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Historic Win for Minnesota Young and Beginning Farmers

First-in-the-country land access bill for young and beginning farmers signed by Governor Dayton— **11 million in funding** - bipartisan and agricultural groups supporting.

Saint Paul Minnesota – Tuesday evening Governor Mark Dayton signed 10 budget bills that included a first of its kind beginning farmers tax credit. Authored by Rep. Nels Pierson (R-Rochester) and Sen. Mike Goggin (R-Redwing) the bill supports the transition of land to young and beginning farmers through a tax credit.

Organic grain farmer and co-founder of the Central Minnesota Young Farmers Coalition Matthew Fitzgerald said, “This bill offers a win-win solution for the future of farming in Minnesota. This is also the first bill to include an incentive for the sale of farmland – making it a historic win.” Co-founder and conventional hops farmers Eric Sannerud added, “Less than 4% of Minnesota farmers are under the age of 35 and access to land is the number one barrier to getting started. This bill offers a tangible way to address pressing problems.”

Through the bill, landowners receive a state income tax credit when they sell or rent land to a beginning farmer. The credit equals **5 percent of the sale price or 10 percent of the cash rent fee**. In turn, the beginning farmer **must** take a farm management course to qualify for the tax incentive and would be eligible for a tax credit covering the full cost of training. **The bill is effective for the 2018 tax year and is funded at 11 million dollars for the 2018-2019 biennium. The funds are available on a first-come-first served basis and administered by the Minnesota Department of Revenue.**

Beginning farmers and leader Andrew Barsness talked about the organizing effort to pass the bill, “We [young farmers] worked hard to see this pass; we organized, testified, and worked with the authors to get a good piece of legislation. For lots of us this was our first time getting political. We showed that by working with a broad coalition and staying focused on practical solutions beginning farmers have a voice and power.”

The bill had bi-partisan support: House File 608 was co-authored by Representatives Jason Rarick (R-Pine City), Josh Heintzeman (R-Baxter), Mary Franson (R-Alexandria), Greg Davids (R-Preston), Jeanne Poppe (DFL-Austin), Gene Pelowski (DFL-Winona), Clark Johnson (DFL-North Mankato) and David Bly (DFL-Northfield). In the Senate, the bill (SF 1414) was chief authored by Sen. Michael Goggin (R-Redwing) and co-authored by Senators Andrew Mathews (R-Milaca), Rich Draheim (R-Madison Lake), Kent Eken (DFL-Twin Valley) and Dan Sparks (DFL-Austin).

Additionally, the Central Minnesota Young Farmers Coalition worked with major agricultural groups that included: Minnesota Farm Bureau, Minnesota Farmers Union, and Land Stewardship Project, and Minnesota Catholic Conference.

Rachel Brann, a beginning cut-flower farmer summarized the impact of the bills by saying, “More beginning farmers on the land means stronger communities for Minnesota— this bill helps us all, big or small, rural or urban, conventional or organic.”

Founded in 2016, the Central Minnesota Young Farmers Coalition is a membership organization of farmers from Benton, Grant, Stems, Meeker, Milaca, McLeod, Wright, Carver, Rice counties.