



THE GOOD ACRE
FOOD + COMMUNITY

April 5, 2023

Dear Chair Putnam and Members of the of the Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee,

As Minnesota's largest nonprofit food hub, we are grateful for this committee's dedication to the sustainability and equity of programs like LEAFF, and those administered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and Rural Finance Authority (RFA) aimed at uplifting diverse farmers and providing them with equitable access to financial programs. Minnesota's unfortunate distinction as a leader in racial disparities underscores the urgency of these efforts.

Regarding SF 5049, it is important to expand the "limited market access" definition to include aggregators and wholesale markets. Many farmers, particularly those from marginalized communities, rely on wholesale channels facilitated by aggregators, such as The Good Acre, that serve as vital conduits for farmers facing obstacles in accessing traditional direct market opportunities statewide. While direct market avenues, such as farmers markets, hold importance, they do not singularly sustain the livelihoods of disadvantaged specialty crop farmers in Minnesota.

Should this new definition for limited resource farmer expand eligibility for the beginning farmer tax credit, down payment assistance, and our LEAFF program, it's important that a corresponding increase in funding for these initiatives be prioritized. These programs have proven to be extremely popular and effective, contributing to Minnesota bucking the national trend with a higher number of farmers in the latest ag census as compared to 2017.

I commend Chair Putnam and his staff for their receptiveness to working with organizations like ours, the Midwest Farmers of Color Collective, Latino Economic Development Center, The Food Group, and the Land Stewardship Project, among others around this issue. Together, we can confront the urgent challenges of climate change, fortify a resilient local food system, and combat racial injustice through the transformative power of food.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these matters.

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