HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO WORK WITH THE TARO SECURITY AND PURITY TASK FORCE TO IDENTIFY TARO LANDS AND DEVELOP POLICIES TO PROMOTE TARO FARMING.

WHEREAS, Kalo (colocasia esculenta), the Hawaiian word for taro, is a culturally significant plant to the kanaka maoli, Hawaii's indigenous peoples and to the State; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, the Legislature recognized kalo's role in the State's history by designating kalo as the state plant; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature also passed Act 211, Session Laws of Hawaii 2008, which created the Taro Security and Purity Task Force that directed the taro farmers, Department of Agriculture, Department of Land and Natural Resources, University of Hawaii, Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, and Onipa'a Na Hui kalo representatives to seek solutions to challenges facing taro, taro farmers, and taro markets for a period of two years; and

WHEREAS, the Taro Security and Purity Task Force found that the State retains numerous lands within its jurisdiction that were former taro lands or are capable of becoming wet or dry taro producing lands on all islands, many of which are prioritized for other uses; and

WHEREAS, the Taro Security and Purity Task Force also found that some agricultural leases, both public and private, were as low as $30 per acre per year, but as high as $2,000 per acre per year when they were adjacent to highly valued residential properties or conservation land; and

WHEREAS, in general, taro farming lands appear to have higher lease rates among state agencies than leases for other agricultural uses; and

WHEREAS, the high cost of leases renders unaffordable critical fallowing practices that improve soil health and reduce...
apple snail populations and fungal diseases in taro soils; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2010, that the Legislature requests the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Land and Natural Resources, in conjunction with the Taro Security and Purity Task Force to:

(1) Reevaluate agency land inventory for potential taro-growing lands, and using local knowledge of the location of historic dry and wet taro cultivated areas, designate these lands for taro production use by January 1, 2012;

(2) Develop a consistent and affordable lease rent rate schedule specific to taro farmed lands by January 1, 2012;

(3) Set a cap on lease rents for taro farms at no more than $100 per acre, regardless of adjacent land values;

(4) Review existing qualifying criteria for farm leases and develop a consistent and accessible criteria for taro farmers to qualify for taro land leases by January 1, 2012; and

(5) Provide taro farmers, organizations, and individuals access to information by January 1, 2012, including:

(A) Taro land inventories;

(B) Opportunities for leases of these lands; and

(C) Qualifying criteria and costs for farm leases; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Land and Natural Resources are requested to submit a report to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the 2012 regular session regarding the reclassification of taro lands, adjustments to lease rents, and modifications to lease qualification criteria; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture, the Chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources, and the Taro Security and Purity Task Force.

OFFERED BY: 

Mele Carmel

Kanem Amano

[Signatures]

MAR 10 2010