

## Agency Purpose

The mission of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is to work toward a diverse agricultural industry that is profitable and environmentally sound; to protect public health and safety regarding food and agricultural products; and to ensure orderly commerce in agriculture and food products.

From the farm to your family, the MDA ensures that Minnesota agricultural products used in production or available for consumption meet or exceed regulatory standards. These standards are set by state and federal laws that ensure the quality of products and the safety of food. The MDA also helps sustain and enhance the economic and environmental conditions of the agricultural sector in a number of ways. Since Minnesota produces more food and agricultural products than its citizens can consume, it must focus on marketing strategies that encourage exports to other states and countries. The MDA plays a lead role in helping the state's farmers and agricultural businesses build trade relationships with potential customers in other states and countries.

## Core Functions

The Protection Services Program provides regulatory oversight for agricultural products from the farm to retail stores. Many of these regulatory activities touch consumers' everyday lives. For example, the MDA protects consumers by inspecting food and dairy products, dairy farms, food processing facilities, grocery stores, and even food stands at the Minnesota State Fair. The MDA also regulates, inspects and analyzes animal feed, fertilizers and pesticides; it performs laboratory analysis on food products; and inspects grain and fresh produce moving into or out of Minnesota. The MDA helps protect the environment by monitoring surface and ground water for possible contaminants and by preventing the establishment of destructive tree and plant pests such as gypsy moth and emerald ash borer.

The Agricultural Marketing and Development Services Program helps sustain and enhance farmers' economic and environmental well-being through a number of services. The program develops and tests new farming practices that help minimize environmental impacts, educates farmers about these practices and encourages their implementation with education and technical assistance. It gives farmers updated information on plant pests during the growing season, helping them determine how and when to take action to protect their crops. The program also helps the state's agricultural community expand existing markets and develop new markets for Minnesota agricultural products. This includes developing international trade opportunities, offering educational programs on risk management, and encouraging value-added activities.

The Ethanol Producer Payment Program was authorized by the 1986 legislature. Currently ten ethanol plants located throughout Minnesota are eligible to receive producer payments. M.S. 41A.09 contains the formula for producer payments. Each plant submits a quarterly report of gallons of ethanol produced. These reports are independently audited, and payments are made in accordance with statute.

The Administration and Financial Assistance Program provides leadership and administrative support to the agency, gathers important statistical information for the farm sector, and offers financial assistance to producers. This program provides overall leadership and coordination of agency efforts. It coordinates communication with internal and external stakeholders including farmers, media, and other government bodies. It provides fiscal oversight to the department and provides important information on employment and benefits to employees. Producers use the statistical information gathered by our joint federal/state division of Ag Statistics to learn about

## At A Glance

Why is agriculture vital to 21<sup>st</sup> century Minnesota? In addition to providing us with the world's most abundant and wholesome food supply, agriculture remains a cornerstone industry.

- ◆ Agriculture and its related industries account for approximately 15% of all Minnesota jobs, making it the second largest economic sector in the state.
- ◆ Over 80% of all agricultural jobs are off-farm, in processing, distribution, supply, and service activities.
- ◆ Exports of farm products bring in more than \$2 billion to the state each year.
- ◆ Minnesota is the fifth largest exporter of agricultural products among the states, leading in turkey exports and ranking in the top ten in milk, soybeans, pork and other commodities.
- ◆ More than half of the state's total land area is farmland.

MDA works to help ensure that all this activity remains orderly, safe, and profitable.

important trends in their industry. The Ag Stats program produces publications that provide valuable information on crop conditions and production statistics and forwards information on Minnesota agriculture to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Producers and rural lenders benefit from the Rural Finance Authority loan programs. These loans help beginning farmers get started and they help producers upgrade existing production facilities.

## Operations

The department's main office is at 625 Robert Street North, in St. Paul. However, since most of the regulatory and promotion services we provide require face to face contact with our farmers, producers, and consumers, almost half of our staff is scattered throughout the state in the areas they serve. Our inspectors are responsible for on-site inspections of facilities. These inspections ensure that the agricultural products and processes meet applicable standards for quality and integrity. For example, the fertilizer we use on our lawns must meet quality standards just as the fertilizer used in production agriculture. The pesticides we use in our homes are regulated just as those used by farmers. Milk is inspected at many points, from the farm to the milk plant to our supermarkets. Sustainable agricultural practices, such as biological control of weeds and pests, benefit not only the farmers but the shoppers in urban shopping malls.

In addition to ensuring the safety and integrity of products, the department helps farmers and agribusinesses market those products in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. The MDA encourages value-added activities and the development of new domestic markets for existing agriculture products, and it works with other state offices to stimulate international exports of Minnesota-grown agricultural products. This is done to help keep Minnesota's agricultural community competitive in the world marketplace.

## Budget

The MDA budget comes from multiple funds. These funds include the General Fund for operations and for ethanol producer payments, dedicated revenue funds, federal funds, and loan funds.

Over half of all money expended is appropriated from the General Fund. Of this amount, approximately 40% is for ethanol producer payments. Most of the balance supports agency program operations.

Dedicated funds spent by the MDA (Special Revenue and Ag Fund) provide operational costs for various programs. These funds recover of the costs of services provided.

Some regulatory programs collect various fees that defray the cost of services to the General Fund. These fees are deposited to the General Fund as non-dedicated revenues.

MDA continues to apply for federal funds that complement our area of programmatic responsibility.

MDA also administers several agricultural loan programs. Funding for these loan programs is provided through a variety of sources that include user financed bonds.

## Contact

For additional policy information, please contact Quinn Cheney, Director of Policy Development at (651) 201-6180 or [Quinn.Cheney@state.mn.us](mailto:Quinn.Cheney@state.mn.us). For more budget details, please contact Steve Ernest, Financial Management Director, at (651) 201-6580 or [Steve.Ernest@state.mn.us](mailto:Steve.Ernest@state.mn.us).

MDA's web site is [www.mda.state.mn.us](http://www.mda.state.mn.us). Our web site contains additional information on each of the divisions in the agency, licensing information, food recalls information, and more. For information on how this agency measures whether it is meeting its statewide goals, please refer to [www.departmentresults.state.mn.us](http://www.departmentresults.state.mn.us)