

MDA Developing Markets for CLC Crops Grant Program

2026 Minnesota legislative session • Friends of the Mississippi River



This program funds early commercial development of value chains and markets for “continuous living cover” (CLC) crops and cropping systems. This includes regenerative poultry, winter-hardy oilseeds such as camelina and pennycress, Kernza® perennial grain, hybrid hazelnuts, elderberries, and more.

CLC crops: The environmental and economic upside

CLC crops and cropping systems reduce nitrate leaching and soil erosion to benefit water quality, while allowing growers to diversify their income streams and build soil health.

Supply chains for these novel crops are still in early stages of development, which hinders broader adoption by growers and puts a cap on consumer demand.

By providing grants to small- and mid-sized Minnesota businesses, the [Developing Markets for CLC Crops grant program](#) is helping to speed up — and scale up — these crucial enterprises.

Renewing the program will help the state meet growing demand

The Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$500,000 for this grant program in each of the 2022 and 2023 sessions, and \$450,000 in 2024. The program received an additional \$500,000 of federal support in 2025 for a cumulative \$1.95M in funding to date.

This hasn't been enough to keep up with demand.

Renewed support from the Legislature in 2026 and beyond will enable the next round of entrepreneurship and enterprise scaling, amplify progress to date, and ensure that investments in CLC basic research translate to better market and environmental outcomes for Minnesota.



Spotlight: Perennial Pantry

Award amount: \$50,000 (March 2023 RFP)

For: Operationalizing a new facility in Northfield, Minnesota, that will allow the business to more quickly scale up and meet demand for Kernza products, such as crackers.

“The grant dramatically accelerates everything, which really opens the door to a lot more growth and a lot more Kernza. ... It means increased viability for us as a business, and more Kernza we can source from water-quality plantings. And it means much wider availability of what we're making.”

— Christopher Abbott
President, [Perennial Pantry](#)

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Where things stand: The impact of the grant program so far

To date, 19 small- and mid-sized Minnesota businesses have benefited from the MDA Developing Markets for CLC Crops Grant Program.

We've seen a farmer-entrepreneur build a mobile winter camelina cleaning unit to address a critical gap in the regional supply chain, a family-owned nursery propagate 10,000 hybrid hazelnut shrubs for distribution and a fast-growing Kernza food business open a new manufacturing facility to keep up with demand.

Farmer-owned cooperatives, heritage Minnesota companies and ag startups alike have tapped the program for assistance with business development, equipment and other core needs. State support enables such businesses to quickly and efficiently overcome bottlenecks in emergent CLC agriculture markets, benefitting their local communities and incentivizing private investment.

Grant recipients to date

- Perennial Promise Growers Cooperative
- Regenerative Agriculture Alliance
- Perennial Pantry
- Midwest Elderberry Cooperative
- Nine Hazels Farm
- Dawson Drug & Gifts
- River Rock Kitchen & Baking Co.
- Rookie Farmers, LLC
- Gertens
- MSX Nexgen Inc.
- Bang Brewing Company
- Estling Farms Inc
- Midwest Hazelnuts, LLC
- Sturdiwheat
- SUN Consulting Inc.
- Tree Range Farms
- 40 Century Grain
- Ivy & Karma Inc. (Green Acres Milling)
- Minnesota Native Landscapes



Spotlight: Midwest Elderberry Cooperative

Award amount: \$50,000 (March 2023 RFP)

For: Prototyping a new de-stemming machine that will help Midwest Elderberry Cooperative growers capitalize on the untapped North American elderberry market.

“Having the confidence and the support from the state should help us get other interest from investors or partners. ... The confidence expressed by the Legislature’s vote, by Forever Green and our efforts as farmers is very helpful in getting our story told to other people.”

— Christopher Patton
President, [Midwest Elderberry Cooperative](#)

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