

Kauai County Farm Bureau*Affiliated with Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation*

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kcfb@hawaiiantel.net*The Voice of Kauai's Agriculture*RECEIVED
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April 24, 2012

ATTN: Members of the Honolulu the County Council

RE: Labelling of GE Food (Reso 12-57)

Aloha,

In November, 2011 The Kauai County Farm Bureau testified in opposition to item 3 on the HSAC legislative package – proposed bill requiring labeling of genetically engineered food products sold in Hawaii. The following testimony below was made to the County Council of Kauai.

Farmers on Kauai and in the state of Hawaii face many challenges in growing and marketing their crops, this issue adds another level of complexity and uncertainty for consumers, retailers and growers which can significantly impact sale of food products locally.

We question whether this type of labeling at a state level only would have a positive effect on the community and the general consumer because it enforces an additional requirement for packaged and fresh food products that food producers do not have to meet in any other state. Our imported goods are already more expensive due to transportation and would be made more so, as food processors and manufacturers would not label products just for the Hawaii market. Locally our farmers do not have the resources to implement this across the board and it could create a stigma on all products out of Hawaii which would need to include the label if exported.

The proposed labeling bill would call for labeling of many foods, including products from animals that were fed biotech grain, such as genetically engineered corn and soybean. Approximately 93% of soybeans and 85% of corn planted by farmers in the US is biotech, requiring most meat and milk shipped to Hawaii to be labeled, not to mention all the processed products that contain corn and soy. Given that our packaged food products and fresh produce comes from Kauai not only from other states but also from around the world, it would be onerous and costly to implement.

Aside from implementation issues, the proposed labeling bill is constructed to create a stigma on GE products. Implementing this policy would contradict the findings of scientists as well as federal and state regulatory agencies. The FDA is tasked with food labeling, requiring biotech foods to be substantially equivalent to their conventional counterparts. Biotech foods have been

in the marketplace since 1996 and we are not aware of any negative health impacts that have been proven during that time that would justify such a warning.

Some shoppers may want to avoid eating genetically engineered foods and we recognize the importance of consumers having choices. Currently that choice is available by purchasing products that are labeled organic or GMO-free. Organic farmers are required to not plant genetically engineered crops to meet standards of certification. A new label is not necessary when there is a system already in place to provide that choice.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this issue.

Affiliated with the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, the Kauai County Farm Bureau represents over 300 members on Kauai. The Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation (HFBF) is a non-profit organization of farming families united for the purpose of analyzing problems and formulating action to ensure the future of agriculture thereby promoting the well-being of farming and the State's economy.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Roy Oyama, President

On behalf of the Kauai County Farm Bureau

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