



April 9, 2025

Dear Chair Anderson and Chair Hansen,

I want to thank you both and the House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee for your work in drafting HF2446 Department of Agriculture (MDA), the Board of Animal Health (BAH), and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI) budget established. Our agency appreciates your commitment to Minnesota's agriculture sector and community prosperity throughout our great state. I look forward to working with you all to craft a bill that continues to invest in Minnesota's farmers and our communities.

I am pleased that several of the Governor's recommendations are included in HF2446, including an operating adjustment to maintain agency services for the MDA, the BAH and AURI, and supplementing the Agricultural Emergency Account with a \$4 million increase. The inclusion of these appropriations will help the MDA to maintain agency services and respond to agricultural emergencies.

This bill also aims to address several important areas of the agricultural industry, including additional funding for county ag inspectors, the MDA meat inspection program, wolf and elk depredation compensation account, farm safety health and wellness, First District Association wastewater assistance, farm to school and childcare, Local Food Purchase Assistance Program, and more. Many of these proposed requests and recommendations came from the MDA's public portal and meetings in which Minnesotans shared their policy and budget priorities.

Provisions not in the bill include the MDA food licensing modernization and grain buyers and storage license fees. The food licensing modernization updates are required to simplify the licensing structure to meet food industry needs, and to maintain the current level of licensing, inspection and enforcement service in the food programs. Without the fee increases and taking into account the related reductions in federal funding, the retail food and manufactured food program will face a budget shortfall that will result in the reduction of at least eight inspection staff, or 26% of the in-field inspectors, resulting in a reduced number of inspections and increased wait times for licensing. The grain buyers and storage license fee changes are overdue and have not been updated for 20 years, and the program has been operating at a deficit; we will either need to reduce staff or supplement with other funding if these fees are not increased. Other priorities not included are the Good Food Access Program update, the Livestock Investment Grant expansion, and updates to Rural Finance Authority programs, among others. I look forward to continued discussion with the committee on these issues.

This strong budget will help enhance the MDA's ability to respond to critical issues facing Minnesota agriculture in a time of extreme uncertainty for our family farmers and agriculture related businesses. The investments in this bill will keep our industry strong and competitive. The MDA thanks the chairs and the committee for their work and looks forward to continuing to collaborate with the committee to cultivate a resilient agriculture budget bill that works to protect the integrity of our food supply, the health of our environment, and the strength and resilience of our agricultural economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Thom Petersen'.

Thom Petersen

Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture



April 2, 2025

RE: Avian Flu Food Worker Testing Funding

To the Leadership and Members of the Minnesota Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee

Dear Members of the Committee,

We are writing in support of a proposed amendment that would provide \$1.5 million for avian influenza biomonitoring tracking for agricultural workers, farm workers, and poultry or livestock workers that would voluntarily participate in a tracking program. Avian influenza, also known as bird flu, is an illness that infects birds and many other animals, including poultry and dairy cattle. Bird flu can also infect people with symptoms ranging in humans from mild illness to very serious conditions.

State officials recently announced that a Stearns County dairy farm was subject to quarantine for bird flu after milk testing found avian influenza last week.¹ This was the first reported dairy cow infection in Minnesota since last summer and the first detection from a state milk testing program that launched a month ago. Workers along the food supply chain interacting with affected animals and their byproducts will be at continued risk for exposure and infection.

We now know from the COVID-19 pandemic that these workers are vital to the America's food supply chain and must be protected. Employers also have a responsibility to protect their workers from the risk of bird flu infection. The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 663 and Local 1189 represent nearly 24,000 frontline professional workers and their families in grocery stores, meat processing, retail shops, and healthcare facilities across Minnesota, and we value efforts that will protect their health and safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Rena Wong
President
UFCW LOCAL 663

Adam Evenstad
President
UFCW LOCAL 1189

ⁱ <https://www.startribune.com/bird-avian-flu-h5n1-dairy-herd-cow-found-detected-minnesota-farm/601243008>



BIOECONOMY

COALITION OF MINNESOTA

April 9, 2025

Dear Chair Anderson, Chair Hansen, Vice-Chair Harder, Vice-Chair Smith, and members of the House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House File 2446. The Bioeconomy Coalition of Minnesota brings everyone involved in the Bioeconomy together to collaborate and grow the industry along the entire value chain from research and development to production and use. Coalition members include representatives from agriculture, forestry, local government, nongovernmental organizations, and start-ups. The Coalition aims to position Minnesota as a global leader in the Bioeconomy by supporting innovation in biobased industries, add value to Minnesota's resources, and create a sustainable bioeconomy.

The Bioeconomy Coalition of Minnesota appreciates this committee's continued support for the Minnesota Bioincentive Program, but we urge you to consider increasing its funding. More funding is needed to maximize the program's benefits for Minnesota's economy and to fulfill the state's commitments to companies that have invested in projects in the state. Incentive programs such as the Bioincentive Program are also critical to competing with other states for federal funding opportunities for biobased industries, but only if those programs are fully funded.

Based on a report by the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality, the economic benefit of the Bioincentive Program far exceeds its cost. Each dollar spent on this program has generated \$407.10 for the state's economy and \$8.90 in new tax collections.¹ This program is actively boosting Minnesota's economy and creating value across the bioeconomy supply chain. Additionally, the program only makes payments to participating companies after production has already started, making it a low-risk, high-reward investment for the state.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Berninger

Public Policy Manager, Transportation & Fuels

Great Plains Institute (facilitator of the Bioeconomy Coalition of Minnesota)

¹ Brigid Tuck, *Economic Contribution of the Biobased Industrial Products Industry in Minnesota: 2019*, University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality, August 2020, <https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/217094>



305 Roselawn Ave E | Suite 200 | St. Paul, MN 55117
Phone: (651) 639-1223 | www.mfu.org

April 8, 2025

Co-Chair Rick Hansen
Co-Chair Paul Anderson
House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee
75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard., Room G3
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co-Chair Hansen, Co-Chair Anderson, and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to share strong support for provisions in your agriculture finance bill (HF2446 DE) and to highlight priorities for our family farmer members. We are grateful for you and your team's hard work to craft a budget that will support family farmers, help fill gaps left by the federal government, and build an agriculture economy that is more resilient, distributed, and fair. In all, this is a strong proposal, and we hope it moves forward quickly to conference with the Senate.

Your work on this state budget comes as our members are facing significant headwinds. Traveling the state in the last two weeks for a series of 10 listening sessions, we heard firsthand about the impacts of an escalating trade war, cancelled federal contracts, layoffs at local USDA offices, lack of action on a Farm Bill, risk of animal disease, and increasing input costs. All these challenges are exacerbating to the financial stress experienced by farmers and ranchers going into spring.

The state's budget for agriculture is comparatively small, making up less than half of one percent of our total state budget. That said, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), and the Board of Animal Health (BAH) all have a big impact, helping lead our state's agriculture economy through COVID-19, 2021's historic drought, past zoonotic disease outbreaks, and more. Recognizing this—and the fiscal challenges facing the state—we appreciate you and your colleague's work to secure a meaningful increase to the agriculture budget. Broadly, **thank you for prioritizing funding for the agencies to maintain operations, ensure continuity of programs, and continue providing quality service to farmers, ranchers, and others in our state.** We also appreciate that—with exceptions—base funded programs are largely held harmless.

Beyond that, **we would like to share our support for:**

- **Expanding access to local and regional markets** including by:
 - **Increasing support for Farm to School and Early Care** (HF1795 Nelson, HF2785 Vang; 10.14) to help farmers access new markets and ensure young people have access to healthy, nutritious meals that aid their learning. This program has been a success for participating farmers, schools, and the state. We're glad to see the state renew our commitment to this work in the face of cancelled federal funding.

- **Creating a state Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) program** (HF2102, Lee; 16.6) to help organizations establish wholesale agreements with farmers, providing a stable market to those who are working to build their farm businesses. For many new and emerging farmers, accessing a reliable market can provide much-needed financial stability during the high-risk early years of farming. Even beyond that—and much like farm to school efforts—this program is a win-win for communities, improving access to fresh healthy food for people who need it.
- **Expanding local and regional processing** is an important way we can help family farmers add value to their products locally, promote rural economic development, and ensure that farmers can earn a fair price for what they produce. That’s why this work has been a top priority for our organization in recent years. We support:
 - **New increased funding for state meat and poultry inspectors** (4.5) to ensure that new processors seeking inspection can count on that critical service from the state. This investment is timely as a significant portion of our state meat inspection program is funded by the federal government, creating uncertainty about stable funding going forward. Without inspection, farmers are unable market their meat or poultry through retailers, restaurants, or other means, limiting their markets and opportunities for profit.
 - **Continued support for livestock processing and value-added grants through AGRI** (10.8; 7.24), which supports meat, poultry, dairy and other processors in starting up, expanding, or modernizing their facilities. This will help them serve more farmers, directly addressing the bottleneck experienced by our members across the state. Upgrading facilities will also ensure that these businesses are modernized, aiding in the transition to the next generation. Should there be the opportunity, we support additional resources for meat processing, particularly given cuts to programs at the federal level. We also appreciate that where you propose adding programs to AGRI, the total funding for the program (7.20) is also increased so as not to displace programs—like value-added grants—that rely on undesignated funding.
- **Supporting new and emerging farmers** and helping the next generation of farmers build a life in agriculture. We believe strongly that this is not only an investment in those individual farms, but also the continued vitality of our rural communities. More specifically, we support:
 - **New funding for Farm Business Management (FBM) scholarships and support** (HF653, Nelson; 19.4) which will help new farmers and others weather financial challenges and ensure their farms are viable long-term. We’re also glad that FBM has continued to prioritize farmland transition and supporting all farms with one-on-one financial assistance. We appreciate the increase starting in 2028 and would welcome opportunities to move that up to this coming year. We believe that demand for the program will be high given the financial challenges facing farmers this coming year.
 - **The Emerging Farmers Office** (15.7) ensuring that MDA will continue to implement the important work spearheaded by the Emerging Farmers Working Group making the department’s programs are equitable, accessible, and responsive to the unique needs of emerging farmers.

- **Down Payment Assistance** (12.1) which is a direct way the state helps get new farmers on the land. Land access is a central challenge for new farmers and it's also how they gain security and build generational wealth. We're glad to see the state build on the investment in this program. And we also support increasing the max for an individual award (20.21) and would encourage the committee to consider extending awards so that farmers who utilize the program have time to identify a qualifying purchase of farmland.
 - **Farmland transition support** (15.21) through the continuation Farm Advocate program. Farm transitions which can be costly and complicated for both parties, and this will help get more new farmers started.
- **Farm Safety and Rural Mental Health** (HF1702, Anderson; 7.7), supporting outreach and counseling services and ensuring that MDA can continue their nation-leading work to support farmers experiencing crisis. Farming can be stressful and the financial uncertainty of the coming growing season will only add to that stress. This appropriation compliments other investments in mental health and safety by enabling MDA to operate the Farm and Rural Helpline, coordinate the Farm Safety Working Group, and other important initiatives. We're also grateful to see continued support for statewide mental health counselors, supported through an appropriation to Region Five Development Commission (14.30).
- **Farm Advocates** (15.21) to help expand their work to support farmers experiencing financial hardship. While the department's work on rural mental health supports farmers, the advocates help the farm finances.
- **Zoonotic disease preparedness**, including through direct investments in the Board of Animal Health (BAH) is critical for helping our state prepare for a renewed bout of HPAI, H5N1, and other animal diseases that pose a significant threat to our state's livestock farmers. We support:
 - **New funding for the Ag Emergency Account** (17.28), ensuring that the state is well-prepared to quickly respond in the face of an outbreak this spring.
 - **Protect grants** (HF1503; 12.4) to help poultry producers install technology to limit interactions with wild birds and prevent the transmission of avian influenza. This is an important and comparatively cost-effective method the state can help mitigate risk of devastating outbreaks.
- **Cooperative Development Grants** (11.7) – continuing this successful program helps our members and others build and scale cooperatives that add value to MN-grown products, improve profitability, and keep money in rural communities. In the face of market concentration and an escalating trade war, many of our members are seeking new ways to process, market, and otherwise add value to products they produce. Helping new cooperatives get started will shorten supply chains and make our food system more resilient.
- **Funding Forever Green** (HF525 Anderson; 19.9) – continued investment in the development of perennial and winter annual crops will help our family farmer members add value and diversity to their farming operations, deliver important ecosystem benefits, and remain resilient in the face of climate change. On the other hand, this proposal does not renew funding for market development and commercialization, which we also feel is an important strategic next step in developing new cropping systems in a way that supports small businesses, increases adoption, and ensures a fair price for farmers.

- **Wildlife depredation funding** (HF271 Burkel) to support farmers and ranchers who've lost livestock to wolves (2.31), or crops and infrastructure to elk (3.15). Farmers losing livestock to wolves carries a financial and emotional toll. These programs help compensate producers and limit the financial loss. Going forward, we also support the committee considering continued investment in wolf-livestock prevention grants, which help mitigate conflicts before they happen.
- **Biofuels infrastructure grants** (19.3) to expand the use of higher-octane, cleaner-burning biofuels through upgrading the infrastructure at fuel retailers across the state. This improve consumer access to higher blends, lower prices at the pump, and lower the emissions from existing vehicles, all while bolstering an important market for many family farmers.
- **County fair support** (6.9) to help promote agriculture, enhance arts access and education, and preserve and promote our state's history and cultural heritage.
- **Noxious weeds funding** (HF38, Anderson; 4.11) to helps with detection, control, and management. This is a threat to producers' livelihoods, and we support Minnesota continuing support to County Agricultural Inspectors.

Last but not least, we strongly support your committee's consistent **investment in our state's work on rural broadband** (23.9). Strong and consistent funding will help us make sorely needed progress toward ensuring that every Minnesotan can access quality, high-speed internet. Family farmers rely on the internet to connect with customers, monitor market trends, educate themselves on the latest farming methods, and make use of modern farming technology—it's increasingly essential to running a farm business and supporting a family in rural Minnesota.

We realize that the state is facing broader fiscal challenges and that this is still an early step in crafting a budget for the coming years. And even given the increased you helped secure, we understand that crafting a bill requires difficult choices between worthy priorities. With that in mind, we'd like to share our concern about omissions or cuts in your budget that we hope can be addressed as this bill moves forward. These include:

- **Making AGRI a dedicated account** to ensure that funding allocated to this flagship program stays in AGRI. This structural change would grant MDA flexibility and—in effect—make more money available to Farm to School and Early Care, biofuels infrastructure Grants, Farm Business Management scholarships, and so much more. Also important at a time when farmers are facing incredible uncertainty, this change would ensure that AGRI has more undesignated funds to quickly respond to challenges as they have with COVID-19, 2021's historic drought, and recent outbreaks of HPAI. We appreciate your consideration of making AGRI a dedicated account.
- **Cut to the Green Fertilizer Grant program** (20.9) – we value your leadership in establishing this program in 2023 and hope it is not cut in a final budget. This nation-leading pilot program not only invests in green fertilizer production, but also incentivizes farmer ownership of production facilities through Minnesota's existing network of farmer-owned cooperatives. There are many benefits to building this industry in our state, including lowering the carbon intensity growing crops, increasing economic resilience for farmers and rural communities, and creating a stable market for green hydrogen that can

then be scaled and deployed to green manufacturing and mining. That said, projects are hugely capital intensive and early investment from the state will could prove consequential for getting distributed, farmer-owned production capacity online soon. Particularly given uncertainty on the federal level, we hope the state can find ways to expand this program going forward.

- **Cut to Soil Health Financial Assistance Grants** (HF985, Nelson; 2.15) – continued strong funding for this successful program will help more farmers get started with practices that make farmland more resilient to extreme weather events, retain topsoil, build organic matter, and promote water quality. We appreciate that this program is flexible and allows farmers to lead in pursuing innovations that make sense for their operation and geography. And we also understand that additional federal funding for this program was recently unfrozen, helping meet the significant demand from farmers.
- **Livestock investment grant changes** (HF1796, Nelson) to help more livestock producers upgrade and improve their farm infrastructure. We understand that substantial policy changes were not considered for your DE, but appreciate your consideration of this priority going forward. Helping livestock producers make update their operations and make them more resilient is good for main street businesses, the health of soil, and the vitality of our rural communities. Our members see the value of this grant program and the need to increase the reimbursement amount to 50 percent for the first \$20,000. This will help beginning farmers and those adding livestock to their operations by allowing them to get more meaningful cost share on installing watering systems, building fences, or adding shelter for grazing animals. Importantly, MDA's proposal also maintains equity for larger projects by ensuring that projects above that threshold still get the increased reimbursement on their first \$20,000.
- **Cut to the DAIRI Program** (20.12) – this program was created in 2023 to help small and mid-sized dairies access federal risk protection, manage increasing input costs, and weather market volatility. Unfortunately, lack of action on an updated Farm Bill has meant that this money has gone unspent. While have concerns about this cut, we appreciate that the committee has prioritized funding for other challenges facing dairy farmers, including the renewed threat of H5N1, helping upgrade First District, and continuing support for value-added grants.

In all, this is a strong bill, and we encourage your support to move it forward to conference. We thank you for your partnership and look forward to working with to continue strengthening this bill as it moves forward. If you have any questions, please contact our Government Relations Director, Stu Lourey, at stu@mfu.org or (320) 232-2047 (C). Thank you for considering the needs and perspectives of Minnesota's farm families.

Sincerely,



Gary Wertish
President, Minnesota Farmers Union

Representative Paul Anderson
House Agriculture Finance & Policy Committee
Centennial Office Building, 2nd Floor
658 Cedar Street
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Representative Rick Hansen
House Agriculture Finance & Policy Committee
Centennial Office Building, 5th Floor
658 Cedar Street
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: HF2446, Agriculture Budget Bill

April 8, 2025

Co-Chairs Anderson and Hansen, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to comment on the delete-all (DE4) amendment to HF2446. The Nature Conservancy is a nonprofit organization working to conserve the lands and water on which all life depends toward our vision where nature and people thrive, and offer the following reflections on programs we believe support this vision.

We appreciate the inclusion in the bill of a \$100,000 appropriation to evaluate the **Olmsted County Soil Health Program**. We have seen this program demonstrate exceptional success in improving groundwater quality by promoting the use of cover crops, reduced tillage, nutrient management, and crop diversification, and hope such an investment now will help to yield additional investment in the program in the future, so it can expand to more of southeastern Minnesota. This program's comprehensive approach - incorporating a suite of sustainable practices - provides a model for improving soil health and water quality while supporting agricultural producers. (*Article 1, Section 2 (j) of the DE4*)

We are also grateful to see a \$2,000,000 investment in the **Local Food Purchasing Assistance Grant Program**. This program helps provide markets that support expanded diversification of crop rotations, which in turn can and does have meaningful impacts on nutrient use, especially in southeastern Minnesota where diversification helps address water quality challenges exacerbated by karst topography. With federal reductions related to this program, it is critical that MN can continue to deliver. (*Article 1, Section 2 (k) of the DE4*)

We are concerned about the reduction to the **Soil Health Financial Assistance Program** ("Soil Health Equipment Grants") in the base, especially given the popularity of the program. However, we recognize the challenges the committee faces in this biennium's budget-setting process, and appreciate that there will continue to be some ongoing investment in the program. (*Article 2, Subd. 2(b) of the DE4*)

Thank you for your consideration,



Stephanie Pinkalla
Government Relations Director
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota



April 8, 2025

RE: Comments to the House Omnibus Agriculture Finance Legislation (HF2446)

Dear Chairs Anderson and Hansen and Members of the House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee:

The **Minnesota Association of County Agricultural Inspectors (MACAI)** is an association of local government professionals who are responsible for enforcement of noxious weed laws. MACAI is involved in a variety of plant and pest control functions to support good public policy and implementation of the law. MACAI is an affiliate of the Association of Minnesota Counties and adopts platforms consistent with the League of Minnesota Cities and Minnesota Association of Townships as well.

MACAI appreciates the work of the House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee in assembling this funding proposal. Minnesota is weighing potential future deficits that makes this work even more difficult, but you have assembled quality budget recommendations that will keep agricultural interests at the forefront in the coming years.

MACAI appreciates the investment of \$750,000 per year for state support of agricultural inspectors. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Noxious Weed List has grown to 59 prohibited, restricted, and regulated species. These plants are placed on the Noxious Weed List because they may be harmful to public health, the environment, public roads, crops, livestock, or other property. The county ag inspectors work hand in hand with the MDA and other local weed inspectors to identify and manage these plants for public and environmental benefit.

Current funding disparities around the state means that the ability to give these issues proactive attention varies between jurisdictions and that has an impact statewide. We believe this investment will elevate the importance noxious weed management and encourage further local investment, thus establishing more consistent, statewide efforts.

Thank you for your attention to the many important issues included in the Omnibus Agriculture Budget bill, including support of county agricultural inspector work. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Brian Martinson, AMC Policy Analyst, at 651-246-4156 or bmartinson@mncounties.org.

Sincerely,

Tyler Luethje, Le Sueur County Parks Director & Ag Inspector
Minnesota Association of County Agricultural Inspectors, President



Dedicated to a Strong Greater Minnesota

April 8, 2025

Dear Co-Chair Hansen, Co-Chair Anderson and members of the Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC), an organization of more than 115 cities located outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area, to comment on a small portion of the Agriculture Omnibus Finance and Policy bill, H.F. 2446, pertaining to the proposed study of PFAS in Biosolids at Art. 1, Sec. 2, lines 5.21 – 6.2.

Our cities play a significant role in ensuring Minnesotans have clean water through our wastewater facilities and their biosolids programs. The ability of municipal wastewater treatment facilities to land apply properly managed biosolids is extremely important to our members and the residents of their communities. Our member cities also share this committee's concerns about the health risks associated with per-and-polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and we understand the need to assess the potential impact to human health in biosolids.

We are not opposed to the proposed study of the impact of land applied biosolids, though we believe the committee should consider whether it is duplicative of the Environmental Protection Agency's recently released study on the same topic, which can be found on their website, <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-01/fact-sheet-wwtps-draft-sewage-sludge-risk-assessment-pfoa-pfos.pdf>. More importantly, if this study is looking at the impacts in Minnesota and is making recommendations, we believe it is essential that Greater Minnesota have a voice in the study as well. We urge the committee to include a representative from a major Greater Minnesota wastewater facility as part of the study as well.

Thank you for your consideration.

Elizabeth Wefel
Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities



MAMP
MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF MEAT PROCESSORS

651-247-9966
jordan@mamponline.com

April 7th, 2025

Co-Chair Paul Anderson
Co-Chair Rick Hansen
House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee
75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard., Room G3
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co-Chair Anderson, Co-Chair Hansen, and members of the committee:

The Minnesota Association of Meat Processors (MAMP) is writing to express strong support for continued and increased funding for the AGRI Meat Processing and Value-Added Grant Programs for 2026 and 2027.

MAMP is a network of small, independent meat processors across Minnesota. As one of the largest and most active state meat processor organizations, our mission is to support new technologies, advance workforce training, and maintain a strong and viable local meat industry.

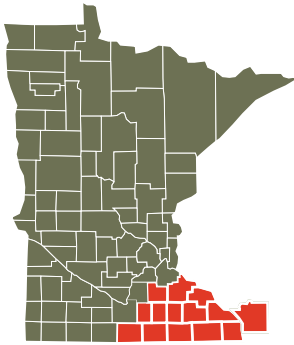
We appreciate the Minnesota Legislature's 2023 investment of over \$1 million in the AGRI Meat Processing and Value-Added Grant Programs. However, we are concerned that HF2446 DE4, as currently written, would reduce funding to just \$250,000 in 2026 and 2027 (lines 10.8-10.13). This reduction would significantly impact small meat processors across the state, who depend on these grants to expand their capacity, meet the growing processing needs of local farmers, and modernize equipment to improve efficiency amid ongoing workforce shortages. We respectfully ask the committee to address this funding gap.

Thank you for your consideration of this increasing this important funding. We are excited to continue supporting innovation, training, and the next generation of meat processors in Minnesota.

Please give this funding your strongest support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jordan McCallum". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jordan McCallum
Executive Director



Our mission is to strengthen food access and build healthy communities with a vision that every community in our region is food secure. We serve people experiencing hunger in 14 counties in southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin through a network of more than 125 food shelves, pantries and programs.



in our region,
60,790
people are food
insecure

map.feedingamerica.org



in our region,
19,440
kids are food
insecure

Channel One Programs

Food Bank

Warehouse and food distribution center serving 14 counties

Kitchen Coalition

Public/private partnership that provides prepared meals using donated food to those facing hunger in our community

Mobile Markets

Food shelf experience at areas of high identified need for people who encounter transportation barriers

Food Shelf

Food for people facing food insecurity in Olmsted County

Mobile Pantries

Drive-through food distribution in rural communities and areas with limited access to food and programs

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

Supplemental boxes of USDA nutritious food to improve the health of seniors in need

In 2024, Channel One...



supported
391,295
household visits to
partner food shelves in
our region

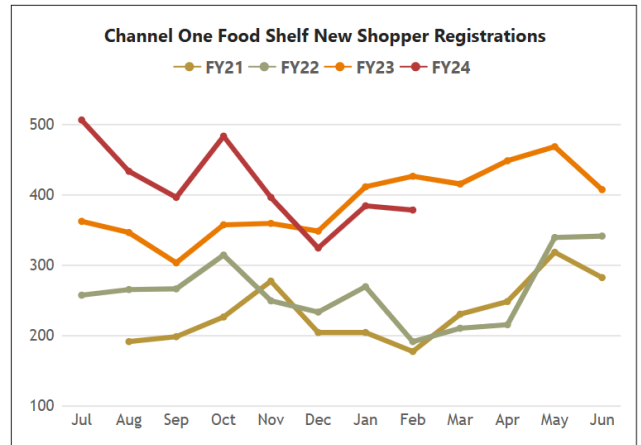
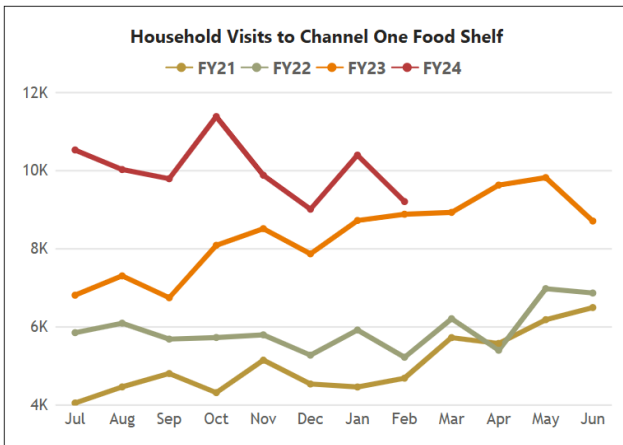


distributed
18,862,674
pounds of food to those
facing food insecurity in
our region

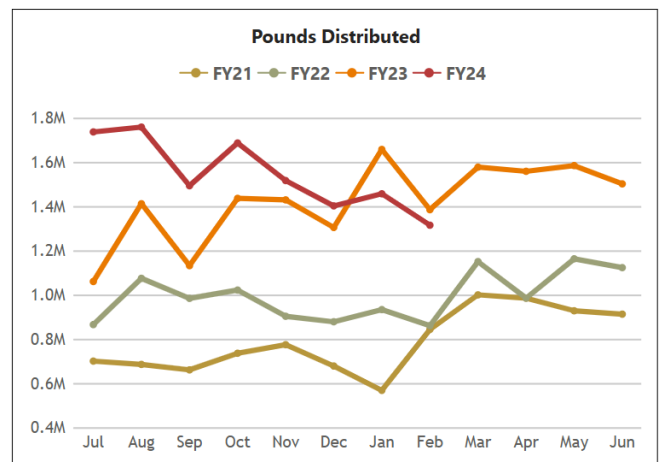
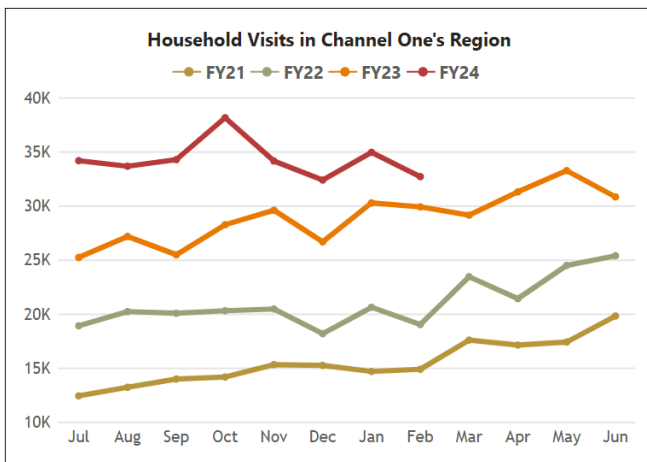


volunteers donated
13,988
hours in our
Food Bank and onsite
Food Shelf

Increased Need for Channel One's Programs



The Channel One Food Shelf is serving a historic number of shoppers, including those who have never needed assistance before. Comparing 2024 over 2023, there was a 40% increase in new shoppers. Also, the increase in new shoppers from 2022 to 2024 was 68%.



The Channel One Food Shelf and the entire region continue to serve a record number of shoppers. For the entire region in 2024, there was a 32% increase in monthly household visits compared to 2023. Also, 2024 had a 78% increase in monthly household visits compared to 2022.

In our region, in partnership, Channel One distributed approximately 18.9 million pounds for calendar year 2024 and almost 14 million pounds for calendar year 2023. This is an increase of 35% year over year.



FARMWARD

COOPERATIVE

Advancing farming for generations

April 8, 2025

Co-Chair Rick Hansen & Co-Chair Paul Anderson
Minnesota House of Representatives Agriculture Finance & Policy Committee
Email: rep.rick.hansen@house.mn.gov; rep.paul.anderson@house.mn.gov
cc: Peter.strohmeier@house.mn.gov; Mark.nisley@house.mn.gov
Re: HF2446 DE4 Amendment

Chairs and Members of the House Agriculture Finance & Policy Committee:

I am writing to share my gratitude for the bipartisan work that went into preparing the House Ag Committee's omnibus bill that was presented on Monday, April 7th. In particular, I want to share my thanks for the leaders and staff who heard the concerns brought by grain elevator operators and farmer-owned cooperatives regarding changes in the state grain buyers and storage license fee structure. The absence of these changes in the amendment you presented to the committee is greatly appreciated by Farmward Cooperative, and many other farmer-owned cooperatives throughout the state who would have been greatly impacted by the original bill language.

As the CEO of Farmward Cooperative, we're here to help guide growers through the current tumultuous farm economic landscape, help them reap the benefits, and mitigate the most difficult challenges. Headquartered in Morgan, Minnesota, Farmward has outlet locations in Clements, Comfrey, Danube, Morton, Olivia, Renville, Sacred Heart, Springfield, Wabasso, and Wood Lake. We have a diverse line of products and services for our farmer-owners, including grain handling and marketing.

This is a critical time to do everything we can to help farmers succeed in a very difficult market environment, and adding burdensome new license costs during this time doesn't help us achieve that goal. That said, we want to thank the professionals at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for the critical work they do to audit and inspect our state's licensed grain facilities, and we hope that the chairs will work together to find a more reasonable fee structure that will ensure they have the resources they need to do their required work and not increase fees for smaller co-ops like ours by 250%.

Farmward Cooperative, and our friends at the Cooperative Network, appreciate your attention to this issue and we are grateful that you heard the concerns of our cooperatives and their farmer-owners. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John Husk, Chief Executive Officer
Farmward Cooperative
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