
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TARO.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature recognized the need to develop
2 non-genetic modification based solutions to protect taro from
3 disease and insects on a statewide basis. In senate concurrent
4 resolution no. 206 (2007), the legislature requested that the
5 department of agriculture develop a taro security and purity
6 research program that is designed to ensure that taro can be
7 saved and protected from natural attack.

8 In 2007, 1.8 million pounds of taro were imported to
9 Hawai'i. Under current biosecurity rules, the department of
10 agriculture was unable to inspect much of these imports for
11 threats to existing taro crops in the State.

12 At the same time, taro farmers are struggling with high
13 rates of pests and disease infestation, rising crop and land
14 costs, lack of access to quality water and land resources,
15 declines in crop cultivar biodiversity, and a decrease in the
16 number of families able to continue the taro farming lifestyle.
17 Taro and taro farms are a visual image that is critical to



1 Hawaii's economic vitality in agriculture, tourism, health and
2 wellness, and education and the arts. Taro and taro farms help
3 to sell Hawai'i to the world.

4 The department of agriculture was tasked under senate
5 concurrent resolution 206 (2007) to collaborate with taro
6 growers and various native Hawaiian groups to develop and adopt
7 a program that would:

- 8 (1) Allow the department of agriculture's biosecurity
9 program to protect crops in Hawai'i by inspecting
10 foreign crops upon entrance to the State, and
11 preventing any viruses or insects from entering the
12 State;
- 13 (2) Allow alternative forms of research on taro other than
14 genetic modification;
- 15 (3) Provide public outreach, engagement, and education on
16 taro research and protection; and
- 17 (4) Request the United States Department of Agriculture to
18 have the Alomae/Bobone virus disease complex and taro
19 beetles designated as "actionable pests" in the
20 findings of the United States Department of
21 Agriculture and the Hawai'i department of agriculture



1 report to prevent entry into Hawai'i from foreign
2 countries.

3 The department of agriculture initiated a dialogue with taro
4 farmers from each island, researchers and representatives from
5 the University of Hawai'i, the Hawai'i Farm Bureau, and the
6 office of Hawaiian affairs. From that dialogue a joint report
7 was drafted describing the outcomes and recommendations of the
8 participants. The joint report included proposed legislation
9 and was developed and forwarded to the legislature.

10 One of the primary recommendations of that report was to
11 form a taro security and purity task force in order to guide
12 policy and prioritize research for the protection of taro in
13 Hawai'i.

14 To ensure that such a task force would have the full
15 participation of taro farmers throughout the State, who have
16 faced crop hardships for many years without financial assistance
17 and whose resources are limited, the participants recommended
18 that the task force be funded under a legislative appropriation
19 for fiscal year 2009.

20 The purpose of this Act is to establish the taro security
21 and purity task force and appropriate funds out of the general
22 revenues of the State of Hawai'i for the formation and operation



1 of the task force with full participation of taro farmers from
2 all islands.

3 SECTION 2. There is established the taro security and
4 purity task force. For administrative purposes the taro
5 security and purity task force shall be placed within the
6 department of agriculture.

7 SECTION 3. The taro security and purity task force shall
8 consist of the following members or their representatives:

- 9 (1) The department of agriculture;
- 10 (2) The office of Hawaiian affairs;
- 11 (3) The University of Hawai'i; and
- 12 (4) The Hawai'i Farm Bureau Federation;

13 The taro security and purity task force shall also have a
14 minimum of two representatives from the taro farming communities
15 of each of the islands of Kaua'i, O'ahu, Maui, Moloka'i and
16 Hawai'i and one representative of botanical gardens or taro
17 collections in the State.

18 At no time shall less than fifty per cent of the task force
19 be comprised of taro farmers.

20 The taro security and purity task force members shall serve
21 without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for expenses,



1 including travel expenses, incurred in the performance of the
2 duties of the task force.

3 SECTION 4. The taro security and purity task force shall:

- 4 (1) Develop guidelines, protocols, and recommendations for
5 taro policy, non-genetic modification based taro
6 research, and the allocation of resources to ensure
7 that taro is saved and protected in Hawai'i;
- 8 (2) Develop a program of incentives and projects that have
9 the support of a broad spectrum of taro growers that
10 will enhance taro security, protect taro purity,
11 provide support to taro farms and farmers, and improve
12 taro markets for the long-term;
- 13 (3) Support the recovery of traditional Hawaiian taro
14 cultivars throughout the State; and
- 15 (4) Increase public awareness of the value of taro and its
16 role culturally, socially, in health and well-being,
17 environmentally, and economically in the State.

18 SECTION 5. The members of the taro security and purity
19 task force shall select a chairperson from among its members.

20 SECTION 6. The taro security and purity task force shall
21 meet at times and locations to be determined by its members;
22 provided that the first meeting of the taro security and purity



1 task force shall be no later than three months after the
2 effective date of this Act.

3 SECTION 7. The taro security and purity task force shall
4 submit a written report to the legislature summarizing its
5 program, the results achieved, and recommended legislation, by
6 no later than the 2009 regular session.

7 SECTION 8. There is appropriated out of the general
8 revenues of the State of Hawai'i the sum of \$650,000 or so much
9 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2008-2009 to be
10 allotted as follows:

11 (1) \$250,000 for the convening and implementation of the
12 taro security and purity task force, including the
13 conducting of dialogues on all islands;

14 (2) \$100,000 for retaining the minimum of at least one
15 person to facilitate, coordinate, communicate, and
16 record the work of the taro security and purity task
17 force;

18 (3) \$150,000 for archival and ethnographic research of the
19 history of taro and taro practices in Hawai'i and the
20 traditional Hawaiian cultivars to aid in its revival
21 and to revise Bulletin 84: Taro Varieties in Hawai'i



1 (1939) which is the key reference for taro growers and
2 researchers;

3 (4) \$125,000 for protection of the Moloka'i taro varieties
4 collection, the oldest and most complete collection
5 and source of taro varieties in Hawai'i; and

6 (5) \$25,000 for preparing the final report to be submitted
7 to the legislature.

8 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
9 agriculture for the purposes of this Act.

10 SECTION 9. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2008.



Report Title:

Taro Security and Purity Task Force; Appropriation

Description:

Creating the taro security and purity task force and appropriating funds for that purpose. (SD1)

