



To: House and Senate Agriculture, Commerce, and Energy Conference Committee

The Minnesota Crop Production Retailers represents the statewide network of co-ops and ag retailers. Our members, who are trusted crop advisors and agronomists, work closely with farmers and producers to provide essential plant health and protection inputs.

As you consider the various agricultural-related sections of the bills, we respectfully offer the following comments and recommendations.

[HF4975](#)

Article 6: Pesticide Control

Section 3 – Advisory panel.

- Requires MDA to convene and consider the recommendations of a panel of outside experts before approving a pesticide registrant's application for an experimental use pesticide product. Specifies that the panel must include scientific and public health experts, including representatives of the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the University of Minnesota.

Recommendation: This additional process requirement is not necessary. MDA currently utilizes a thorough review process when considering experimental use.

Section 4 – Expert advice required for emergency exemptions.

- Requires MDA to convene and consider the recommendations of a panel of outside experts within 30 days of submitting an emergency pesticide registration exemption application to the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Specifies that the panel must include scientific and public health experts, including representatives of the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the University of Minnesota.

Recommendation: The Federal EPA and MDA extensively review pesticides before allowing use. In emergency situations, time is a critical factor. Convening this proposed expert panel may cause delays and create conflicting guidance for ag retailers, community stakeholders, and growers. This section is not needed and should not be adopted.

Article 7: Other Agriculture Statutory Changes

Section 9 – Grant requirements (Soil Health).

- Adds new requirements and restrictions for those who receive soil health equipment grants from MDA, including certification under MDA’s Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program, a prohibition against leasing or renting the equipment to another for economic gain, and a prohibition against profiting from the sale of the equipment.

Recommendation: Specialized equipment is expensive. The proposed language restricts the availability of soil health grants and limits the ability of private-sector entities to use grant funds for equipment leased or rented. If the goal is to increase the number of acres of land where the soil health practices are implemented, it would be helpful to delete the requirement for Agriculture Water Quality Certification and permit private sector service providers to access the equipment grants to maximize the number of acres where the equipment would be utilized. Further, limiting the sale of used equipment may have unintended consequences as farming practices evolve and an increasing number of farm operations seek to implement soil health practices.

Suggested Amendment

17.134 SOIL HEALTH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

- The commissioner may provide financial assistance to local governments, private sector providers or farmers for the costs of specialized equipment and technology needed to install and sustain soil health practices.

Sections 13, 14, 15, 16, and 18 Fertilizer Definitions.

- The bill adds several new definitions for nitrogen fertilizer.

Recommendation: These new definitions are unnecessary.

Sections 23, 24, 25, 26 – Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council (AFREC).

- Extends an expiring 40 cent/ton fertilizer fee. Specifies that until June 30, 2025, MDA must continue depositing this fee revenue in the Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council (AFREC) account. After that date, this section would require MDA to deposit the 40 cent/ton fertilizer fee revenue in a new private drinking water assistance account created in a subsequent section.

Recommendation: Adopt the Senate position on AFREC included in SF4942, Article 2, Section 5. MCPR strongly supports the council’s recommendation to renew AFREC and extend the council for ten years, as well as invest in statewide cross-crop research supported by the \$.40 per ton fee. Redirecting these research dollars would adversely impact Minnesota's ag sector and limit the development of peer-reviewed research available to advance farming practices, improve nutrient management, and enhance fertilizer efficiency.