



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.

By
Nicholas Comerford, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 96 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS

Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and members of the House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of HB 96. Our testimony relates to Section 1 (a) (3), (4) and (7) that apply to controlled environment agricultural (CEA) structures and other farm structures. This is similar testimony to that provided for SB 489.

CEAs need to be an important component of agriculture in Hawai'i's future. The advantages of CEAs include:

- protection from insects and, hence, plant disease vectors;
- protection from invasive plants as pests;
- more efficient use of water resources (particularly where hydroponics is used within the structures);
- more efficient use, and hence less use, of pesticides required to control insect and plant pests;
- higher production per square foot of ground;
- higher quality of product allowing a better price and more income for the operator; and,
- easier and more efficient manner of meeting food safety requirements.

As an example of the advantage of a shade house CEA based on research from the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, a CEA resulted in:

- a 50% reduction in insecticide use, and
- up to a 7-fold increase in marketable yields of cucumber, kale and zucchini.

This bill expands the opportunity and ease of increasing the CEA structures in Hawai'i. Given the known advantage of such structures, this bill has the potential to have a significantly large effect on Hawai'i agriculture.

Aquaculture/hydroponics can also be seen as a CEA structure. Approximately 63% of our seafood is imported (<https://hdoa.hawaii.gov/ai/aquaculture-and-livestock-support-services-branch/aquaculture-in-hawaii/>). Aquaculture/aquaponics can be a growth industry in Hawai'i. This bill provides for a greater efficiency and ease of increasing the aquaculture/aquaponics industry.

We strongly support the concept of increasing the permissible size of these structures that are exempt from building permits and building code requirements. We understand that this is an important move to improving Hawai'i agriculture. However, we defer to the proper engineering/permitting authorities as to the details of such a bill.