

Hannah Bernhardt

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March 8, 2022

Chair Mike Sundin
House Agriculture Policy & Finance Committee
597 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Sundin and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to express my strong support for Rep. Lippert's bill appropriating funds for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to prepare a Regional and Local Food Systems Report (HF 3999).

I own and operate Medicine Creek Farm in Pine County. I raise grass fed beef and lamb and pastured pork, and direct market all my products to over 500 customers primarily in the metro regions of the Twin Cities and Duluth. I am also a member of the Emerging Farmer Working Group, advising the MDA on ways to improve equity and access for other farmers like me.

Without baseline knowledge on the current state of Minnesota's regional and local food system—such as how many farmers are selling products locally and how they are being marketed—it's difficult for the Department to know what policies and programs will have the greatest impact or offer emerging farmers the most help. It's my understanding that traditionally MDA has not tracked significant data on non-commodity agriculture, and yet there are many Minnesota farmers feeding our communities and strengthening local resilience in the face of unexpected pandemics, climate change uncertainty, and international market and supply chain disruptions.

A report on the current state of our regional and local food system is a baseline necessity to serving all Minnesotans – both farmers and eaters – and I encourage your support of this bill. I appreciate your consideration of this proposal and thank Rep. Lippert for his leadership as well as the Committee's work on behalf of Minnesota's food producers.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hannah K. Bernhardt".

Hannah K. Bernhardt