

March 6, 2026

Minnesota House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture Finance & Policy
75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for the Forever Green Initiative and “Continuous Living Cover” programs

Dear Chair Anderson, Chair Hansen, and committee members,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our strong support for ongoing state investment in “continuous living cover” (CLC) agriculture including the University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative.

Forever Green is a nationally respected program that develops and helps to commercialize new, economically viable perennial and winter-annual crops to create more sustainable farm landscapes. By integrating such crops into existing farming systems, growers and businesses can bolster our ag economy through the development of high-value, commercially marketable food, feed and fuel products. In addition, CLC farming systems can dramatically help in protecting and enhancing water quality, soil health, wildlife habitat and climate resiliency.

Specifically, CLC crops can:

- Foster new economic opportunities for Minnesota family farmers;
- Protect drinking water and improve public health;
- Improve water quality in surface waters and groundwater;
- Diversify crop rotations and farm income streams;
- Enable production of biofuels with strong sustainability attributes;
- Attract new investment and employment in emerging agricultural industries;
- Enhance soil health and climate resilience;
- Enhance habitat for wildlife and pollinators; and
- Attract high-quality talent to the University of Minnesota to meet the future state workforce needs of the agriculture, food, energy and natural resource industries.

Continuous living cover agriculture is increasingly recognized as a core strategy for achieving Minnesota's water quality goals: the 2026 update to the MN Nutrient Reduction Strategy calls for the creation of a CLC Work Group and CLC Campaign to achieve 8 million acres of continuous living cover farming systems statewide. The state-supported Forever Green Partnership has spent several years laying the groundwork for this push by forming cross-sector collaborations that are attracting investments from private and philanthropic sectors, leveraging

public investments and building resources needed for the successful deployment of Forever Green crops and other CLC systems.

Investing in the farmers of today and the crops of tomorrow

Multiple Forever Green cropping systems have reached an inflection point, moving beyond field trials and into landscape production and market development. Forever Green's one-of-a-kind "Environmental and Economic Clusters of Opportunity" (EECO) Program provides Minnesota farmers with technical and financial assistance in order to protect early adopters from undue risk and feed real-world lessons back into University researchers' breeding and agronomic work. EECO is a partnership with the MN Department of Agriculture and has been made possible due to investment from the Clean Water Fund.

Forever Green also partners with dozens of supply chain businesses – ranging from local "mom & pop" operations to some of the world's largest agribusiness companies – to create the products and grow market opportunities that are fundamental to the success of this enterprise. The Legislature, in turn, has provided seed funding for the MDA's *Developing Markets for CLC Crops* grant program, which for the past three years has invested in small and mid-sized businesses involved in supply chain and market development in communities across the state.

Maintaining and enhancing funding for such farmer- and business-facing efforts – including deploying dedicated finance tools for larger-scale CLC infrastructure – will be critical to maintaining momentum and scaling up implementation.

Robust, long-term funding for Forever Green is particularly important because successfully breeding and commercializing new crops requires dedicated researchers and supply chain specialists. Already, Forever Green crops like winter camelina (a winter-hardy oilseed crop with immense potential for livestock feed and biofuel markets) and Kernza perennial grain are rapidly advancing due to the state's sustained support of foundational research, with more winners on the horizon. State investments in continuous living cover through Forever Green have historically been leveraged many times over in federal grants and other funding that supports this increasingly high-profile effort, while major players in the private sector are bringing their own capital and expertise to bear.

With continued support, we can make Minnesota the unquestioned leader in developing sustainable, profitable and diversified cropping systems that improve habitat, water quality, and soil health while boosting farm prosperity and rural economies.

Sincerely,

A&L Peterson Farms
Alliance for Sustainability

Audubon Upper Mississippi River
Ben Penner Farms
Center for Precision Agriculture, University of Minnesota
Citizens' Climate Lobby Minnesota
Clean River Partners
Climate Land Leaders
Cool Planet
Elders Climate Action Twin Cities
Environmental Initiative
Environmental Working Group
Friends of the Mississippi River
Full Circle Farm
Izaak Walton League of America - Austin Chapter 10
Land Stewardship Project
League of Women Voters of Minnesota
Midwest Elderberry Cooperative
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Minnesota Trout Unlimited
Perennial Pantry
Perennial Promise Growers Cooperative
Regenerative Agriculture Alliance
Renewing the Countryside
Savanna Institute
SUN Consulting / Gertens Nursery
Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota
The Savanna Institute
Upper Mississippi River Region of League of Women Voters
Vote Climate