



**CONSERVATION
MINNESOTA**

March 9, 2022

RE: HF 3999 (Lippert)

To: Chair Sundin, Vice Chair Vang, and Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives
Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee

We write to you as members of Minnesota's conservation community to express our support for HF 3999 (Lippert). As an organization, our mission is to protect the people and places that Minnesotans love. Advocating for the health of our communities, soil, water, and economy is vital to this achieving this goal.

HF 3999 requests the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) prepare a report on the state of local and regional food systems and provide recommendations for strengthening these systems. While Minnesota currently has a robust farm economy, the MDA must further build its internal capacity and lay the groundwork for investments in local foods and regional capacity.

By digging into and researching the state of local food and regional food systems in Minnesota, the MDA can better outline current strengths and weaknesses and begin to develop and deepen resilience within Minnesota's farm economy. Resiliency creation requires collaboration between consumers, governments, supply chains, and institutions. From recent supply chain issues to local meat processing needs to increasing change in weather patterns, now is the time to invest in our unique agriculture economy and address food system inequities.

The MDA recently completed a Legislative Report on the Emerging Farmers' Working Group, which conducted listening sessions, identified metrics on emerging farmers, and presented a series of recommendations to support and cultivate new Minnesota farmers. HF 3999 would follow a similar approach, and appropriate \$10,000 in fiscal year 2023 to the Commissioner of Agriculture to study and report on the state of Minnesota's local and regional food systems.

Minnesota's local communities, in the countryside and in our cities, benefit from access to strengthened regional food systems. Fortunately, HF 3999 supports the MDA as it envisions how resiliency informs the future of food, notes important contributions from our farmers and community groups, and identifies which indicators will help Minnesota lead in regional food systems work. We urge you to take advantage of this moment and begin the constituent collaboration necessary to build a vibrant and just regional food system in Minnesota, something the farm and food community is eager to do. We urge you to support HF 3999, and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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