



LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

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Members of the House Agriculture Finance & Policy Committee,

The Land Stewardship Project's mission is to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, promote sustainable agriculture, and develop healthy communities. LSP represents over 4,500 households in Minnesota – primarily farmers and rural residents, as well as urban and suburban allies. Some of the Land Stewardship Project's greatest priorities are keeping small and mid-sized farmers on the land, growing the number of farmers stewarding the land, and advancing adoption of sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices.

With a historic budget surplus, we have a unique opportunity to deliver for Minnesota farmers, our food system, and our rural communities this legislative session. The Land Stewardship Project strongly supports numerous provisions of the H.F. 4366 DE Amendment and thanks the Chair and original bill authors for their inclusion:

- \$100,000 to reimburse small meat processors for food safety and business planning courses.
- Increase of AGRI Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk processing grants by \$3 million.
- \$500,000 for livestock processing technical education at Central Lakes College and Ridgewater College.
- \$500,000 for grants to secondary career and technical education programs for meat cutting and butchery instruction.
- \$6.725 million for and the establishment of the soil health financial assistance program.
- \$9 million to develop continuous living cover supply chains.
- \$6.5 million to the Forever Green Initiative.
- \$1.6 million for the farm-to-school program.
- \$1 million for urban and youth education or urban ag community development, including up to \$10,000 to the emerging farmer account.
- \$2.6 million for grants for organizations to provide technical and culturally appropriate services to emerging farmers and related businesses.
- \$3 million for Second Harvest Heartland for hunger relief, including \$500,000 for the Good Acre LEAFF program.
- \$1 million for the Good Food Access Program.
- Establishing a cooperative grant program.
- \$3 million for and the establishment of a down payment assistance grant program.
- \$141,000 to administer the beginning farmer tax credit.
- \$300,000 for farm business management tuition assistance with priority to specialty crop farmers, urban farmers, and farmers facing mediation, and support for new urban and specialty crop instructor positions, including translation and outreach.

- Various appropriations and policies to protect our pollinators, water, and food from dangerous fertilizers and pesticides.

Thank you for putting together a robust agriculture budget that, if passed, will make our rural communities and agricultural economy more resilient for both people and the land.

To strengthen the bill even further, we ask you to consider including the following provisions from the Governor's Budget:

- \$500,000 for grants to local governments, regional planning and economic development organizations, and Tribal governments for planning and plan implementation activities for value-added food and agricultural economic development. *(As introduced, line 14.5 to 14.25)*
- Bolster food access by providing \$1 million for grants that facilitate the start-up, modernization, or expansion of grocery stores, corner stores, farmers' markets, and related food retailers. *(As introduced, line 13.7 to 13.20)*
- \$250,000 to expand co-packing and shared cold storage capacity through grants to co-packers, commercial kitchens, restaurants, community entities with the capacity to provide commercial production space, and cold storage facilities. *(As introduced, line 13.21 to 13.28)*
- At \$27 million for healthy soils programs between the Agriculture Omnibus Bill and the Environment & Natural Resources Omnibus Bill.

On behalf of our members, we urge you to vote yes on this bill and consider our recommendations to strengthen the bill even further. This budget will certainly deliver for farmers and rural Minnesotans this legislative session.

Sincerely,



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