room 325 and via Videoconference**

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify today. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Hawai'i and Palmyra supports SB2925 SD1, which establishes recognition of coconut trees as a source of food and water, and as a cultural treasure, requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to establish rules to allow the use of coconut tree seed banks in the State, requires owners or operators of property where any coconut tree is located to post and maintain a sign that clearly indicates that the coconut tree is a landscape palm, when applicable, requires the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to establish labeling standards for non-consumable landscape palms, and establishes an income tax credit for consumable coconut trees maintained through natural management practices.

Coconut trees are deeply important in Hawai'i as a source of food, cultural arts and products, and natural infrastructure. They contribute to shoreline stability, community food resources, and cultural practices. The continued spread of the coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) across O'ahu, Kaua'i, and now Hawai'i Island poses a serious threat to these values. We recognize that during active eradication efforts, particularly in areas where CRB has recently been detected, the use of pesticides can be vital due to their efficacy. At the same time, pesticide use often requires the removal of coconut flowers to prevent impacts to pollinators such as bees and prevents the harvest of coconuts for food and water. On islands where CRB has become established, it is important to provide the public with a variety of management options and to find a balance between controlling CRB in some trees while utilizing other approaches for trees intended for consumption or propagation.

This bill supports that balanced approach by recognizing the cultural and food value of coconut trees, promoting transparency around pesticide use, supporting seed banking, and encouraging non-toxic and natural management options where appropriate. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of SB2925 SD1.

Guided by science, TNC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the lands and waters upon which all life depends. The Conservancy has helped protect more than 200,000 acres of natural lands in Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll. We manage 84,000 acres in 13 nature preserves and 18 managed areas and have supported over 50 coastal communities to help protect and restore the nearshore reefs and fisheries of the main Hawaiian Islands.

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Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and Members of the House Agriculture & Food Systems Committee,

The Hawai'i Farmers Union is a 501(c)(5) agricultural advocacy nonprofit representing a network of over 2,500 family farmers and their supporters across the Hawaiian Islands. **HFU supports and seeks to amend SB2925.**

SB2925 provides meaningful recognition of coconut trees as essential sources of sustenance, hydration, and cultural heritage. By mandating the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) to establish guidelines for coconut tree seed banks, this bill ensures the preservation and propagation of these invaluable resources, fostering both agricultural sustainability and cultural continuity.

While we strongly support the intent of identifying trees treated with systemic pesticides, **we recommend that the labeling requirement for Landscape Palms be limited to trees located on public lands and lands that are generally accessible to the public.** Focusing on publicly accessible areas ensures that communities are protected from consuming contaminated foods without placing additional burden on producers. Restricting this mandate to public or publicly accessible spaces reduces the regulatory burden on private homeowners and agricultural producers whose land is not open to the public, while still maintaining a high standard of public health and safety.

The proposed income tax credit for those who maintain consumable coconut trees through natural management practices offers vital incentives that align with sustainable agricultural methods. This approach supports farmers and landowners in the fight against the coconut rhinoceros beetle without compromising the purity of our food system.

Together, these measures highlight a proactive stance toward nurturing a resource that is integral to our islands' ecosystems and cultural fabric. We urge the committee to pass this measure with the suggested amendment.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Hunter Heavilin
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Farmers Union

SB-2925-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2026 6:15:04 PM

Testimony for AGR on 3/18/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yanrong Chen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Chun, Vice Chair Kusch, and members of the Committee on Agriculture and Food Systems,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB2925, which recognizes coconut trees as vital food, water, and cultural resources; regulates their labeling and management; and provides tax incentives for naturally maintained consumable coconut trees.

My name is Yanrong (Irene) Chen and I am a sophomore at ‘Iolani School testifying in support of SB2925. I am both a youth group leader of the Oceans & Biodiversity Group in Climate Future Forum, and a committee member of Hawai‘i Youth Food Council. In recent years I have grown to become more climate conscious than ever whether that be for our mountains, our streams or our oceans, and I urge the public and our government to call for long-term solutions.

Coconut trees are often overlooked as ornamental landscaping trees planted on the side of Waikiki, but Coconut trees, or niu, have long been a vital part of Hawaiian culture and sustenance. Traditionally, every part of the tree served a purpose: from the fruit providing nourishing food and clean drinking water, to the leaves and husks being used for weaving, shelter, and tools. More than just a resource, the niu symbolizes life, resilience, and connection between people and the ‘āina. By recognizing and protecting these trees, we preserve not only a food source but also an important part of heritage and identity.

However, our coconut resources now face a serious threat from the invasive Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle, which destroys trees from the crown and prevents them from regenerating. Many of the remaining coconut trees are aging or being removed due to infestation risks, leaving fewer edible coconuts available for communities. By offering a tax credit for maintaining consumable coconut trees grown through natural and sustainable practices, this bill encourages residents to preserve these vital food sources, protect healthy trees, and strengthen local food security.

Hawai'i is currently facing a long-term threat of Coconut Rhinoceros Beetles and it is important that we create plans for this problem. Hawai'i must take a multi-pronged approach to environmental management and protection to ensure the viability of the land and people. This bill helps achieve those goals efficiently and equitably, and I'd love to discuss this further if there are any concerns.

Mahalo!

Yanrong (Irene) Chen, Kapahulu/Mo'ili'ili



IN SUPPORT OF SB2925

The Libertarian Party of Hawaii recognizes the deep cultural, practical, and self-reliant value that coconut trees hold for the people of Hawai‘i. SB2925 takes meaningful steps toward affirming these values without imposing heavy-handed mandates often seen today on the topic of agriculture. Coconut trees are a vital, multi-generational source of food, water, building materials, and cultural significance in Native Hawaiian traditions. In a time of increasing concerns over food security, and heavy reliance on imported resources, recognizing the coconut tree as a source of food and water, and as a cultural treasure, promotes self-sufficiency and honors Hawai‘i's heritage. This symbolic and practical affirmation aligns with libertarian principles of empowering individuals and communities to sustain themselves rather than depending on centralized systems.

We particularly appreciate provisions that direct the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity to establish rules allowing the use of coconut tree seed banks. Seed banks preserve genetic diversity and enable private individuals, farmers, and cultural practitioners to propagate trees freely while reducing barriers to voluntary conservation and local food production.

We are also in favor of establishing an income tax credit for consumable coconut trees maintained through natural management practices. This is a targeted, voluntary incentive that rewards responsible stewardship without forcing compliance or punishing non-participants.

Finally, we support the bill's requirements for signage on landscape palms and labeling standards for non-consumable palms treated with pesticides that render their coconuts unsafe for human consumption. This is a practical preventative measure that ensures consumers are clearly aware of potential risks from treated fruit. It achieves a reasonable balance by promoting consumer and environmental awareness without overly restricting pesticide options or imposing broad prohibitions. We do, however, urge the committee to ensure any implementing rules remain minimal, transparent, and fully respectful of property owners' rights.

SB2925 advances positive recognition and incentives that empower people to care for their ‘āina and resources. Protecting and promoting coconut trees supports resilience, cultural preservation, and economic freedom for farmers and homeowners alike. We respectfully urge the committee to **pass SB2925**.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to submit testimony.

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Testimony for AGR on 3/18/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill and appreciate all your hard work. Mahalo!