

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

October 23, 2017

Mr. Kevin Shea
Administrator
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Hawaii Project Suggestions for FY 2018 Farm Bill Section 10007 Funding Consideration

Dear Administrator Shea:

We are writing in support of the Hawaii project suggestions that have been submitted for consideration to receive FY 2018 Farm Bill Section 10007 funding. Hawaii is on the front line in dealing with alien species and early pest detection is critical to protecting our agriculture and environment. The Hawaii suggestions submitted to your agency, totaling over \$6 million, would support such efforts.

In particular, we would like to highlight a few of the major issues in Hawaii that the suggestions would help to address:

Rapid Ohia Death (ROD) is a devastating fungus that is ravaging the native ohia forests on Hawaii Island. In mid-September it was reported that the disease has now been detected in every district on Hawaii Island and concerns are now that the fungus will travel via wind dispersal to other parts of the state. ROD has only recently been identified but ohia trees dying as early as 2010 were later diagnosed with ROD. Researchers, forestry managers, and others have been drawing from all available resources to research, detect, mitigate, and educate the community on this fungus and its damage to our native forests. The funding identified for this suggestion would go towards supporting much-needed surveys to facilitate early detection and rapid response in forested areas impacted by ROD.

The Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) has been destroying palm trees on Oahu since its detection in December 2013. The U.S. Navy, Hawaii Department of Agriculture, Hawaii Invasive Species Council, University of Hawaii at Manoa, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have banded together to mitigate the spread of the CRB. It is feared that if left unchecked, the CRB could move from palm trees to bananas, papayas, pineapples, and taro in Hawaii and could possibly make its way to the continental U.S. where it could wreak havoc on the palm oil and date industries.

Protecting crops and the environment on the mainland from pests found in Hawaii, such as the CRB and fruit flies, has long been a priority. Funding identified for pre-clearance screening of luggage traveling from Hawaii to the mainland is necessary to intercept pests and avoid potential devastation throughout the rest of the United States.

The Coffee Berry Borer (CBB) is an invasive pest that threatens coffee production in both Hawaii and Puerto Rico, valued on an annual basis at over \$100 million and \$30 million, respectively. While USDA Agricultural Research Service has provided much-needed funds to support a brief Integrated Pest Management Program on Hawaii Island and a similar program in Puerto Rico, additional funding is required to continue a multi-year strategy in selecting a biological control that can treat areas currently infested with CBB as well as prevent CBB from infesting new areas, such as Maui, Molokai, and Kauai. Funding identified for this suggestion, submitted by an APHIS specialist in Arizona, will support developing new means to combat this pest that threatens our domestic coffee industry.

Just last year, USDA provided over \$3 million in financial support through Farm Bill Section 10007 funding to Hawaii to address invasive pests and diseases that threaten our environment. Continued funding is necessary to sustain our efforts to control these threats and avoid disaster. We understand that the funding for FY 2018 Farm Bill Section 10007 suggestions is \$75 million, with at least \$5 million going to the National Clean Plant Network. We also understand that this a very competitive process. Funding to support Hawaii's project suggestions for early pest detection, whether it be ROD, CRB, CBB, fruit flies, or other pests, is instrumental in supporting efforts to protect our environment and agricultural industry.

Accordingly, within applicable rules and regulations, we would appreciate your full and fair consideration of Hawaii's project suggestions. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



MAZIE K. HIRONO
U.S. Senator



BRIAN SCHATZ
U.S. Senator



TULSI GABBARD
U.S. Representative



COLLEEN HANABUSA
U.S. Representative