



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
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SB 2711 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Ruderman, and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the intent of SB 2711 that establishes a foreign agriculture small equipment pilot project.

The idea behind the bill is worthy in that given the prevalence of small farms in the state, and the need to improve the technology used on those farms, and that typical farm equipment is not of the right size to be effective on small farms. The need for equipment of appropriate size is clear.

The issue we see with this bill is that it does not clearly identify objectives for the pilot program. As written it includes identifying foreign agriculture technology, purchasing equipment, and retrofitting equipment engines to comply with Environmental Protection Agency standards.

Not included in the objectives is a list of what foreign technology beyond small tractors should be considered; nor does it include testing of the equipment on small farms in Hawai'i. If the objective is to see if it can be done, then it would be more appropriate to give the task to a community college that has the appropriate shop(s) to do the retrofitting, as well as give students a useful educational experience. The shop program might also be able to test the machinery in the field.

If the future is to consider buying equipment and lending it out as needed, that is typically done, in other states, through the county Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

We recognize the need for this equipment, and we would support a stronger plan that includes the more appropriate state organizations, since the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture does not seem like the right organization in which to put this.

Given the above arguments, we support the intent of SB 2711 and express concerns.