



Climate Land Leaders are working with compassion and commitment to address the climate crisis on their lands

March 21, 2025

Rep. Paul Anderson, Co-Chairperson and Rep. Rick Hansen, Co-Chairperson
Minnesota House Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband and Rural Development Finance and Policy
Committee

RE: HF 1796

Dear Co-Chair Anderson, Co-Chair Hansen and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Climate Land Leaders (CLL), I request your support of HF 1796, the Livestock Investment Grant bill, with Representative Nathan Nelson as Chief Author. This is a policy change from the current Livestock Investment Grant program and is recommended by the Department of Agriculture.

Climate Land Leaders is comprised of farmers and landowners who are using conservation and soil health practices on their farms to reduce carbon emissions, foster clean air and water and achieve resilience in the face of an ever-changing climate. Some are working to turn their farms over to the next generation, while others are livestock producers who want to expand their operations and better market locally. Some are new farmers who wish to diversify by adding livestock to their farms.

We support the changes proposed to the Livestock Investment Grant program in HF 1796, which would provide for a 50 percent cost share on qualifying investments of 0 - \$20,000 and a 20 percent cost share on the next \$200,000 in project costs, for a cost share on a maximum of \$220,000 of a project, or a \$50,000 grant. This is a change from the current 10 percent cost share on projects up to \$500,000. HF 1796 supports all eligible projects in a progressive manner, regardless of the size or type, in that all applicants receive the same cost share percentage on the first increment of investment up to \$20,000 and the same, smaller cost share of 20 percent on the next \$200,000 for a more progressive cost share.

The third page of this letter provides statistics from the Department of Agriculture which show that the Livestock Investment Grant programs usage, total amount funded, number of grants and average size over the last 7 years. Because the current program requires a minimum of

Mission: Landowners create community and support to alleviate climate change through land stewardship and conservation.

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\$4,000 investment with the 10 percent cost share, it only provides a \$400 grant which is so low that many don't apply. For example, a watering system of \$4,000 would receive only a \$400 cost share, which many consider not worth the application effort. Under HF 1796, the 50 percent cost share would provide a \$2,000 grant, greatly increasing the chances of this smaller project to be launched. HF 1796 would provide more robust support – a 50 percent cost share – for the first \$20,000 of investment, better serve all farmers and ranchers who would receive the same cost share on this first amount of investment, while also better serving smaller farmers and new livestock producers who are not making big expenditures.

Costs for livestock investments have increased dramatically and are not going down, and the program's 10 percent across the board match is less impactful today than when the Livestock Investment Grant first started. HF 1796 addresses this and aligns this cost share percentage with most other MDA cost share programs.

According to the MDA, HF 1796 offers greater opportunity for the smaller projects to apply and see greater benefit, with the potential to fund more projects, while also supporting all other eligible projects at the progressive level. For example, if MDA funded 10 projects costing \$10,000 (each) this would use \$50,000 in grant funds (\$5,000 each grant). This would be equivalent to two projects of \$250,000 at \$25,000 cost shares each under today's program. In turn, these funds support main street feed, seed and supply stores that thrive on small livestock producers.

Climate Land Leaders also supports these changes because they are consistent with the fifth soil health principle, adding livestock to the landscape. We encourage conversion of marginal cropland to robust pastures and prairie that can support managed grazing. We also support silvopasture, which uses a combination of forage improvements and managed grazing in woods. These practices can be better incentivized with the changes proposed in HF 1796.

HF 1796 also includes other species to the definition of livestock, ensuring greater flexibility to program eligibility. The bill also enables representatives of Minnesota Tribal nations to apply for the Livestock Investment Grant for their Tribes.

Lastly, Minnesota has made game changing investments in local meat processing and in the education of meat processing professionals, in an effort to rebuild a locally controlled meat system and support these important main street businesses. Minnesota has also fostered a robust farm to school program which puts nutritious food and protein on the plates of students across the state. The changes to the Livestock Investment Grant will help stimulate local meat production from more producers to serve communities and our growing farm-to-school efforts.

We urge your support HF 1796.

Thank you for your consideration.



Theresa M. Keaveny, State Policy Lead
Climate Land Leaders

From Minnesota Department of Agriculture – Livestock Investment Grant Use

FY 2025

Applications received	112
Amount available	\$1.125 million
Grants*	69
% of applications funded	62%
Amount awarded	\$887,251
# Under \$10,000	33
Average	\$12,859
Median	\$10,589

*Contracts for FY25 are not finalized so the final number may vary

FY 2024

Applications received	212 (over 2 rounds)
Amount available	\$1.5 million
Grants	90
% of applications funded	43%
Amount awarded	\$1.44 million
# Under \$10,000	31
Average	\$15,925
Median	\$22,117

FY 2023

Applications received	141
Amount available	\$1.3 million
Grants	78
Amount awarded	\$1.18 million
# Under \$10,000	26
Average	\$15,958
Median	\$17,398

Year	# of Applications	# Awarded	\$ Available	\$ Awarded
2019	174 (1 round)	104	\$2 million	\$2 million
2020	147 (1 round)	39	\$768,000	\$772,000
2021	99 (1 round)	44	\$789,000	\$756,000
2022	259 (2 rounds)	77	\$1.3 million	\$1.3 million