

MAR 11 2021

SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO CONSIDER AMENDING
THE ELIGIBILITY QUALIFICATIONS AND LEASE TERMS FOR ITS
AGRICULTURAL LOTS TO AID SMALL FARM BUSINESSES.

1 WHEREAS, Hawaii annually spends an estimated \$3,000,000,000
2 to import approximately ninety percent of its food and pays food
3 costs that are eighty-two percent higher than the national
4 average; and

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6 WHEREAS, dependence on food imports threatens the
7 sustainability of food producers on the islands and places the
8 entire population directly at risk of food shortages in the
9 event of pandemics, natural disasters, and economic disruptions;
10 and

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12 WHEREAS, increasing local food production is essential for
13 the future health and vitality of the State and despite the
14 State's natural resources and goals for increased local food
15 production, production has remained slow to develop; and

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17 WHEREAS, Hawaii has the fifth highest projected percentage
18 (17.5 percent) of residents experiencing food insecurity and has
19 the tenth highest rate of projected child food insecurity (29.9
20 percent); and

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22 WHEREAS, due to the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and
23 the resulting unprecedented rate of unemployment, between April
24 and October 2020, there has been a fifteen percent increase in
25 the number of recipients of government assistance programs, like
26 the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; and

27
28 WHEREAS, an increase in the production and sale of Hawaii-
29 grown food would contribute to significant job creation and
30 replacing ten percent of current food imports with locally grown
31 food would create a total of two thousand three hundred jobs and
32 could keep hundreds of millions of dollars circulating within
33 Hawaii's economy, stimulate growth, and create thousands of new
34 jobs, ensuring that Hawaii has stable food sources; and
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S.R. NO. 71

1 WHEREAS, Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 69, S.D. 1,
2 Regular Session 2014, established the Aloha+ Challenge which, in
3 part, specified that local production is to double by 2030 with
4 a goal of twenty to thirty percent of food being grown locally;
5 and

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7 WHEREAS, research has found that the State needs to be
8 growing at least fifty percent of its staple crops to be
9 considered self-sufficient; and

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11 WHEREAS, the State has many natural resources and vast
12 agricultural lands that lend themselves to increasing local food
13 production; and

14
15 WHEREAS, farmers have difficulty obtaining long-term leases
16 and reasonable lease rents because there is pressure on the use
17 of important agricultural land for higher value purposes,
18 resulting in accelerated agricultural decline near urban areas
19 due to farmers' disinvestment in their farm operations in an
20 anticipation of development; and

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22 WHEREAS, the agricultural parks program administered under
23 the Department of Agriculture seeks to encourage the
24 continuation or initiation of agricultural operations and lands
25 that are acquired, developed, and leased to farmers with the
26 objective of providing long-term tenured lands that are not
27 subject to reclassification or rezoning, further subdivision,
28 lack of monitoring of activities, or introduction of non-
29 agricultural uses, available to small farmers at a reasonable
30 cost; and

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32 WHEREAS, the agricultural parks program utilizes a thorough
33 qualification process to ensure potential lessees will undertake
34 substantial activity and that most of the total annual income of
35 lessees comes from agricultural activities; and

36
37 WHEREAS, lease rents in agricultural parks are lower than
38 privately owned lands; and



S.R. NO. 71

1 WHEREAS, Act 90, Session Laws of Hawaii 2003, established
2 the non-agricultural park lands program to provide for the
3 transfer of certain public lands from the Department of Land and
4 Natural Resources to the Department of Agriculture, in which the
5 lands are to be used for the purposes of article XI, section 10,
6 of the Hawaii State Constitution to develop farm and
7 homeownership on a widespread basis. The Board of Land and
8 Natural Resources approved 5,186.843 acres for transfer and the
9 transfer for 4,072.783 acres have been completed; and

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11 WHEREAS, the Agricultural Development Corporation is tasked
12 with protecting the future of agriculture by facilitating its
13 transformation from a dual-crop economy of sugar and pineapple
14 to a multi-crop industry and is authorized to lease or sell its
15 lands to agricultural enterprises and farmers without having to
16 go through a public auction process; and

17
18 WHEREAS, the Department of Agriculture has a number of
19 eligibility requirements that make it difficult for small
20 farmers to qualify and obtain leases for these agricultural
21 lots; now, therefore,

22
23 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first
24 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021,
25 that the Department of Agriculture is requested to consider
26 amending the eligibility qualifications and lease terms for
27 agricultural lots to aid small farm businesses; and

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29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Agriculture
30 is requested to consider different solutions to encourage more
31 affordable long-term leases including encouraging small farmers
32 to obtain financing for affordable long-term leases and allow
33 for public comment regarding the matter; and

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35 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Agriculture
36 is requested to submit a report of its findings and
37 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the
38 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
39 the Regular Session of 2022; and
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S.R. NO. 71

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this
2 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of
3 Agriculture.
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OFFERED BY: 

