



**LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT**

LEWISTON OFFICE  
180 East Main St, Box 130  
Lewiston, MN 55952  
507-523-3366

MINNEAPOLIS OFFICE  
821 East 35<sup>th</sup> St, #200  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
612-722-6377

MONTEVIDEO OFFICE  
117 South 1<sup>st</sup> St  
Montevideo, MN 56265  
320-269-2105

April 15, 2024

Members of the House Agriculture Finance & Policy Committee,

**For over forty years, LSP has engaged tens of thousands of Minnesotans in building a more just and sustainable food system and healthy communities, the vast majority of whom are white farmers and rural people.** Decade after decade, our 4,500 members and nearly 60,000 supporters have stood up to say that we must address the historic and ongoing racism within our farm and food system farm and food system.

Our country's agricultural system was built on stolen land and labor. For generations, farmers who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color have been explicitly discriminated against by public and private institutions, unable to access capital, loans, land, and other resources that have been available for their white counterparts. While some progress has been made, institutional racism and discriminatory practices persist today. As a result, BIPOC farmers have significantly less inheritable land and generational wealth than their white counterparts, making it especially hard to start and sustain a farm. These challenges are not limited to those whose ancestors have been in the U.S. for more than a few generations. Immigrant and refugee farmers, on the whole, also lack capital, inheritable land, generational wealth, as well as face institutional racism and discriminatory practices.

**Last legislative session, LSP celebrated that our legislature took an important step towards not only recognizing the importance of emerging farmers but reckoning with our state and country's history of generations of disenfranchisement of historically underserved populations, particularly BIPOC farmers.** Our farm and food system more resilient and just with a diversified farming population and more people on the land. We know that the steps Minnesota has taken in recent years are making a difference. The 2022 Agricultural Census showed a growth in Minnesota's emerging farmer population, particularly BIPOC farmers.

**But now we are here forced to take a step backwards. We should not be in the position of having to choose between the future of these critical programs and the prioritization of emerging farmers within them.** Ultimately, this lawsuit, which is rooted in white supremacy, is a distraction that divides Minnesotans and prevents us from building the solidarity we need to change how our systems are largely failing small and mid-sized farmers, no matter our backgrounds. By pitting emerging farmers and non-emerging farmers against each other, we continue to fight over crumbs instead of coming together to fight for a bigger slice of the pie.

**But because we are, we have been working alongside our BIPOC allies to ensure legislative changes work for emerging farmers. LSP supports the following, which are incorporated in the HF 3763 DE-1 amendment:**

- Keeping the definition of "emerging farmer" intact for the purposes of the Emerging Farmers Office and Emerging Farmers Working Group.
- Not modifying the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit.
- The inclusion of those renting land from an incubator farm within the definition of "limited land access".

- Clarifying that, in the definition of limited land access, the lessee or renter can be under a lease or other rental agreement. In our experience, many (if not most) rental agreements are “handshake agreements”.
- Prioritizes farmers with limited land access and/or limited market access in the Beginning Farmer Equipment & Infrastructure Grants Program. The updated Senate version only prioritizes farmers with limited land access (with a different “limited land access” definition), which means that farmers who own land but have limited resources or are newly established would not be prioritized.
- Prioritizing farmers who grow specialty crops, hemp, and/or cannabis as well as farmers with less than \$100,000 in gross sales in the previous year for the Down Payment Assistance Program. The Senate version prioritizes farmers with less than \$100,000 in net profit in the previous year, which is too broad and would include a significant number of non-emerging and established farmers.
- Addressing the social equity provisions of cannabis statute in a separate bill.

We no longer have concerns about not including those who currently do not have access to land in the definition of “limited land access”, since this definition does not impact the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit or Down Payment Assistance Program.

**We have one remaining concern, however. The definition of “limited market access” is simultaneously narrow and wide.** Emerging farmers sell their products in a variety of markets, including through aggregated markets, food hubs, food shelves, and farm-to-school or farm-to-institution programs. Moreover, many farmers who are not considered “emerging” would fall under “limited market access”, such as well-established farmers who primarily use CSAs and farmers markets. These folks could unintentionally be prioritized in programs, when the intention, as we understand it, is to target farmers who have fewer resources or are less established.

We also wanted to note that the Senate does not change the Technical Assistance Grant Program, which LSP supports. As courts have repeatedly ruled that technical assistance can be targeted towards historically underserved populations, we believe that the existing statute should be able to remain intact.

**LSP believes that those most impacted by public policy should be deeply engaged in its development. As the disability justice movement says, “nothing about us without us”. We want to thank Chair Vang for working with LSP and partner organizations on language, as well as the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for their collaboration throughout this process.**

**We ask that you support H.F. 3763 as amended and consider our concern as the conference committee process moves forward.**

Sincerely,



Amanda N. Koehler  
 LSP Policy Manager  
[akoehler@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:akoehler@landstewardshipproject.org)  
 651-431-1117 (cell)