



'Āina Aloha Economic Futures

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Release: 'Āina Aloha Economic Futures Calls on Federal House Agriculture Committee to Support Hawaiian Agriculture in Pending Farm Bill Discussions

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Release: 'Āina Aloha Economic Futures Calls for Parity in House Agriculture Committee's Farm Bill

Honolulu, Hawai'i, May 20, 2024 – 'Āina Aloha Economic Futures is applauding the work of the Hawai'i congressional delegation in advancing Hawaiian interests in the Farm Bill, and is calling on other members of the House Agriculture Committee to continue that support as they proceed with their mark up.

The House Agriculture Committee plans to mark up bill text for the Farm Bill on May 23, 2024. Their recently released summary comes days after Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) [released](#) a detailed [section-by-section](#) description of their bill, called the [Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act](#). Early review shows that the Senate Agriculture Committee bill contains many provisions favorable to Native Hawaiian agriculture. The concern is that the version released by the House Ag Committee (chaired by Rep. Glenn Thompson, R-PA) does not have those provisions and appears to contain significant cuts to nutrition programs, negatively impacting public health, and removes support for climate-related programs and practices. This will further disadvantage farmers who are investing in regenerative agriculture and traditional ecological knowledge, and negatively impact smaller scale farmers.

Native Hawaiian priorities in the farm bill were presented in testimony to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (chaired by Hawai'i Senator Schatz) last spring, by 'Āina Aloha Economic Futures, through co-authors Davis Price and Mahina Paishon. The priorities were identified through a series of stakeholder meetings held among Native Hawaiian producers and practitioners throughout the islands and facilitated by 'Āina Aloha Economic Futures in partnership with NDN Collective, the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement, the Native Farm Bill Coalition and others.

“We are grateful to the many Native Hawaiian producers who made time to share their priority areas of need and support, and to our Hawai'i Senators Schatz and Hirono for advancing those priorities,” said Climate Justice Initiative Director (NDN Collective) Davis Price. “Hawai'i has, for too long, been barge dependent for its food. We need to have a more localized food economy for all residents of Hawai'i, and centering that on traditional Native Hawaiian agricultural systems will improve the health and prosperity of our *'āina* (land), wai (water) and kānaka (people).”

The Senate Agriculture Committee version of the farm bill includes a number of provisions to support agriculture in Hawai'i, and for Native Hawaiian producers, including a process to recognize and reward the traditional ecological knowledge of Native Hawaiian farming practices, provide greater financial support for

“geographically disadvantaged farmers” (such as those faced with inter-island shipping costs), expand Regional Conservation Partnerships, officially establish a Hawai‘i Regional Business Center for food systems, increases DaBux funding and expands its reach to produce prescriptions.

“We call on all members of the House Agriculture Committee to continue the support shown by the Senate Agriculture Committee for Hawai‘i’s unique agriculture, and thank Representative Jill Tokuda, who sits on the committee, for her efforts advancing the interests of Hawai‘i and Native Hawaiians,” said ‘Āina Aloha Economic Futures co-author Mahina Paishon.

“Representative Tokuda has introduced a bill to create a rural and urban Thrifty Food Plan in Hawai‘i, which would bring parity with Alaska and could significantly increase SNAP benefits on the neighbor islands,” said Paula Daniels, food policy expert and host of The Thirty Percent Project podcast (about Hawai‘i’s goals for 30% local food by 2030). “We call on the members of the House Agriculture Committee to vote for this needed assistance for underserved communities in Hawai‘i and also to support the recognition of Traditional Ecological Knowledge as a valuable conservation practice.”

Some specific provisions of the Senate Agriculture Committee version of the Farm Bill, which would support local agriculture in Hawai‘i, are:

- Authorizes NRCS (the Natural Resource Conservation Service) to enter into cooperative agreements with farmer-to-farmer networks, Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations, to build capacity for mentoring networks to support consistent, science-based, site-specific practices designed to achieve conservation objectives and to increase the provision of technical assistance that meets the specific needs of farmers, ranchers, and forest owners
- Specifies Tribal, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian organizations as eligible entities for Rural Development grants .

- Increases authorization of appropriations for education grants to Native Hawaiian serving institutions to \$15 million for each of fiscal years 2025 through 2029.
- Streamlines the process for NRCS approval of interim and final conservation practice standards and requires NRCS to consider conservation innovations, scientific and technical advancements, traditional ecological knowledge, and the results of Conservation Innovation Grant On-Farm Trials to proactively establish new and update existing conservation practice standards.
- Directs NRCS to allow flexibility for State, Tribal, and local governments to create interim conservation practice standards particular to specific regions.
- Authorizes NRCS to enter into cooperative agreements with farmer-to-farmer networks, Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, Native Hawaiian Organizations, units of local government, institutions of higher education, or States to build capacity for mentoring networks to support consistent, science-based, site-specific practices designed to achieve conservation objectives and to increase the provision of technical assistance that meets the specific needs of farmers, ranchers, and forest owners.
- Allows for the expansion of eligible partners in the Regional Conservation Partnership Program to include Native Hawaiian Organizations.
- Includes Hawaii in The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
- Creates climate hubs, including one based in Hawai'i
- Authorizes a Regional Food Business Center to serve producers and businesses in Hawai'i

- Increases funding for Geographically Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers, which could be applied to inter-island shipping costs.
- For GusNIP (the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, which is the basis for Hawai'i's Double Up Bux program):
 - Increases the federal match for GusNIP projects from 50% to 80%.
 - Allows retailer associate wages to count towards the match.
 - Makes program improvements to produce prescription projects, including allowing for all forms of fruits and vegetables, establishing standards for review panels
 - Increases mandatory funding to carry out this section by \$750 million over 10 years.