

March 27, 2023

Chair Putnam and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Forever Green Initiative at the University of Minnesota, I would like to thank you for including funding for our work in SF1955. This funding will help stabilize key scientific personnel, including our plant breeders, many of whom lack dedicated funding. This investment will help us deliver new crops that are a win-win-win for farmers, the environment, and rural communities.

We recognize that the Committee had limited resources to address many worthy requests for funding. We hope that legislative leadership will find a way to provide additional funds to address the many challenges and opportunities in the Committee's jurisdiction. We look forward to continued partnership as we work toward fully funding the Forever Green Initiative.

Base funding for Forever Green is critically needed to ensure the long-term viability of our efforts to protect soil and water while driving new economic opportunities for growers, industry, and communities across Minnesota. In addition, funding for equipment and infrastructure would help us accelerate the pace of discovery, achieve even more with State research dollars, and secure more large federal grants.

Forever Green is a research platform at the University of Minnesota developing and improving winter-hardy annual and perennial crops. By combining these novel crops with traditional annual crops, farmers can keep the soil covered all year round. This approach to farming with "continuous living cover" can deliver a wide range of environmental benefits, including clean water, healthy soil, pollinator habitat, and wildlife habitat.

Forever Green is advancing these crops with a comprehensive approach that integrates research across multiple disciplines: breeding and genomics; agronomics; soil and water science; and food science. We also develop markets and supply chains for our crops so that it can be profitable for farmers to produce these crops across rural Minnesota.

Forever Green crops are a market-based approach to improving Minnesota's environment. Our vision is that they will spawn new industries that operate without financial support from the State.

However, public support is needed to achieve this vision. Research at the University of Minnesota was critical for the development of Minnesota's major crop industries, including hybrid corn, soybean, and wheat. Forever Green crops are the next generation.

We appreciate the Committee's support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mitchell C. Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mitchell C. Hunter, Ph.D.
Associate Director, Forever Green Initiative
Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Agronomy and Plant Genetics
University of Minnesota