



**Board of Land and Natural Resources  
October 11, 2024, 9:00 a.m.**

D3: Set Aside to the Department of Agriculture, Pursuant to Act 90 Session Laws of Hawaii 2003, for Pasture, Intensive Agriculture, and Apiary Purposes on the Island of Hawaii, See **Exhibit B** for List of Tax Map Keys to be set aside.

Chair Chang and the Members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council would like to submit testimony in support of agenda item D3 to set aside agricultural leases to the Department of Agriculture, pursuant to Act 90, 2003.

The purpose of Act 90, 2003 is to ensure the long-term productive use of public agricultural lands by allowing these lands to be transferred to and managed by the Department of Agriculture. We advocate for the transfer of all agricultural lands, including all lands designated as intensive agricultural use, special livestock use, and pasture use. These are lands that are in active agricultural production and producing food for our community.

Ranchers are proponents for stewarding the land well and will continue to implement conservation practices when leases are transferred to DOA—the health of the land allows ranchers to continue their production. Under the DOA, leaseholders will have access to longer terms based on agricultural production, and ranchers will be even better situated to invest in long-term conservation practices. Transferring agricultural lands from DLNR to DOA will help many productive leaseholders continue raising cattle for beef and stewarding the land with confidence that they will be supported in their agricultural operations.

According to the State Ag Land Use Baseline, 1.1 million acres of the state's land was in grazing use in the 1980s. In 2015, that number dropped to 761,000 acres. The 2020 State Ag Land Use Baseline reports that pasture continues to decline on Oahu and Hawaii Island. Astute land stewards are well aware that when land is taken out of management, Hawaii's environment and prevalence of invasive species make it costly and difficult to get it back to working order. It is extremely important that we support those who are still operating as agricultural businesses. **We believe that the DOA is best suited for supporting these agricultural businesses. We ask that you support the transfer of agricultural leases from DLNR to DOA.**



The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Our member ranchers represent over 60,000 head of beef cows; more than 75% of all the beef cows in the State. Ranchers are the stewards of over 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on this priority for our industry.

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## MEETING OF THE BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**Testimony on Item D3:** Set Aside to the Department of Agriculture, Pursuant to Act 90 Session Laws of Hawai'i 2003, for Pasture, Intensive Agriculture, and Apiary Purposes on the Island of Hawai'i, See **Exhibit B** for List of Tax Map Keys to be set aside.

Aloha Chair Chang and Members of the Board:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB comprises 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

HFB offers its **strong support** on agenda item D3 to set aside agricultural leases to the Department of Agriculture, pursuant to Act 90, 2003.

The intent of Act 90, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2003, was to transfer *agricultural* lands from the DLNR to the DOA, whose mission is to support *agriculture*. DOA is the agency that is equipped to manage agricultural lands and leases to ensure that farming remains viable on these lands. Since that date, twenty years ago, only approximately nineteen thousand acres have been transferred to DOA, with the vast majority of these lands still awaiting transfer.

These lands need the everyday support of caretakers on the ground, observing changes and following through with action to manage, for example, feral ungulates and other invasive species, fire prevention, soil health, watershed management, and exotic disease monitoring and suppression. Agricultural leaseholders are in the best position to do this. After all, conservation and stewardship are what these ag lessees and revocable permit holders have already been doing, many of them for decades, with little or no DLNR oversight or assistance. They know their success is predicated upon their careful stewardship of the land and other natural resources.

Farmers and ranchers must have long-term leases to invest in infrastructure improvement on the leased land prudently. While the DOA laws and regulations are specifically structured to make it practical for farmers to do this, DLNR is unable to provide lease terms that help farmers.

Hawai'i Ranchers are good stewards of the land. These Ranch families toil every day at the back-breaking work to maintain their successful ranching businesses and dutifully provide ecosystem services while awaiting this long-promised opportunity for a stable, supportive long-term lease.

HFB respectfully encourages you to approve the transfer of these lands and to assure that the lease terms align with our State's goals of self-sufficiency, sustainability, and food security for Hawai'i 's future, including consideration of any concerns from the ranchers themselves.

Thank you for your support of Hawai'i's producers.