



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Agriculture
Wednesday, February 2, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.

By
Nicholas Comerford, Dean
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
And
Michael Bruno, PhD
Provost
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 1717 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Hashem, Vice Chair Perruso, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the intent of HB 1717 relating to establishing a foreign agriculture small equipment pilot program.

Hawai'i agriculture will benefit from the incorporation of smaller equipment that matches the limited acreage indicative of many farms in the state. CTAHR provides the following evaluation and comment to address the specific goals of HB 1717:

1. Identify and purchase foreign agricultural technology, including but not limited to small equipment tractors and retrofit engines, which will benefit the State's farmers and ranchers and comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's emission standards.

It is CTAHR's understanding that such equipment does not exist currently, which is the reason that such equipment is not currently in use. The expectation of the type of equipment to consider is quite open-ended, and the success of HB 1717 would benefit from a more specific charge.

2. Establish contact with manufacturers of small equipment in Japan and other countries.

This is certainly possible; in fact, CTAHR's Extension program has done this some years ago in response to previously expressed interests. Contacts with manufacturers would have to be re-initiated.

3. Work with the United States Environmental Protection Agency to identify federal Environmental Protection Agency standard and compliance requirements for small foreign agricultural equipment.

From past experience, this would be necessary in order to import any equipment. One option that has not been considered, is for the state to pay one or more of these companies to retrofit equipment prior to exporting to Hawai'i and having it pre-approved for import. It would be a reasonable approach given the inventors of the equipment are the most knowledgeable.

4. Collaborate with agriculture and agricultural professionals from foreign countries on management practices.

Management practices using equipment is often well-known. We see this more along the lines of training for the use of equipment. See below for training issues.

5. Bring harvesting, weed management, and field preparation machinery into the State of Hawai'i for evaluation.

This is consistent with #1 above.

6. Conduct on-farm trials to evaluate the efficacy and applicability to multiple growing systems (e.g. wetland conventional, organic, forage crops, etc.) statewide.

CTAHR assumes that this refers to how the new equipment is used in different systems.

7. Conduct education and training workshops statewide to update agriculture producers on available technology.

This is the mission of Cooperative Extension in CTAHR.

Limitations of HB 1717 in its current form and comments on changes:

1. CTAHR does not currently have the staff expertise to accomplish all of this, but that could be rectified with the appropriate budget.
2. The goals as stated will be a multi-year operation, and it is not clear if the plan and ability is to provide a multi-year budget. It would be helpful if that could be indicated in the bill.
3. The bill identifies CTAHR and mentions the inclusion of a community college, but does not identify the community college that has an appropriate program. It would be helpful if the bill was specific about the community college. That would

allow the community college to provide input to the bill's language and budget needs.

4. A budget is not proposed to accomplish those goals.

The goals outlined in this bill would require a budget that includes the following categories:

1. Adequate staff for a multi-year program in CTAHR and in the community college once the community college and its role are identified.
2. Significant funding for the purchase of equipment and its shipping to Hawai'i.
3. Significant funding for the retrofitting of the equipment either here or in the country of origin.
4. Travel funds (assuming COVID-19 does not become a limitation of travel) in order to find and evaluate the applicability of equipment in foreign countries.
5. Training for CTAHR personnel in the operation of the equipment, probably in the country of origin.
6. Funding for the community college that will participate in the program once their involvement is defined. A successful program would require that individuals receive training in the repair and maintenance of such equipment if it is distinctly different from what is currently available in Hawai'i.
7. Additional operating expenses necessary to meet this goal.

The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of HB 1717, but notes that there is much to be concerned with in its present form. In addition, we support this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Budget.