



LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

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,

As an organization that values creating a food system that is just, grounded in community, and has health of people and the land at the heart of our work, we are disappointed to see the elimination of the Healthy Eating Here at Home program, otherwise known as Market Buckets, from the Agriculture budget agreement. This is a deep loss for our farmers and consumers across the state, especially SNAP/EBT recipients.

In a year of unprecedented food insecurity and economic hardship, Market Bucks is a program that allows low-income Minnesotans to access fresh, healthy, local food and fosters a resilient local food system supporting small and medium sized farmers to help grow their customer reach and business. This program allows for new customers, nearly 13,000 annually, to frequent farmers markets and bring a critical economic opportunity to farmers and rural communities.

Many farmers drive hours into the metro area to sell their produce at farmers markets and, bring that money back to their rural communities to continue to grow their operation and spend those earnings in their local community. The implications of not funding this program are devastating, both from a healthy food access and hunger alleviation perspective, as well as the decision to not invest in programs that benefit hard working farmers dedicated to feeding Minnesotans fresh, healthy foods. Our members understand this as well. In just two days, 284 Land Stewardship Project members took action to tell this committee and leadership to protect and invest in this program, many sharing how this is a critical program especially in rural Minnesota that helps to build the local networks needed to create a resilient food system.

Additionally, this decision has federal funding implications, as in July the program stands to lose an anticipated award from the USDA for a full Federal match of \$325,000 per year. We will be sacrificing the opportunity to invest in farmers and our local economies by not funding this program.

We urge the committee and leadership to explore all options to preserve Market Bucks—a program that farmers and Minnesotans cannot afford to lose.

Please contact Laura Schreiber lschreiber@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-722-6377 with any questions.

Sincerely,

Laura Schreiber
Policy Organizer
Land Stewardship Project