



# Legislative Priorities

2023

## Lower health care costs

Farmers disproportionately purchase insurance on the individual market and are hit hard by the high cost of healthcare. This limits rural economic vitality and makes it harder for older Minnesotans to afford their lives. That's why we support:

- Expanding MNCare through an affordable 'buy-in' option. We believe this should include expanded tax credits to ensure affordability in the near term and an option for small business owners to purchase competitive coverage for their employees.
- Establishing a Prescription Drug Affordability Board to rein in drug costs.
- Funding initiatives to support rural care providers, increase reimbursement rates, expand telehealth services, streamline medical transportation, and other initiatives to improve access to care in rural areas.

## Strong ag budget for a resilient food system

Minnesota's budget for agriculture makes up less than one half of one percent of the state's overall budget. We believe in growing our investment in the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), and the Board of Animal Health (BAH) so they can continue partnering with farmers and others to build a farm and food system that is more resilient, distributed, and fair for farmers, workers, and consumers.

## Right to Repair

We believe that farmers and independent repair technicians should have the access to the parts, tools, and diagnostic equipment needed to fix their own equipment, ensuring a competitive market for repair services.

## Corporate farm law

We support Minnesota's prohibition on corporate ownership of farmland and other ag assets.

## Broadband investment

We support border-to-border broadband development, providing affordable connectivity to every residence.

## Biofuels

We support investing in biofuels infrastructure, establishing higher blend rates, and pursuing market-based initiatives that increase biofuel use.

## Competitive markets

Since 1952, the farmers share of every dollar spent on food has decreased from 50 percent to less than 15 percent today. More broadly, the U.S. economy is 50 percent more concentrated than it was in 2005 allowing multinational companies to increase prices without market penalties. To create a more level playing field for farmers, independent business owners, and consumers, we support:

- Funding capacity at the Attorney General's office to enforce antitrust and consumer protection law.
- Strengthening Minnesota's antitrust laws by increasing fines and providing clear, enforceable standards for anticompetitive behavior.
- Adopting an 'abuse of dominance' standard that would allow the Attorney General to act against companies who unfairly abuse their power in the marketplace.
- Prohibiting price discrimination that undermines local retailers and price gouging that hurts consumers.

## Expanded meat and poultry processing

A severe shortage of processing in Minnesota has put pressure on family farmers, limiting their businesses. This bottleneck was intensified by COVID-19 when the large packing plants shut down, keeping producers from meeting increasing consumer demand for locally grown meat and poultry. That's why we support investments to expand processing, including by:

- Continuing support for training programs at technical colleges and in K12 schools.
- Supporting incentives for employee retention, like stipends for relocation and childcare.
- Funding inspection services and establishing a navigator position to work with inspection staff.
- Funding for processors to expand and start new plants, including for halal and tribal processing.
- Supporting generational transition, including through apprenticeships.

## Cooperative development

We support funding cooperative development grants reauthorized last session to help farmers access the capital needed to start new cooperatives to process or market products collectively.

## Climate resilience

Farmers are on the front lines of the climate crisis, experiencing drought, extreme weather, unpredictable growing seasons and increased risk of plant and animal diseases. Farmers are coming up with ways to remain resilient and lead through action. That's why we support:

- Expanding voluntary, publicly funded programs that incentivize on-the-ground practices, including MDA's soil health grant program, the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP), and other voluntary programs that help farmers purchase equipment and implement soil health practices.
- Funding for the University of Minnesota to research and scale alternative crops that can improve farm finances and make farms more resilient.
- Expanding farm-scale renewable energy through tax credits, cost-share incentives, and technical assistance.
- Ensuring transparent contracts and fair compensation for renewable energy or carbon sequestration projects.
- Funding scaled pilots to create hydrogen and 'green fertilizer' with a priority for farmer ownership.

## Generational farm transition

The price of farmland in Minnesota rose by nearly 10% from 2020 to 2021. This makes it increasingly difficult for young people to build a life in agriculture. We support:

- Targeting programs and tax incentives that support farmland access and transition.
- Expanding access to credit and down payment assistance through Minnesota's Rural Finance Authority (RFA).
- Strengthening MDA's FarmLink program, funding Farmland Access Navigators, and otherwise helping new farmers access land.

## Emerging farmers

We support policies and programs that remove systemic barriers for emerging farmers by supporting farmland transition, funding MDA's Emerging Farmers office, and ensuring that programs are accessible, useful, and responsive to the unique needs of emerging farmers.



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## Creating a grain indemnity fund

Over a dozen states, including Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota, Illinois, and Michigan have indemnity funds which protect producers in the event of fraud, elevator collapse, or other events resulting in nonpayment to producers. We support creating a fund in Minnesota.

## Beginning Farmer Tax Credit

We support reauthorizing this credit, allowing family members to participate and utilize the credit, and funding administration and outreach capacity at MDA.

## Farmer-Lender Mediation and Farm Advocates

We support the state's Farmer-Lender Mediation and Farm Advocate programs, both of which help farmers in financial crisis.

## Rural Finance Authority (RFA)

Financing is a central challenge for farmers, which makes the RFA's work partnering with local lenders to offer low-interest loans so important. That's why we support expanding staff capacity at the RFA and otherwise expanding access to their programs.

## SWCD funding

We support sustainable funding for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs).

## Transportation funding

We support a long-term, sustainable plan to fund transportation.

## Ag to School Tax Credit

We support this credit, which provides farmers property tax relief while helping rural schools make improvements to their facilities.

## Farm to Schools and School meals

We support programs that help schools buy local food and believe all students should receive school meals regardless of their parent's ability to pay.

## Ag education

We support funding for ag education including 4-H, FFA, Extension, and Farm Business Management.

## Wolf depredation

We support funding for reimbursing farmers who experience losses due to wolves.

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