



February 28, 2023

MFMA Supports H.F. 1637 – Urban Ag Grant program

Chair Vang, and Members of the MN House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee,

Minnesota Farmers' Market Association works to build a strong local foodshed in Minnesota because our state is much more resilient when communities are equipped to produce food and sustain themselves. MFMA stands in support of H.F. 1637, granting money to the Urban Ag grant program.

MFMA supports all farmers' markets in Minnesota, wherever they are. We are at a record-high 362 farmers' markets, with more onboarding this year. We do the research and curriculum development, offering trainings on food safety, MN food laws and licensing, cottage foods, sales tax on foods, business plans, etc. This winter, we have 32 zoominars scheduled, during the day, evenings, weekends – making the training as accessible as possible. We've offered a handful with interpretation into various languages – and need to offer more. MFMA is working with the Metro Food Justice Network to bring farm financial trainings to urban farmers, as part of our Farm Financial Resources Collaboration.

As climate change continues to upset Minnesota's growing seasons with more erratic weather events, the need to grow more food where people live is one of the best risk management strategies we can employ. Small plots of land can produce volumes of diversified food crops; a 1-acre produce CSA can feed 25-30 families for the year. The money invested in this grant program can then be leveraged to access federal monies by these urban farmers through various FSA and NRCS programs. We have navigators scattered across Minnesota to help connect urban farmers to these resources.

There are many local foodshed initiatives in front of your committee this year that need to get funded – we'll encourage Leadership to set a high budget target for Agriculture so these critical initiatives can get funded during this year's historic budget surplus.

Sincerely,

Kathy Zeman
Executive Director
Minnesota Farmers' Market Association

MISSION

MFMA provides services, programs, and leadership that support and promote farmers' markets across Minnesota.