



THE GOOD ACRE

FOOD + COMMUNITY

April 15, 2024

Dear Char Vang and Members of the House Agriculture Finance & Policy Committee,

As Minnesota's largest nonprofit food hub, we are grateful for this committee's support of programs like LEAFF, and those administered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and Rural Finance Authority (RFA) aimed at uplifting diverse farmers with down payment assistance and tax credits. Minnesota's unfortunate distinction as a leader in racial disparities underscores the urgency of these efforts.

Of the 65 emerging farmers who we have accepted into tiers one and two of our LEAFF program this year, 10% own their land, however, 100% of them have reported annual farm sales below \$100,000. Based on what we see, we recommend that the proposed definition of limited resource farmer in HF 3763 be expanded to include an income limit provision so that the programs affected by this policy change can still benefit the communities they were intended to support.

Many farmers, particularly those from marginalized communities, rely on wholesale channels facilitated by aggregators, such as The Good Acre, that serve as vital conduits for farmers facing obstacles in accessing traditional direct market opportunities statewide. While direct market avenues, such as farmers' markets, hold importance, they do not singularly sustain the livelihoods of disadvantaged specialty crop farmers in Minnesota. We hope that an income limit could be a solution to defining limited market access since the types of markets available to small and diverse farmers are so vast and varied across Minnesota.

I commend Chair Vang and her staff for their receptiveness to working with organizations like ours, the Midwest Farmers of Color Collective, 40 Acre Co-op, Latino Economic Development Center, The Food Group, and the Land Stewardship Project, among others. Together, we can fortify a resilient local food system and combat racial injustice through the transformative power of food.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these matters.

Sincerely,
Nikki Warner
Director of Communications & Government Affairs
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