



May 11, 2022

Chair Torrey Westrom
Agriculture and Rural Development Finance and Policy Committee
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3201
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Mike Sundin
House Agriculture Committee
417 State Office Building
St Paul, MN 55155

Chair Westrom, Chair Sundin and members of the committee,

The Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) appreciates the opportunity to share written testimony on behalf of its nearly 30,000 members on the provisions included in the agriculture omnibus bills being considered by this conference committee.

Thank you for the work you have done throughout this session to address issues impacting farmers, ranchers and rural communities. We appreciate the conversations and the ability to share the perspectives of our members. From this work, there are pieces of HF4366 and SF4019 that Farm Bureau would like to highlight in comparison to the policy set by our grassroots membership:

- As we continue to see HPAI devastate poultry farms and backyard flocks around the state, we recognize the importance of investing in preparing for and responding to animal diseases. MFBF supports investment into the ag emergency account (*Senate 23.22; House 23.26 and 29.4*) and the University of Minnesota's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (*Senate 5.18; House 23.30*).
- MFBF prioritized addressing food and agriculture supply chain challenges both in the short- and long-term to ensure access to markets and a safe and secure food supply for everyone. The House and Senate versions each provide investments for meat processing to help strengthen a critical link of the food supply chain. We specifically support:
 - Increased investment into the AGRI Value Add grant program to facilitate the start-up, modernization, or expansion of meat, poultry, egg, and milk processing facilities (*Senate 12.6; House 13.35*);
 - Increased funding for meat and poultry inspection laboratory testing (*House 5.4*);

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- Funding for meat and poultry processors for reimbursing the cost of attending courses or training and receiving technical assistance that support developing sanitation standard operating procedures, hazard analysis and critical control point plans, or business plans (*Senate 23.10; House 25.27*); and
 - Investment into the next generation of meat processing by providing grants to secondary career and technical education programs in meat cutting and butchery (*Senate 20.23; House 26.3*).
- We support additional funding for grants to local units of government and tribal nations for noxious weed detection, control, and management. They are important partners in controlling noxious weeds that can wreak havoc on farmers and ranchers (*House 4.4*).
 - We support the additional dollars for research and equipment for the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI) (*Senate 25.17; House 28.17*).
 - MFBF supports the formation of locally-owned cooperatives for purposes of agricultural production. We support the creation of the grant program to help finance new agricultural cooperatives (*Senate 28.9; House 29.11*).
 - The Beginning Farmer Tax Credit has continued to be an important tool in bringing the next generation to the farm. However, it needs additional funding to be administered timely and efficiently (*House 24.24*).
 - Minnesota farmers and ranchers lead the way in climate-smart practices that improve our environment through voluntary stewardship. MFBF supports the Senate version of soil health grants (*Senate 29.6*). The Agriculture Best Management Practices Grant Program would provide Minnesota farmers with financial resources to implement conservation practices to build soil health on their farms. Financial assistance under this grant program would not be limited to just traditional cost-share but could also include down payments on equipment, purchases or subscriptions of equipment technology for precision agriculture, low interest loans, and the purchases of seed and soil amendments or technical assistance for conservation plans. Expanding the types of financial assistance can help to lower the risk of new practice adoption for Minnesota farmers. Additionally, this program does not limit farmers to specific practices but allows them to invest in soil health practices that work on their farms rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.
 - MFBF supports the changes to the rural mental health programs. This has been an incredibly beneficial program for all rural Minnesota. We appreciate the initiatives by the legislature to make sure this program works as intended, especially the changes to ensure that people who seek out these resources are protected. (*Senate 14.8; House 16.29*).
 - MFBF opposes the language that would prohibit the sale, use or application of a plastic-coated fertilizer (*House 37.10*) and the language that applies additional restrictions on crop protection tools (*House 37.16*).

On behalf of Farm Bureau members across Minnesota, we appreciate the work you have done to continue to invest in agriculture and rural communities. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. If you have any questions, please contact Amber Glaeser, Director of Public Policy at amber.glaeser@fbmn.org or (507) 272-6677. Thank you for the work you do on behalf of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Glessing". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "D".

Dan Glessing
President