



Legislative Priorities

2026

Response to the crisis in farm country: Many farm families are under financial stress, at best managing uncertainty and at worst facing bankruptcy or foreclosure. We need swift action to address this crisis, coupled with long-term reforms that promote a farm economy that is stable, resilient, and fair. We support:

- Increasing bonding authority for Minnesota's Rural Finance Authority (RFA), ensuring that the program can provide affordable financing to farmers.
- Extending Minnesota's Farmer-Lender Mediation program. Requests for mediation have more than doubled. Proactively moving to secure the program's continuity will help staff plan and demonstrate our state's commitment to helping farmers in distress.
- Defending and expanding farmer supports, including Minnesota's Farm Advocate program, Farm Business Management (FBM), and our state's leading work on farm and rural mental health and farm safety.

Stable ag budget: Investments at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), and the Board of Animal Health (BAH) help promote an agricultural economy that works better for family farmers and all Minnesotans. At a time when farm families are under stress, we strongly support:

- Full, dedicated funding for the Agricultural Growth, Research and Innovation (AGRI) program, which is an effective, flexible tool for responding to challenges.
- Expanding market development including increased funding for Minnesota Grown, Farm to School and Early Care, and support for farmers markets and food hubs.
- Strengthening local and regional processing.
- Expanding soil health initiatives including Soil Health Financial Assistance Grants and the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program.
- Ag education through funding 4-H, Extension, FFA, and other initiatives.

Healthcare affordability: This year, MFU members are facing steep premium hikes, leaving some to seek off-farm employment or make the dangerous decision to go without health insurance. This limits rural economic vitality and risks people's health. 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; support independent pharmacies; and ensure that healthcare dollars go toward patient care.

Rural access to medical care: Farming can be a dangerous occupation and the ability to survive an accident should not vary by zip code. We support increased support for rural care providers, including emergency medical services (EMS) and rural pharmacies.

Rural childcare: We support addressing the high cost and short supply of childcare that is squeezing farm families.

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 equipment. This monopoly keeps farmers reliant on dealership networks that have continued to consolidate, leaving farmers with fewer options and increased costs.

In 2023, Minnesota passed the most comprehensive Right to Repair law in the country. Unfortunately, the legislature exempted farm equipment. We strongly support passing an ag-specific law that creates a competitive market for repair and guarantees that farmers and independent repair technicians have access to parts, tools, and diagnostic equipment necessary to repair complex machines.

Broadband: We support addressing the lack of broadband in too many regions of our state.

Investing in new farmers: Local ownership of farmland promotes stewardship, encourages long-term investment in soil health and farm infrastructure, and helps build community wealth. We support:

- Removing the cap on Minnesota's Beginning Farmer Tax Credit so that no farmer is turned away from utilizing this nation-leading program. In 2024, around 40 percent of eligible farmers were turned away.
- Improving access to credit and down payment assistance for beginning farmers.
- Continuing to expand and target tax benefits, like Ag Homestead, for owner operators.
- Supporting Farmland Access Navigators, FBM, FarmLink, and other initiatives aimed at helping farmers.

Emerging farmers: We support MDA's Emerging Farmers Office (EFO), the Emerging Farmers Working Group and other programs that ensure programs are accessible, useful, and responsive.



Expanding conservation and climate resilience:

Family farmers are experiencing challenges, while also leading through action. We support expanding voluntary programs that incentivize on-the-ground soil health practices, expanding farm-scale and cooperatively owned renewable energy projects (including green fertilizer), and promoting the role of livestock in maintaining perennial systems and promoting soil health.

Supporting agricultural research and Extension:

Public research helps farmers increase productivity, conserve natural resources, and otherwise make their operations more profitable and resilient. We support funding for the University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative, the UMN Research & Outreach Centers, and the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA).

Biofuels: Many family farmers rely on this local, value-added market for farm products. We support investing in biofuels infrastructure and continuing to position Minnesota as a leader on Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).

Rural veterinarian shortage: Minnesota's shortage of large animal veterinarians is making it harder for farmers to care for their livestock. We support expanding training opportunities, funding scholarships, and otherwise increasing access to veterinary care.

Fighting hunger and expanding local markets:

We believe strongly that in a state and nation with such abundant ag resources, no person should go hungry. Minnesota has led in establishing programs that connect people with local food, establishing new markets for locally grown farm products, and helping farmers build their businesses. We support increased investment in the Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) program, Market Bucks and Farm to School and Early Care initiatives.

Strengthening local and regional processing: Minnesota has made great strides to expand options for meat processing, including supporting the establishment of technical training programs, expanding inspection staff, providing grants for employee retention, and expanding options for grants and loans. We support these initiatives and are eager to expand them across dairy, grain, and other areas of production.

Competitive markets: Corporate consolidation pushes down prices paid to farmers, increases input costs, stifles innovation, and limits individual farmers' voices in the marketplace. While farmers are earning less, consolidation is driving up costs for consumers. To create a more level playing field, we support:

- Ensuring adequate funding for the Attorney General's Antitrust Division.
- Prohibiting unfair pricing tactics that harm independent business and workers.
- Modernizing antitrust laws and increasing penalties to address new forms of collusion that increase prices.

Corporate farm law: We support Minnesota's prohibition on corporate and foreign ownership of ag assets.

Cooperative development: We support cooperatives, which provide a model of distributed, democratic ownership that keeps profits local, promotes engagement with community, and solves problems for people.

Taxes: Beyond lifting the cap on the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit, we support removing the sales tax on fencing equipment, grain bins, and equipment tires to match the current exemptions for most ag equipment. We also support maintaining Ag Homestead, the Ag to School Tax Credit, and local government aid for SWCDs.

Wolf and elk depredation: We support reimbursing farmers who experience losses and maintaining the DNR's ability to manage wolves should they be delisted federally.