



MINNESOTA FARMERS' MARKET ASSOCIATION
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June 13, 2021

Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee
476 State Office Building
100 Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
St. Paul MN 55155

Chairs and members of the committee,

Eliminating funding in the Ag budget for Market Bucks (aka Healthy Eating Here at Home) is a stunning loss and defeat for Minnesota's local foodshed, particularly in a year where money is not an issue. In 2019, when Market Bucks moved from the Government Services Committee, it never occurred to anyone that our Agriculture Leadership would choose to defund a program that benefits farmers.

Markets Bucks helps low-income Minnesotans stretch their buying power at farmers' markets with a \$10 match—and those sales go directly to our food farmers and food makers. During COVID-19 in 2020, Minnesota farmers' markets did such an amazing job at providing local food to their communities, that we were one of two national recipients of the Gus Schumacher Award from the Farmers Market Coalition. A few months later - this.

As of July 1, we will somehow have to cover outstanding Markets Bucks already disbursed, to make both the markets and the vendors whole. We do not look forward to seeing the disbelief and hurt on the faces of our farmers' market managers and vendors as we inform them that Agriculture Leadership in Minnesota does not value Market Bucks, and by extension, the contribution these food farmers and food makers make in supporting Minnesota's local foodshed.

Despite untimely frosts (so many produce farmers spraying their crops at midnight) and drought throughout Minnesota, 2021 *was* shaping up to be a great year for farmers' markets. Losing Market Bucks and subsequently thousands of SNAP customers will most likely negatively impact the profitability of many of our food farmers.

We urge the committee and leadership to explore any and all options to preserve Market Bucks—a program that feeds our people and builds Minnesota's foodshed.

Sincerely yours,

Kathy Zeman
Executive Director
Minnesota Farmers' Market Association
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MISSION

MFMA provides services, programs and leadership that support and promote farmers' markets across Minnesota.