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RE Testimony on behalf of “Promoting a Resilient Economy for Hawaii Businesses”, ways to improve and expand federal programs that support Hawaii small businesses in the agricultural sector.

The main challenges Hawaii small farmers face in seeking federal grants are 1) applying and administering the grants – overcoming barriers of compliance, language, fiscal processes and reporting; 2) theoretical concepts – sustainability, climate change, climate resiliency, cooperative interactions; and 3) loss of productivity while executing the grant. In the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 78% of Hawaii farmers reported farm value of sales less than \$25,000 with 62% reporting farm value of sales less than \$10,000. Small family farms make up 91% of all Hawaii farms. Many of the new farmers are immigrants from Southeast Asia or new farmers from the local population.

While there are various solutions to the three barriers noted, 1) include funding for a service provider to handle the accounting and reporting; 2) developing grant programs that focus on the farmer – how to support their operations, provide what they need and meet the conceptual goals; and 3) create outcomes and indicators that the small farmer finds value in continuing – the recent federal programs such as the “Regional Food Business Centers Program” (\$30 M award), the “Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program” (\$3.2 M award), the “Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities” (\$40 M award) provide a top-down approach to supporting Hawaii small businesses in the agricultural sector. By awarding funds to a hui of committed partners with the institutional knowledge to create, manage and monitor programs that can be specific to providing the resources that a farmer, food hub or commodity group needs to expand and/or become commercially profitable, the projects have a high degree of success to benefit the small farmers.

Programs such as the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, and Microgrants for Food Security Program provide funding for specialty crops important to Hawaii – cacao, coffee, kalo, uala, ulu – and provide funding to individuals to increase the quantity and quality of locally produced food in food insecure communities – and are vital parts of the HDOA support for Hawaii farmers.

