



March 16, 2023

Chair Putnam and Members of the MN Senate Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee:

This letter is written in strong support of Senate File 2900 Support for Farmers' Markets and Direct Marketing Producers.

I work for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) as the Specialty Crops Farm Business Management Instructor for the state of Minnesota and I am also a produce farmer. I work with a wide variety of specialty crop farmers across the state from Apples to Zucchini to help improve their bottom-line. This group of farmers is extremely diverse in terms of demographics and business size but what they all have in common is direct-market sales.

Farmers Markets typically rank as one of the most significant market channels for direct sales for these farmers and have proven extremely beneficial not just for farmers but for local municipalities and businesses that host or sponsor them. We also witnessed how popular and critical farmers markets became during the Covid 19 pandemic and this popularity show no sign of stopping.

Farmers Markets are a good investment. Specialty crop farmers often are dialed in on the production of their products but lack the access or expertise to get their products on the market. Robust, thriving, local Farmers Markets offer a solution to this problem and could also benefit the communities, both economically and socially, they reside in. Specialty crop farmers are underrepresented and underfunded, but have a huge impact on the vitality and sustainability of local and state communities. These farmers do not have lobbyists to speak on their behalf or an association with a research and promotion council. What they do have in common is participation at farmers markets at some point in their careers. Funding farmers markets would be the most expedient way to assist these farmers for years to come and ensure the MN food supply is stable and secure.

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Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Erik Heimark'. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Erik Heimark
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