UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI SYSTEM
Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Energy and the Environment
And
Senate Committee on Agriculture
Thursday, March 19, 2015 at 3:00 pm
By
Robert Bley-Vroman, Chancellor
And
Maria Gallo, Dean
And
J. Kenneth Grace, Associate Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

HB 507 HD1 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chairs Gabbard and Ruderman, Vice Chairs Green and Riviere, and members of the committees, we respectfully submit testimony in support of HB 507 HD1, which appropriates funds to the department of agriculture to collaborate with the University of Hawaiʻi to research and develop methods for the prevention and treatment of macadamia felted coccid.

Hawaiʻi is the third largest producer of macadamia nuts in the world, with approximately 15,000 acres harvested on the Island of Hawaiʻi and a $38.2 million farm-gate value (NASS 2012). Macadamia felted coccid is a severe pest of macadamia. This scale insect was found in south Kona in February 2005, and is now distributed throughout the Island of Hawaiʻi. Development of new control methods and appropriate management recommendations are essential for Hawaiʻi's producers to stop this invasive pest. Horticultural and harvest methods used in Hawaiʻi and the large size of trees in our well-established orchards contribute to great difficulties in achieving effective control.

In FY 2014, the legislature appropriated funds to initiate collaboration by the Department of Agriculture and CTAHR to address this serious invasive pest problem, augmented by funds committed by industry. With this support, CTAHR has begun the extensive field sampling required to develop a management decision plan, is testing the impact of canopy management, is developing methods to identify key predators of the coccid and to augment their populations, and is testing new control options.

This is not a simple problem, and a multi-year effort is required. HB 507 HD1 requests appropriation of the funds necessary to continue this research effort to the department of agriculture, in order to identify and import effective biological control agents, find ways to increase the populations of natural enemies of this insect pest, develop better insecticide application technologies, and ultimately develop an effective macadamia felted coccid management plan for Hawaiʻi macadamia orchards.