

Statement on Fruit Irradiator to be built on the Island of Oahu

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I applaud Mr. Michael Kohn for his foresight and perseverance in planning a gamma irradiator on the island of Oahu. His interest in having an irradiator on this island to treat fruits as a quarantine treatment dates back easily eight years or more. He had explored the possibility of modifying the Hawaii Research Irradiator eight years ago to make it a semi-commercial operation. A number of factors made that idea not practical.

While an X-irradiator already exists on the Big Island since the summer of 2000, another irradiator on this island will still make a lot of sense and will be beneficial to all the fruit growers and packers on the three major islands besides the Big Island.

Irradiated foods and fruits are safe for human consumption, as demonstrated with numerous chemical analyses, animal and human feeding tests from the early 1970s to the 1990s. A fruit irradiated with a Co-60 source contains absolutely no residual radioactivity. I can present myself as a researcher in tropical fruit irradiation who quite likely holds the world record of having eaten the most irradiated papaya. I started eating irradiated fruits in 1965 when I supervised sensory evaluation by conducting many taste panels. Today, I find myself very healthy. (A footnote should indicate that my eating so much irradiated fruits has no relationship with the thinning of my hair. That was strictly a matter of inheriting the genes from my maternal grandfather.)

Irradiation facilities are safe, when I speak from personal experience of managing a Co-60 research irradiator on the University of Hawaii Manoa campus for some 35 years. The one proposed to be built is also a Co-60 irradiator. I think the GrayStar design is unique and safe, and I congratulate Messrs. Martin Stein and Russell Stein, and the management team of GrayStar for their good thinking and advanced engineering. Co-60 is not soluble in water, so it cannot contaminate any water source. The constructions of this and other Co-60 irradiators are such that it is impossible for anyone to try to "steal" the Co-60 capsules from the pool. I will challenge anyone to dive down to the bottom of the pool, remove the Co-60 capsules, and still come up alive.

As a citizen of Hawaii and a resident of Oahu, I fully support the project of constructing a Co-60 irradiator on Oahu.

Thank you, and good luck to you Mike on your new irradiator project.

**Written Comment in Support
of Pa'ina Hawaii's plan to build a Food Irradiator on Oahu.**

Submitted to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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My name is John Kaneko, I reside in Kaneohe, Hawaii and present this written comment as a private citizen. As background, my training is in veterinary medicine and food safety. My professional activities are focused on food safety research and training through grants from the US Department of Commerce (NOAA), US Department of Agriculture and contracts with private clients.

I am not an expert in food irradiation. However, I am in support of its application for reducing foodborne illnesses, helping to protect the consuming public as well as its shelf life extension and disinfection capabilities. The potential benefits to Hawaii are enormous.

Food irradiation has the potential to significantly reduce microbial pathogens in foods and combined with other food safety measures, help to greatly reduce the number of foodborne illnesses and deaths. Irradiation is also effective as a disinfection method for eliminating the risk of agricultural pests so that fruits and other produce can be safely shipped out of Hawaii to distant markets. By expanding marketing options beyond the islands, Hawaii growers can become more economically viable with a greater chance of continuing to grow food for local consumers and reduce dependence on food grown and shipped from afar.

Preserving agriculture in Hawaii serves several important functions. It supports local growers so that Hawaii's people can enjoy a fresh nutritious diet of locally grown agricultural products. In the face of rapidly growing fuel costs and percentage of food costs associated with shipping, it makes both ecological and economic sense to support local food production. Keeping Hawaii's agricultural land in production also helps to limit unsustainable urban sprawl and maintain rural communities.

With proper oversight and safety controls, food irradiation is a technology that can help the people of Hawaii. I defer to the NRC, the FDA and the USDA to provide the assurance of worker and consumer safety and hope that these agencies can help to support Pa'ina Hawaii's plan to build the food irradiator and address the concerns of citizens that are in need of accurate information on food irradiation, its risks and benefits.

Sincerely,



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