

February 11, 2025

To: The Minnesota Senate Committee on Agriculture, Broadband, Veterans and Rural Development

Re: Supporting value chain businesses advancing Continuous Living Cover

Dear Chair Putnam and Committee members,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our strong support for measures that advance the development of Minnesota businesses focused on Continuous Living Cover (CLC) agriculture. We imagine a future close at hand when these companies rise as 21st-century leaders in Minnesota's agriculture and food sector, expanding options for Minnesota growers while supporting profitability, sustainability, and resilience.

Market-based CLC agriculture combines the excellent conservation outcomes of natural landscapes—such as prairie and woodland ecosystems—with the profitability of high-demand crops and diverse revenue streams.

State-supported basic research as well as grassroots innovation have brought new CLC crops and cropping systems to the cusp of commercial launch and scaling. These enterprises include Kernza perennial grain, regenerative poultry systems, hybrid hazelnuts, winter camelina, and elderberries, among others. Private companies and government agencies are increasingly turning to the agriculture sector for innovative ways to meet their environmental commitments, and CLC crops are perfectly suited to meet this new demand.

Minnesota is home to a growing cadre of new CLC-oriented businesses taking CLC innovations to market. A number of these businesses are led by or involve new and beginning farmers, BIPOC individuals and communities, and young entrepreneurs dedicating their lives to a profitable, sustainable, resilient agriculture sector in Minnesota. Similar to long-running State investments in renewable energy, dedicated State investment is needed and warranted to accelerate the supply chains and markets that will support expanded production of CLC crops and begin realizing these systems' public benefits at scale.

The Legislature, thanks to your committee's leadership, has invested \$1m via the MN Department of Agriculture's "Developing Markets for CLC Crops" program, created for this purpose in 2022, but that funding has been disbursed and more support is needed. This bill would accelerate the development of CLC value chains by strategically investing in companies poised for commercial breakthrough, delivering significant public benefits to Minnesotans and further solidifying Minnesota as a national and international leader in 21st century agricultural innovation.

Public investment now will spur further innovation and private investment, creating new economic and community development opportunities for our state while also protecting soil, water, biodiversity, and climate.

We urge you to support this important measure during the 2025 legislative session.

Sincerely,

Albert Lea Seed
Alliance for Sustainability
Arcola Farms
Audubon Upper Mississippi River
Climate Land Leaders
Conservation Minnesota
Environmental Initiative
Friends of the Mississippi River
Green Lands Blue Waters
Hastings Environmental Protectors
Lakeville Friends of the Environment
Land Stewardship Project
League of Women Voters of Minnesota
League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region ILO
Mad Agriculture
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Minnesota Division, Izaak Walton League of America
Minnesota Trout Unlimited
MN Div. of the Izaak Walton League of America
MNWOO
Perennial Promise Growers Cooperative
PURIS
Regen Ag Alliance
Renewing the Countryside
Savanna Institute
Sierra Club North Star Chapter
SUN Consulting Inc
Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota
The Good Acre
Vote Climate