GRANTS SUPPORT FARM TO SCHOOL CONNECTIONS DURING COVID-19

Up to $124,000 available through AGRI Farm to School new Rapid Response Grants

June 17, 2020

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) anticipates awarding up to $124,000 through two new Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) mini-grants to respond to the disruptions COVID-19 has caused in traditional Farm to School markets.

- **AGRI Farm to School Rapid Response for Schools** – Grants are intended for school districts to begin, diversify, and expand purchasing from Minnesota producers during the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily during the summer and fall 2020. School districts may apply for $1,000 to $5,000 and there is no match required.
- **AGRI Farm to School Rapid Response for Food Vendors** – Grants are intended to support equipment purchases for food vendors that will help them to meet the product needs of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Agricultural producers (farmers, ranchers, agricultural cooperatives), restaurants, processors, food hubs, food distributors, and food service management companies are eligible to apply. Food vendors may apply for $1,000 to $5,000 and there is a 1:1 match requirement.

“During this period of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we’re looking for ways to support farmers and invest in schools differently,” Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen said. “These mini-grants help preserve and expand markets that provide students with locally grown, healthy, nutritional food options.”

School closures due to COVID-19 have led to many changes for food service departments and the farmers who sell into wholesale markets, while also highlighting the value of strong local food connections.

“The past several months has shown just how essential farms and schools are to ensure that communities have access to fresh, healthy food,” said Kate Seybold, Farm to School coordinator at Minneapolis Public Schools. “These new Farm to School Rapid Response grants will play an important role in helping Minnesota farms and schools to work together in response to COVID-19 to use and serve local food, as well as plan and invest in Farm to School partnerships to expand local food in schools in the future.”

Applications for both mini-grants will be reviewed twice monthly through August 12, 2020, or until funds run out. Funding will be prioritized to support Minnesota’s Emerging Farmers, including Black, Indigenous, Farmers of Color, beginning farmers, women, and veterans.

To apply as a school, visit: www.mda.state.mn.us/f2srapidresponseschools (/f2srapidresponseschools).

To apply as a food vendor, visit: www.mda.state.mn.us/f2srapidresponsevendors (/f2srapidresponsevendors).

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