



THE GOOD ACRE
FOOD + COMMUNITY

March 20, 2023

Dear Chair Vang and Members of the Agriculture Policy and Finance Committee,

I extend my heartfelt appreciation for your steadfast leadership in supporting small farmers throughout Minnesota over the years. Your dedication to ensuring the sustainability and equity of Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and Rural Finance Authority (RFA) programs designed to uplift diverse farmers is truly commendable.

Regarding HF 4908, we ask that you please consider broadening the "limited market access" definition to encompass aggregators. As you are well aware, many farmers, particularly those from marginalized communities, rely on selling wholesale through aggregators such as The Good Acre, Sprout, and smaller incubator farm programs like those run by Big River Farms, Kilimo Minnesota, Renewing the Countryside, Sharing Our Roots, and the Hmong Farmers Association, among others. These aggregators serve as crucial bridges for farmers facing challenges in accessing traditional direct market access opportunities across the state.

Furthermore, we encourage you to expand the definition of "limited market access" to include wholesale markets. Farmers markets, while important, are not the sole avenue through which farmers in Minnesota sustain their livelihoods. The MDA's current Regional Food System Infrastructure (RFSI) Grant stands ready to support the growth of aggregators statewide, thereby facilitating connections between small farmers and wholesale markets. Similarly, through the MDA's Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program, numerous farmers classified as "socially disadvantaged" are forging direct wholesale relationships with food banks and food shelves across our state in lieu of selling direct.

It is paramount that the farmers these programs aim to uplift are also eligible for the grant programs affected by this proposed language change.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,
Nikki Warner
Director of Communications & Government Affairs
nikki@thegoodacre.org

