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HR 97
SUPPORTING A TRI-FLY CONTROL PROGRAM
WITHOUT THE USE OF AERIAL SPRAYS

Statement for
House Committees on
Agriculture
Planning, Energy and Environmental Protection
Health
Public Hearing - 13 February 1985

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HR 97 resolves that relevant state and federal agencies cooperate in the tri-fly control program and that various biological control mechanisms, rather than the use of aerial malathion sprays or indiscriminate use of naled or diazinon, be pursued. This statement on the resolution does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

HR 97 appropriately recognizes in the various "whereas" clauses many of the current concerns attendant to the federally proposed plan to control the Mediterranean, Oriental, and Melon fruit flies. A joint federal/state EIS being prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is currently undergoing review and will not be completed for several more weeks. Many of the serious environmental concerns associated with the proposed tri-fly control program and the widespread spraying that would be a part of it are addressed in this DEIS, including the potential undesirable impacts on beneficial non-target species, pollinators, and birds. Recent pesticide contamination problems in the state make the widespread use of malathion even less palatable to the public and scientific community alike.

The widespread spraying would have drastic repercussions on existing native species and biologically controlled species as well as unknown human health implications. The possibility of failure due to the rugged terrain as well as sources of infestation to the mainland from areas outside the State of Hawaii, and the tremendous costs that such an eradication effort would pose, reflect a poor chance of success for the tri-fly control program and a commensurate poor trade off between possible benefits and significant high costs.

HR 97 would require that appropriately affected agencies at the State level cooperate with APHIS in pursuing a tri-fly control program by use of biological control organisms, male annihilation, use of sterile fruit flies, and with ground application of the malathion bait compounds limited to high density areas such as Kona coffee fields or Kula fruit and vegetable areas. The resolution further expresses opposition to the aerial application of malathion or indiscriminate use of naled or diazinon, and finally the resolution calls for federal support of research for biological control of pests of agriculture crops.

Whereas number 7 (p. 2) cites the need for extensive inspection and quarantine of inter-island traffic if spraying were to be permitted. If biological controls are applied on a county-by-county basis, rather than statewide, then the inspection and quarantine controls associated with aerial spraying may have to be used with the biological controls too.

We note that the tri-fly control program as outlined in the "whereas" statements of HR 97 is an eradication program which strives to eliminate the three primary species of fruit fly from the State of Hawaii. The resolution, however, seeks to control the tri-fly problem through means other than statewide sprays. While we are in unanimous agreement that widespread aerial spraying with malathion or indiscriminate use of naled or diazinon should not be permitted, there are other concerns which should be considered prior to adoption of HR 97. Support for those aspects of the tri-fly program which do not involve widespread aerial spraying implies that biological-control technology will clearly be successful in eliminating the fruit fly of concern. Ongoing research is certainly leading in this direction, but there are many questions which remain. It would be unwise to suggest at this time that control can definitely be accomplished by biological means. If biological control is prematurely attempted and proves unsuccessful, the federal agencies would have greater support for their aerial-spray approach.

The encouragement of strategic research that would be provided by the resolution paragraph 6 (p. 3) is particularly pertinent, since considerable research must still be accomplished to improve the effectiveness of the sterile fly and male annihilation techniques.