

Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

December 19, 2024

Dear Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan,

We the undersigned organizations are writing to express our strong support for robust funding for continuous living cover (CLC) cropping system investments during the 2025 legislative session.

Forever Green: Advancing Continuous Living Cover (CLC) Cropping Systems

The University of Minnesota's [Forever Green Initiative](#) is a nationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop novel, economically viable perennial and winter-annual CLC crops for Minnesota's farmers, many of which can be integrated into rotations with corn, soybeans, and other common row crops.

Forever Green's approach allows growers to gain new revenue streams and more diverse marketing options for high-value food, feed and fuel products.

In addition to their contributions to our ag economy, these crops can dramatically help to protect and enhance water quality, soil health, wildlife habitat and climate resiliency. Several cropping systems, including Camelina and Pennycress, have strong potential as low carbon-intensity Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) feedstocks that could represent an unparalleled opportunity for clean water and prosperous farms in Minnesota.

2025 State Legislative CLC Funding Priorities

The 2025 legislative session represents an important opportunity to invest in CLCs to benefit Minnesota's agriculture sector, public health, and our environment for decades to come. Enhancing funding for this effort is critical to maintaining this momentum and scaling up implementation. We look forward to the opportunity to work with you to secure full funding for the following priorities:

1. **The University of Minnesota Forever Green Initiative (\$10 million):** This investment in Forever Green will help (1) advance crucial research to improve crop varieties, refine management systems, quantify environmental outcomes, and develop end uses; (2) provide targeted technical and financial assistance for early-adopter farmer partners; and (3) design and implement cutting-edge commercialization strategies. This amount includes funding from two sources:

- a. Clean Water Fund (\$6 million): The Clean Water Council has included \$6 million in funding for Forever Green in their FY 26-27 recommendations.
 - b. General Fund - Agricultural Budget (\$4 million).
2. **Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) “Developing Markets for CLC Crops” program (\$500,000):** The MDA has an important role to play in supporting the emerging Minnesota businesses that ultimately drive the adoption of CLC crops. To date, MDA has distributed \$1 million in small grants to catalyze statewide development of infrastructure including agronomic equipment, consumer packaged goods manufacturing, and more; further investment in this program is crucial to build out supply chains.
 3. **Crop Research & Development Equipment (\$10 million):** Forever Green researchers have made enormous strides despite limited access to advanced field and lab equipment, but these restrictions have grown acute and are now obstructing the rapid development and adoption of CLC systems. Filling these gaps while also investing in infrastructure that bridges the gap from small-plot research to early commercial production will allow the program to reach its potential.

CLC Funding Priorities Summary

FY 26-27 CLC Funding Priorities Summary		
	Amount	Source
The University of Minnesota Forever Green Initiative	\$6 million	Clean Water Fund
	\$4 million	Ag Budget
Minnesota Department of Agriculture CLC Value Chain Development Grants Program	\$500,000	Ag Budget
Forever Green Infrastructure Investments	\$10 million	Capital Investment
Total investment	\$20.5 million	

A Dr. Don Wyse Endowed Chair position at the University of Minnesota

In addition to the above priorities, we are also exploring the potential for an endowed chair position within the University of Minnesota’s Forever Green program that would honor our late friend and colleague Dr. Don Wyse. This position, funded through a blend of state and non-state funds, would help ensure that Don’s tremendous legacy of leadership and innovation lives on through the kind of stable, tenured leadership position essential to the initiative's long-term success.

We appreciate your consideration of these priorities and look forward to the opportunity to work with you to advance them during the 2025 legislative session.

Sincerely,

Friends of the Mississippi River
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Citizens' Climate Lobby Minnesota
League of Women Voters - Upper Mississippi River Region
Audubon Upper Mississippi River
Mom's Farm LLC
Midwest Elderberry Cooperative
Savanna Institute
Fountain Ark Farms
Minnesota Division, Izaak Walton League of America
Ben Penner Farms
Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance
Greener Pastures
Regenerative Agriculture Alliance
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

CC: Commissioner Thom Peterson (Minnesota Department of Agriculture)
CC: Commissioner John Jaschke (Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources)
CC: Commissioner Katrina Kessler (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency)
CC: Brandon Kasprick (Office of Gov. Tim Walz & Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan)