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Overview

This bill would create a state program to facilitate farm-to-school sales of certain foods. The program would reimburse eligible schools, school districts, and child care centers for the cost of Minnesota-grown unprocessed or minimally-processed foods, as defined. The program would be a joint effort between the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and University of Minnesota Extension. University of Minnesota Extension would facilitate farm-to-school sales by providing education and technical assistance to certain farmers.

Section

- 1 Farm-to-school administrative support, technical assistance, training, and grant program.** Defines key terms, including “eligible recipient,” “Minnesota grown,” and “unprocessed or minimally processed food.” Requires MDA to reimburse participating schools, school districts, and child care centers for the cost of procuring Minnesota grown unprocessed and minimally processed food. Requires University of Minnesota Extension to participate by providing assistance to farmers and processors who sell or intend to sell qualifying food to eligible recipients. Limits the total amount awarded to any recipient in any fiscal year to an amount equal to five cents times the number of meals served by the recipient under the federal school lunch program, school breakfast program, child and adult care food program, fresh fruit and vegetable program, and summer food service program during the prior year. Prohibits reimbursement for fluid milk, agricultural commodities, or certain yogurt products. Authorizes an eligible recipient to use up to 20 percent of grant funds for certain food-related educational activities.

Section

- 2** **Department of Agriculture; appropriations.** Appropriates \$4.5 million of annual base funding to MDA from the general fund for purposes of the new program. Requires MDA to use up to \$100,000 each fiscal year to administer the program, assist participating farmers and eligible grant recipients, and coordinate statewide farm-to-school strategy and programming.

- 3** **University of Minnesota; appropriation.** Appropriates \$300,000 of annual base funding from the general fund to MDA for transfer to the University of Minnesota to establish three new agriculture extension positions. These new positions would facilitate farm-to-school sales by providing research-based education and technical assistance to beginning, specialty crop, and small to midsize farmers, as well as other farmers with demonstrated need.