

Gov. Tim Walz
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Melissa Hortman
463 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. Erin Murphy
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3211
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 18, 2024

Dear Governor Walz, Speaker Hortman, and Majority Leader Murphy,

As you know, Minnesota's agricultural sector is responsible for \$106¹ billion annually in total economic impact, supporting the livelihoods of millions across our state.

That's why our organizations are writing to express our strong support for FY25 budget targets that invest in farmers, sustainability-oriented agriculture research and small businesses, and Minnesotans in need of nutritional assistance. In short, investments in our future.

Despite last year's record state budget surplus, the state invested just \$164.2 million for the biennium through the Omnibus Agriculture Bill. This limited appropriation forced the Chairs to make exceedingly difficult choices, while leaving many Minnesotans who rely on these programs in difficult circumstances. To give just a few examples, the Farm to School and Early Care program received \$1m in funding, far below the \$5.4 million in applicant submissions; MDA's Down Payment Assistance grants for emerging farmers are oversubscribed by around four times the funded amount; and researchers at the UofM Forever Green Initiative are relying on outmoded infrastructure during a key juncture for alternative crops like winter oilseeds.

We appreciate that this 2024 session is unfolding in a different budgetary context than last year, but believe there is still an opportunity to build resilience in our farm and food systems, our rural communities and our ecosystems.

Together, we can:

- Leverage Minnesota agriculture to create positive climate and ecosystem impact, providing the resources farmers need to build the health of their soil, clean our water, protect against extreme weather, and combat climate change.

¹ From the [Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development](#)

- Increase financial and capacity investments in infrastructure, small and mid-size processing and market development state-wide, supporting resilient local and regional food systems that strengthen rural economies.
- Enable land access and farm viability for emerging farmers, expanding capital, training, technical assistance, and support for small- and mid-sized emerging, beginning, and aspiring farmers.
- Link nutrition and food access needs to Minnesota agricultural producers, ensuring all Minnesotans have nutritious food.

These priorities are interconnected, and decision-makers should be given a budget target with room to support Minnesota's farm and food systems holistically, allowing them to take advantage of proposed strategic opportunities for one-time investments included in the Agriculture budget.

By doing so, you would demonstrate that the House and Senate majorities are tangibly showing up for and delivering for all our state's people.

Thank you for your leadership. We hope to work with you to support and invest in our farmers and food system.

Sincerely,

Friends of the Mississippi River

Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

Northern Waters Land Trust

Neighborhood Roots

Sustainable Farming Association

Second Harvest Heartland

West Central Initiative

MN350

Alliance for Sustainability

Vote Climate

Minnesota Well Owners Organization

The Good Acre

Greener Pastures

Land Stewardship Project

Climate Land Leaders

Minnesota Environmental Partnership

CC: Commissioner Thom Petersen, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

CC: Members of the House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee

CC: Members of the Senate Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee