



**LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT**

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April 19th, 2022

Chair Torrey Westrom Senate Agriculture and Rural Development Finance and Policy
Committee 95 University Avenue W. St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Mike Sundin House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther
King Jr. Blvd. St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Sundin, Chair Westrom, and conferees:

On behalf of Land Stewardship Project (LSP) and our 4,500 member households, I write in support of the drought relief provisions in HF 3420 and key provisions from SF3479 to provide the most relief for both livestock and specialty crop farmers across the state.

As the conferees know, farmers continue to feel impacts from last summer's drought and are eager to see some financial relief quickly. We thank Chair Westrom and Chair Sundin and the Department of Agriculture for their work to put together a holistic package that will support as many farmers across our state as possible. The provisions that we would like to see included in the final package include:

- \$5.1 million for livestock farmers and specialty crop producers with payments allowing up to \$10,000 per applicant for costs incurred between April 1, 2021 and May 1, 2022.
- Allocations that ensure specialty crop producers and livestock producers at least \$1 million in payments and \$500,000 for livestock and specialty crop producers who are also farmers' market vendors.
- Outreach to emerging farmers in appropriate languages to ensure all farmers know of this opportunity for financial assistance.
- \$5 million for the Rural Finance Authority Revolving Loan Account with priority going toward drought relief.
- Changing eligibility requirements to allow more farmers to apply for aid by lowering the gross income requirement from farming from 50 to 20 percent in the past year for the RFA loan.
- Ensuring 5 business days for applications to roll in before awarding payments, ensuring smaller operations or first-time applicants have an opportunity at securing funding.
- Allocating \$7 million to the non-competitive, rapid response grants program (SF3479) to ensure more farmers can benefit.

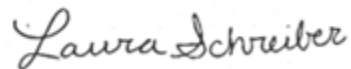
We believe it is especially important to have money allocated specifically for both specialty crop producers and livestock producers as written in HF 3420. We have heard from specialty producers across the state the costs incurred from last summer by having to invest in new irrigation equipment, digging or deepening wells, water testing and more and have limited, if any, insurance options or safety nets established. We encourage the conferees to support reserving allocations for both livestock farmers and specialty crop producers to ensure the most farmers possible could be aided through this package and help ease possible confusion.

To strengthen this package even further we have the following recommendations and considerations:

- If priority is determined by using D4 versus D3 drought status, making this information easily available to farmers to know which zone they fall into.
- We urge the Department to work to ensure those who suffered the most economic impact are prioritized even if their operation falls within a D3 or D2 drought zone.

Thank you to Chair Sundin, Chair Westrom, the Agriculture Committees and the Department of Agriculture for your work this session to bring relief to our farmers. We appreciate your consideration and hope to see the conferees support these provisions. Thank you for considering the needs and perspectives of Minnesota's farmers.

Sincerely,



Laura Schreiber

LSP Policy Organizer

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The Land Stewardship Project's mission is to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, promote sustainable agriculture, and develop healthy communities. LSP represents over 4,500 member households in Minnesota – primarily farmers and rural residents, as well as urban and suburban allies. Some of the Land Stewardship Project's greatest priorities are keeping small and mid-sized farmers on the land, growing the number of farmers stewarding the land, and advancing adoption of sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices.