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Testimony for **County of Hawaii Bill #316**

CITY CLERK
HONOLULU, HAWAII

My name is Michael DuPonte. I am writing in support of County of Oahu Bill number 2013-1 "Relating to Keeping of Animals". Over the last six years, Hawaii has emerged as the leader in promoting new innovative ways of protecting food security and self-sufficiency within their communities. In the wake of domestic and world events over the past decade, the perspective of agriculture in the geographically- isolated state of Hawaii has finally begun to focus on attaining self-sufficiency and assuring food security while preserving Hawaii's unique and limited natural resources. Conventional livestock production as currently practiced, however, precludes achievement of these objectives without addressing effective pollution prevention plans, cost of importing commercial feeds, and the ability to provide consistent quantities of product for the local market. Without imminent solutions, local supplies of fresh meat, milk, and eggs will continue to decline, necessitating further reliance on imported food. One alternative to conventional production is 'Natural Farming', which incorporates use of indigenous microorganisms (IMOs) to restore balance to depleted or over-fertilized soil for plant growth, but is also applicable to livestock production. IMOs promote fermentation and composting of organic matter, such as animal waste, green waste, and agricultural by-products, which can be used to produce animal feed in compliance with waste management regulations that protect the environment. 'Natural Farming' has been practiced in Japan for generations, has since been adopted in many Asian countries (South Korea, Mongolia, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines), and pairs well with raising pigs, small ruminants and for the same reasons, will also suit small-scale poultry production. In addition to lowering feed costs, simple poultry housing can be constructed with very little capital and land area, placing such enterprises within economic reach of many in struggling communities, providing new opportunities for employment and positive lifestyles, while posing little or no risk to the environment and contributing to self-sufficiency in the state with a supply of fresh, locally-produced food.

RELEVANCE

Over the past 40 years, Hawai'i has shifted its economic base from agriculture (sugar, pineapple) to tourism. Diversified and minor crops production has fallen short in replacing the revenue and employment generated by sugar and pineapple; subsequently, the value of agriculture in the state has dangerously eroded. Food production (livestock, fruits, vegetables) is given lower priority for finite land and water resources than housing and production of seed and biofuel crops. The "price" of doing business in Hawai'i has risen to a crisis level: agricultural inputs (feed, fertilizer, stock animals, and construction materials) were more feasible to import than produce locally until oil prices hit historic highs. Our dependence on these imports caused the demise of many livestock support industries (slaughterhouses, feedlots, feed mills, milk, meat and poultry processing plants, and research on tropical feed production). Moreover, reliance on food imported at lower costs than can be locally grown has driven many local farmers out of business.

In light of national and international food safety issues in recent years (melamine contamination in China, *E. coli* and *Salmonella* in the states, BSE ("mad cow" disease) in Canada, shutdown of transportation and businesses due to terrorist attacks or threats), the perspective of agriculture in the geographically- isolated state of Hawaii has shifted to focus on attaining self-sufficiency and assuring food security. Governor Neil Abercrombie was elected in 2010, in part, due to his comprehensive plan "A New Day in Hawaii" that states:

"It is time for an Agricultural Renaissance in Hawaii. Producing more of our own food in Hawaii will keep money in the local economy, protect green space,

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support thriving rural communities, reduce the risk of invasive species, and make

us more secure against disruptions to our food supply lines.

- *Preserve and start growing on agricultural lands*
- *Repair irrigation systems*
- *Develop integrated agricultural/environmental/ cultural education programs*
- *Lower the costs of farming for community-based entrepreneurs*
- *Raise the supply of local food*
- *Raise the demand for local food*
- *Support agricultural exporting*
- *Support individual participation through storm water recapture and community, school, and family gardens."*

I hereby support the passage of Bill 2013 which will change current ordinance allowing 2 hens per household to the raising of 7 to 10 hens per lot within single family residential districts on the Oahu. Because of Natural Farming practices being implemented currently in the State, waste management for swine, small ruminants and poultry is no longer being challenged by public health nuisances dealing with odors and fly mitigation. If there are any questions please feel free to contact me at 981-5199. I look forward to your positive vote in making Hawaii more self-sufficient.

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