



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture
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by

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SB711 - RELATING TO GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FISH

Chair Nishihara, Vice Chair Kahele, and Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture:

The University of Hawai'i stands in opposition to SB 711.

The first genetically engineered (GE) fish were produced almost 25 years ago and since that time over 35 species have been genetically engineered. As of 2010 no GE fish has been approved for food production in the United States.

The greatest science-based concerns associated with GE fish are those related to the ecological consequences of their inadvertent release or escape, not the quality or safety of the food product. The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has found that a genetically engineered fish grown in a lab was "as safe as food from conventional Atlantic salmon," and will "not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment." Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that foods produced from GE animals would provide any greater hazards than the consumption of conventionally or organically raised animals.

Nonetheless, in September 2010, the FDA was unable to approve the first and only application for approval of a GE animal (salmon) for human consumption. Part of that federal decision-making involves labeling of the product. The decision was postponed to provide more time for public comment and more independent data analysis.

In Hawaii, it would be premature to legislate labeling requirements when not one evaluation of a GE animal has been completed by the FDA. Furthermore, the FDA is considering labeling requirements that may conflict with state guidelines should they be passed.

UH believes that if any labeling legislation is enacted, it should be fact-based and focused on providing information to consumers on what is actually in the food they are choosing. UH supports providing relevant, fact-based information to consumers so that they can make informed choices on what to buy and feed to their families. However the UH cannot support this fish labeling bill. As written, this bill will only add to consumer confusion and assist in perpetuating misinformation that foods produced by one method

or another are somehow safer than others when in fact, there is no data to support such presumptions.

UH respectfully requests that this bill be deferred.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.