



# Legislative Priorities

2025

## Stable agriculture budget for a resilient food system

Despite driving as much as a fifth our state's economy, funding for agriculture makes up less than half of one percent of our state's budget. Even so, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has helped lead our state's agriculture economy through COVID-19, 2021's historic drought, zoonotic disease outbreaks and more. We support maintaining strong funding for MDA, the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), and the Board of Animal Health (BAH) so that they can continue building a farm and food system that is more resilient, distributed, and fair. This includes:

- **Full, dedicated funding for the Agricultural Growth, Research and Innovation (AGRI) program.**
- **Expanding market development** including Minnesota Grown, Farm to School and Early Care, support for farmers markets and food hubs.
- **Strengthening local and regional processing**, building on Minnesota's work to expand options for meat processing—including across dairy, grain, and other areas of agricultural production.
- **Supporting new and emerging farmers** through MDA's Emerging Farmers Office (EFO), FarmLink, and other policies and programs that remove barriers for new farmers and support farm transition.
- **Improving farm financing** through Minnesota's innovative Rural Finance Authority (RFA) which partners with local lenders to offer low-interest loans.
- **Expanding soil health initiatives**, like Soil Health Financial Assistance Grants and the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program.
- **Expanding support for farmers** through Farm Business Management (FBM), Farmer-Lender Mediation, Farm Advocates, and MDA's nation-leading farm stress initiatives.
- **Supporting ag education** through 4-H, Extension, FFA, and other initiatives.

## Healthcare affordability

Farmers, like other small business owners, disproportionately purchase insurance on the individual market and are hit hard by the high cost of healthcare – and many can't afford it. We support a Public Option that would allow farmers and other small business owners to 'buy-in' to MinnesotaCare. We also support efforts to strengthen, expand, and de-privatize public healthcare programs, control costs for those with insurance, strengthen Minnesota's ban on corporate practice of medicine, increase transparency, and otherwise ensure that healthcare dollars go to care.

## Rural access to medical care

Farming can be dangerous and your ability to get care should not depend on your zip code. We support increased funding for rural care providers, including emergency medical services (EMS) and rural pharmacies.

## Rural childcare

Farm families are being squeezed by the high cost and short supply of childcare. We support investments in affordable childcare.

## Right to Repair

The market for large tractors and combines is controlled by three companies who use digital equipment to block farmers and independent repair technicians from fixing the stuff they own. This monopoly on repair keeps farmers reliant on dealership networks that have continued to consolidate, leaving farmers with fewer options, and forcing them to pay more for repairs. We strongly support passing an agriculture Right to Repair law that creates a competitive market for repair and guarantees that farmers and independent technicians have access to parts, tools, and diagnostic equipment.



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## Cooperative development

As our economy becomes more consolidated, cooperatives provide a model of distributed, democratic ownership that keeps profits local, promotes engagement with community, and solves problems. We support efforts to strengthen the cooperative movement and help farmers and others start new cooperatives. This includes:

- Expanding state and federal support for cooperative ownership and development.
- Expanding RFA programs that help patrons purchase equity in cooperatives.
- Investing in technical assistance and other support for emerging cooperatives.

## Corporate farm law

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

## Climate resilience

Family 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. That's why we support:

- Expanding voluntary programs that incentivize on-the-ground practices, including MDA's soil health grants, the MAWQCP, and other programs that help farmers implement soil health practices.
- Increasing funding for researching and scaling new crops that can improve farm finances and make farms more resilient.
- Expanding farm-scale renewable energy through tax credits, cost share, and technical assistance.
- Expanding MDA's 'green fertilizer' production incentive with a priority for farmer ownership.
- Promoting the role of livestock in maintaining perennial systems and promoting soil health.
- Ensuring that ecosystem service markets are fair for farmers and accountable to the public.

## Biofuels

Many family farmers rely on this local, value-added market for farm products. We support investing in biofuels infrastructure and pursuing market-based initiatives that increase biofuel use.

## Rural veterinarian shortage

Minnesota has a shortage of large animal veterinarians. We support expanding training opportunities, scholarships, and other initiatives.

## Land access

The price of farmland in Minnesota continues to rise, with some county averages jumping more than 25 percent in 2022 alone. This makes it increasingly difficult for young people to build a life in agriculture. We support:

- Removing the \$4 million cap on total state funding available for Minnesota's Beginning Farmer Tax Credit so that no farmer is turned away from utilizing this nation-leading program.
- Improving access to credit and down payment assistance through the RFA.
- Supporting Farmland Access Navigators, FBM, the EFO, FarmLink, and other initiatives aimed at helping farmers access land and build sustainable and profitable farm businesses.

## Competitive markets

Corporate consolidation in the food and ag system pushes down prices paid to farmers, increases input costs, stifles innovation, and limits individual farmers' voices in the marketplace. To level the playing field, we support:

- Funding the Attorney General's Antitrust Division.
- Modernizing antitrust laws by increasing fines and creating clear standards.
- Strengthening protections against anticompetitive conduct.

## Tax fairness

We understand farmers' important contributions to the state and believe in a tax code that is fair, reasonable, and easy to navigate. We support:

- Expanding the ag homestead tax credit to allow farmers cultivating less than 10 acres to participate.
- Repealing the sales tax on food at farmers markets.
- Repealing the sales tax on fencing equipment, grain bins, and equipment tires, to match the current exemptions for most agricultural equipment.

## Broadband investment

We support ensuring every rural Minnesotan has access to the high-speed internet they need to do business, teach their kids, and access healthcare.

## Wolf depredation

We support DNR management and funding for farmers who experience losses.