



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment
And
Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs
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SB 489 – RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS

Chairs Gabbard and Nishihara, Vice Chair English, and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment and Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SB 489. 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 HB 96.

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.