



September 1, 2020

Dear Candidate,

As you campaign this year in your race for the Minnesota Legislature, you are no doubt keenly aware that Minnesotans are facing significant challenges due to the COVID pandemic and the resulting recession. Minnesota's farming, agriculture and food sector is not immune to the consequences of these challenges, but we do believe our sector offers some of the best opportunities to help Minnesota's economy recover and grow.

The COVID pandemic created some stresses to our food system -- while some consumers did not always find their desired products readily available at their local stores, what's most important is we never ran out of food! It has been truly amazing how all segments of our food value chain have rallied with creativity and innovation to ensure the safety and reliability of our food products for Minnesotans.

We are reaching out to you on behalf of A Greater Minnesota (AGM) -- a broad coalition of farm and food interests that was created in 2014 to raise awareness and understanding about the critical role and significant economic contributions of Minnesota's robust food sector. **There are three points we believe are most important to understand about Minnesota's farm, agricultural and food sector:**

1. **Agriculture and Food are Essential** -- the pandemic underscored the fact that agriculture and food are essential and cannot be taken for granted.
2. **Economically Significant** -- When one considers all of the economic aspects of farming and ag in Greater MN combined with the hundreds of thousands of jobs related to the food sector in the Twin Cities, it becomes easier to understand how farming/food is the one of the largest sectors in Minnesota, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs.
3. **Impacts Entire State** -- The food sector touches every legislative district in Minnesota, from farming and ag inputs/services to food processing, financing, transportation, distribution, grocery/retail and exports.

Whether your legislative district includes Minneapolis, Mahtomedi, Mankato or Moorhead, we hope you will take a few moments to consider the economic impact and importance of our farming and food sector to the people in your area as well as the entire state. Enclosed is a brief information packet that may be useful to you. In addition, AGM will be distributing some information briefs to you between now and the election that we hope you will find interesting and informative.

Over the decades, Minnesota's agriculture and food sector has enjoyed broad support from both DFL and GOP policymakers, from rural to suburban and urban districts. We would welcome your support during the campaign, and, if elected, in the upcoming legislative sessions as we work to advance proposals to support the recovery and growth of our essential industry sector. Feel free to reach out to any of the participants in AGM with questions or if you need additional information. Thank you for your willingness to serve and advance the interests of our great state.

Minnesota Pork Producers Association
Minnesota Corn Growers Association
Minnesota AgriGrowth Council
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association
Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers

Minnesota Milk Producers Association
Minnesota Turkey Growers Association
Chicken and Egg Association of Minnesota
Minnesota Soybean Growers Association
Minnesota Farm Bureau

About A Greater Minnesota

A Greater Minnesota (AGM) is a coalition of like-minded organizations dedicated to the viability and growth of good farms, agriculture and food companies and jobs in Minnesota. The effort was first launched with the primary goal to keep Minnesota competitive in the global food and farm economy.

A key initiative of AGM is to work to inform all candidates for the Minnesota Legislature about agriculture and food's impact on the Minnesota economy and issues important to the industry.

We hope you will take a moment to read more about Minnesota farm and food production. If you would like to learn more, we're happy to schedule a visit with you either virtually or socially-distanced in-person. You can also learn more on our website at farmandfoodmn.org.

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MINNESOTA FARM BUREAU

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Various other Minnesota farm and food entities also support the AGM's efforts.

Key Issues

Currently, Minnesota family farmers, businesses that support farming operations, ag industry and food companies are all experiencing various degrees of economic stress due to:

- The COVID-19 pandemic
- Our current/severe recession
- Global trade conflicts that have sharply reduced demand for MN exports of commodities and products
- Tax and regulatory policies that marginalize the competitiveness of Minnesota compared to other states

The participants in AGM are working closely with their members to ensure we understand the depth and consequences of this economic crisis, the relative influence of various causes and potential solutions that need to be advanced at the state and federal level. The various member organizations of AGM will be submitting high-priority policy proposals to the 2021 legislative session. We sincerely hope that legislators and other policymakers will thoughtfully consider these proposals as we all have a vested interest in doing what we can to help Minnesota farm and food sector to recover and continue to grow.



Minnesota Food and Agriculture: Economic Catalyst

DEEP ECONOMIC ROOTS

Agriculture and food industries have always been an essential part of Minnesota's economy, going back more than 150 years. The state's fertile lands and favorable weather allowed farming to emerge as its first modern industry. Demand for milling led to the birth of the Twin Cities, and the need to move farm products helped shape the state's vast network of rail, barge, highways and the Duluth seaport we see today.

GROWTH AND INNOVATION TODAY

Minnesota's agriculture and food industries create and support hundreds of thousands of jobs, spark new innovations and fuel a variety of businesses and industries across every legislative district – from farm inputs/services, equipment, financing and technology to food processing, distribution, transportation and retail. The industries involved have a total statewide economic impact of \$112 billion!

MINNESOTA FARMING IS NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT

Minnesota agriculture has created an economic powerhouse that produces more than 20 major commodity and specialty crops. Some key Minnesota farm statistics:

- 68,822 farms in MN – 97% are family farms
- No. 5 – in total U.S. agricultural production
- No. 4 – in U.S. crop production
- No. 8 – in U.S. livestock production
- \$6.9 billion – value of Minnesota agricultural exports
- \$17.1 billion – agricultural annual sales of farm commodities
- \$112+ billion – total economic impact of agriculture production and food processing

Minnesota produces a wide variety of crops and food products that generate massive economic activity for the state. Major farm products produced by our farmers and Minnesota's national rankings include:

- No. 1 in turkeys and sugar beets
- No. 2 in hogs and sweet corn for processing
- No. 3 in soybeans
- No. 4 in corn and ethanol
- No. 5 in wheat, alfalfa and meat animals
- No. 6 in red meat and cheese
- No. 8 in milk, eggs and cattle on feed

Other farm products continue to grow in importance, especially those produced by smaller/specialty farmers, organic and alternative farm operations. Minnesota is No. 1 in green peas and wild rice; No. 3 in dry beans, sunflowers and oats; No. 4 in rye; No. 5 in vegetables, canola and barley; No. 7 in honey, potatoes and goats.

LARGE/GLOBAL AG AND FOOD COMPANIES CALL MN HOME

Minnesota's rich history with agriculture and food has historically spurred innovation and continues to do so. We are fortunate that Minnesota is home to five of the world's 30 largest food and agriculture companies. Here are some highlights:

- Over 1,000 Minnesota agriculture and food companies
- 18 – agriculture and food-related companies in MN with over \$500 million in sales
- Examples of major agriculture and food businesses headquartered in MN:
 - ✓ Cargill
 - ✓ Ecolab
 - ✓ Schwan Foods
 - ✓ American Crystal Sugar

- Including four Fortune 500 businesses
 - ✓ CHS
 - ✓ General Mills
 - ✓ Land O' Lakes
 - ✓ Hormel Foods

WORKFORCE

Agriculture and food processing industries are an economic engine supporting over 430,000 jobs for Minnesotans across the state.

- Most jobs are off-farm, including a significant number of jobs in the Twin Cities including processing, distribution, supply and service sectors.
- Minnesota is the fourth-largest employer of food and agricultural technicians nationally
- Minnesota employs almost twice the concentration of food scientists and other technical workers as the national average
- The Minnesota ag and food sector is committed to recruiting and employing a diverse workforce and creating opportunities for all

With many Greater Minnesota school districts offering a variety of vocational and technical education programs, Minnesota students will continue to have good job opportunities working in agriculture.

- 11,000 members of Future Farmers of America in Minnesota
- Many students are opting for farm-related trades and returning home with specialized degrees or certifications in industries like welding, mechanics, tech, biochemistry, biophysics, large animal veterinarians and environmental engineers
- 14 Minnesota colleges have agriculture programs

What Minnesota Farming Looks Like Today

We support the diversity of the thousands of Minnesota farms – large and small, conventional and alternative – that strive to meet the demands of consumers in a sustainable manner and improve our quality of life. While conventional farmers are at times the target of some activists, today's family farmers are producing more quality food at lower costs, which is important to family budgets and the needs of most consumers. Organic and alternative farming also play an emerging role in meeting the diverse expectations of consumers.

Our members share a deep commitment to quality, food safety, environmental and sustainability standards. Every day, farming is innovating and adapting for a better tomorrow. While some aspects of farm country are evolving, some things have not changed.



Rapid adoption of sustainability practices, environmental protections and enhanced animal care. Farmers take a vested interest in the care of their land, animals and water. After all, it's their livelihood.



Long gone is your grandpa's farm technology. Agriculture is on the cutting edge of technology with rapid advancements in everything from GPS systems on equipment, farm management software that assists with resource management and marketing goods, to genetic research that helps feed more people around the world. Robotic feed systems and automated milking technology results in more individualized care of dairy herds and creates good jobs, requiring employees with more education, technical skills and training.



A wider variety of farms. More diverse consumer demand has led to the emergence of more alternative and organic farms. Farmers markets are no longer reserved for the Twin Cities – over 188 now exist across the entire state.

What's NOT changing:



Minnesota farming is a family affair. Ninety-seven percent of all Minnesota farms are family operations. Many are multi-generational farms where land, knowledge and best practices are passed from one generation to the next.



Minnesotans' high standards. Farmers today bring innovation, science and hard work to their operations so that they can be good stewards of their land and deliver quality products to consumers – for today and future generations.



Commitment to local communities. Farmers are deeply rooted where they live and work. Farm families volunteer, serve on local boards and support local schools. They provide a foundation to a stable, quality of life in our state's rural communities.



Producing the food we need. A growing global population means family farms will need to produce more food in the years to come. Even in the most challenging times, Minnesota farmers help feed local communities, the state, the country and the world.



Helping others rise and supporting the economy. GDP growth produced by agriculture reduces poverty twice as much as equivalent GDP growth in other sectors, according to the World Bank. Minnesota farming creates financial security and jobs for MN families while offering better quality and more affordable food to those who need it most.