

FARM AID MINNESOTA PARTNERS

[Farmers' Legal Action Group \(FLAG\)](#) is a nonprofit law center dedicated to providing legal services and supporting family farmers and their communities to keep family farmers on the land. In response to the Farm Crisis in the 1980s, after tens of thousands of families lost their farms, attorneys joined forces to help stop the foreclosures of 80,000 farms. This earned the attention of Farm Aid's very own Willie Nelson. Nelson invited these attorneys to the first Farm Aid festival and the next spring, the first funding check arrived from Farm Aid to help create FLAG.

[The Land Stewardship Project's \(LSP\)](#) mission is to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture and to develop healthy communities. LSP is dedicated to creating transformational change in our food and farming system by building vibrant rural communities that are places of belonging and opportunity for all.

[The Institute for Ag and Trade Policy \(IATP\)](#) works both locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure a fair and sustainable food, farm and trade system. IATP envisions agriculture, trade and food systems that are good for people, farmers and food system workers, ecosystems and social justice globally.

Farm Aid 40: Minneapolis, Minnesota

Since the 1980s, Minnesota has been a groundswell of energy and progress in the Farm Movement, championing rural advocacy, sustainable agriculture and forward-thinking policy reform. That's why Minnesota is an ideal host for Farm Aid 40, the commemoration of 40 years of Farm Aid.

MINNESOTA AGRICULTURE

- According to data from the 2024 USDA Census of Agriculture, there are 65,351 farms in the Land of 10,000 Lakes, with more than 25.4 million acres of farmland. In the same year, the average farm size increased from 371 acres to 388 acres.¹
- University of Minnesota and Minnesota State data show that the median farm income for the state has dropped to \$21,964 in 2024, the lowest level in this century.²
- \$11.3 billion of the state's revenue comes from livestock and \$17.1 billion from crops, accounting for nearly \$28.5 billion in revenue total.³
- Minnesota's top agricultural products include corn, soybeans, hay and wheat.⁴

INNOVATIONS

- In the past five years, Minnesota has had a 30% increase in the use of cover crops, which helps reduce erosion, improve soil health and improve water quality.⁵
- Minnesota is a leader in the food co-op movement, which embraces the idea of egalitarian systems of food distribution led by local communities. In the early years of the movement during the 1970s, there were 60 co-op grocery stores in nearly half of Minnesota's 87 counties. Today there are more than 45 co-op grocery stores that source from 200 local organic farms.⁶



Minnesota Farm Advocates
Reunion
PHOTO Rob Amberg

THREATS

- Like other states, Minnesota agriculture has to reckon with consolidation and corporate power. Rural residents and farmers bear the brunt of resisting corporate power to protect their farms, water, soil, communities and public health. A recent example is the years-long legal fight by Winona County residents against the proposed expansion of what is already the state's concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) dairy farm.⁷
- Rising temperatures, extreme storms and shifting ecosystems pose a threat to Minnesota agriculture. From 1895 to 2021, average minimum winter temperatures (December through February) rose by 7.3°F in northern Minnesota, 6°F in central Minnesota and 4.9°F in southern Minnesota. Minnesota lakes have lost an average of 10 to 14 days of ice cover in the past 50 years, affecting lake and fish health, outdoor recreation opportunities, local governments and business owners.⁸
- Across the Midwest, winter and spring precipitation is projected to increase up to 30% by the end of the century. Average annual damages from increased flood risk in the Midwest are projected to exceed \$500 million by 2050.⁹
- Flooding has cost Minnesota more than \$1.45 billion in damage to corn, soybeans, forage and other crops.¹⁰
- Food insecurity remains a persistent issue in Minnesota. A recent study shows that one in five Minnesota households can't afford the food that they need, which is 20% of the state's population. Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, food insecurity has surged by 40%.¹¹

FOOD SYSTEM LEADERS IN MINNESOTA

- Minnesota is home to 11 sovereign Tribal nations, composed of seven Anishinaabe reservations and four Dakota communities, each with a distinct government. Many Indigenous foods are native to Minnesota, like pumpkins, corn, squash, wild rice and more. Organizations like [NATIFS](#) work to rekindle and empower Indigenous food sovereignty through regional hubs that celebrate and elevate Indigenous culinary traditions.
- The Minnesota [Farm Advocates](#) program provides one-on-one assistance at no cost to Minnesota farmers who face crises caused by natural disasters or financial problems. This program has been supported by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture since 1984 and stands as a model that other states could emulate to support family farm agriculture in their own state.
- The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has created an [Emerging Farmers](#) program, the first of its kind nationwide, to diversify agriculture and create equitable access to farmland, capital and programs that support farmers. This program serves to advance the success of farmers who traditionally face barriers to the education and resources necessary to build profitable agricultural businesses, including women, veterans, persons with disabilities, people of color, Native people and immigrants.



Hoosier Heritage Farm
PHOTO Farm Aid

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⁸ Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. (n.d.). *Climate change impacts*. <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air-water-land-climate/climate-change-impacts>

⁹ Horn-Muller, A. (2025, March 28). *The \$20 billion question hanging over America’s struggling farmers*. Grist. <https://grist.org/food-and-agriculture/the-20-billion-question-hanging-over-americas-struggling-farmers/>

¹⁰ Second Harvest Heartland & Wilder Research. (2025). *2024 Statewide Hunger Study: Findings from a survey for Second Harvest Heartland*. https://www.2harvest.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/mhh_2024-statewidehungerstudy_0.pdf

¹¹ Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute. (2025). *Food Security Dashboard*. University of Minnesota. <https://hfhl.umn.edu/resources/dashboardintro>



Farm Aid’s mission is to build a vibrant, family farm-centered system of agriculture in America. Farm Aid artists and board members Willie Nelson, Neil Young, John Mellencamp, Dave Matthews and Margo Price host an annual festival to raise funds to support Farm Aid’s work with family farmers and to inspire people to choose family farm food. For 40 years, Farm Aid, with the support of the artists who contribute their performances each year, has raised more than \$85 million to support programs that help farmers thrive, expand the reach of the Good Food Movement, take action to change the dominant system of industrial agriculture and promote food from family farms.