

March 13, 2024

Katrina Kessler, Commissioner  
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
520 Lafayette Road  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Subject: University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDP) support of the State Minnesota's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Single Entity Proposal for Climate-Smart Food Systems (Award Number EPA-R-OAR-CPRGI-23-07)

Dear Commissioner Kessler,

On behalf of the University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDP), I am writing to express our support for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and other state agencies' suite of climate-smart food systems programs in your agency's single entity CPRG implementation grant proposal.

Minnesota is poised to be a national leader in climate-smart approaches to our food system and we believe everyone can play a role in making this happen. This proposal supports this vision through a systems approach that captures multiple benefits while achieving significant greenhouse gas emissions reductions and carbon sequestration by identify and implementing mitigation strategies and practices across all aspects of our food system.

RSDP is ready to support and partner on this visionary climate-smart food systems work. For over 26 years, RSDP has fostered community and University partnerships to drive sustainability in four focus areas: agriculture and food systems, clean energy, natural resources and resilient communities. We identify and support local sustainability projects through five regional boards made up of community members and University faculty and staff. We also support multi-region food systems work across Greater Minnesota and provide energy programming through the Clean Energy Resource Teams. Through our two decades of work, we have supported hundreds of communities to address sustainability needs and issues in their local and regional food systems. RSDP is a trusted partner in rural Minnesota and will bring rural perspectives and leadership to this project. For this proposal, RSDP will provide support to the Regional Food Network efforts under the local food economies measure by:

- Advising and assisting the Regional Food Coordinators with the formation of the Regional Food Networks in the Central, NW, NE, SE, and SW regions of the state.
- Participate in the Regional Food Networks

- Help identify existing community food assessments, food policy council work, community health needs assessments, and other relevant planning documents to be reviewed and analyzed for GHG reduction potential within local and regional food systems.
- Be available to provide education, outreach and community engagement efforts for and at Regional Food Network meetings.
- Provide input and feedback in the development of the Request for Proposals for the Community Food Systems grant applications.

RSDP staff and leadership have partnered or supported dozens of state programs over our two decades of work. Recently RSDP provided rural partnership on a statewide food systems analysis project called the ***Statewide Cooperative Partnership for Local and Regional Markets*** (the Partnership) with funding from the USDA Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP). This three-year project involved more than 40 statewide partners and collected data from producers, supply chain partners, and consumers to identify market trends and opportunities for small and mid-sized farms. The goal of this work is to strengthen relationships between institutions and farmers and create more equitable approaches for collecting and sharing data. The data and learnings from the Cooperative project will most certainly inform the data collection proposed in this proposal.

We are enthusiastic about the opportunity this proposal provides to advance our shared climate goals and the goals of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ambitious and vital CPRG program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Constance Carlson".

Constance Carlson  
Assistant Statewide Director  
UMN Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships