

U of M Forever Green Initiative

Developing perennial and winter-annual agricultural crops

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Minnesota Environmental Partnership, Forever Green Partnership



Photo: Dodd Demas for FMR

By investing in the Forever Green Initiative we can harness the power of “continuous living cover” agriculture to protect our state’s natural resources while increasing the efficiency, profitability and productivity of Minnesota’s farmers. Increasing state funding would allow Forever Green to pursue longer-term projects, retain key researchers, and purchase and maintain critical equipment and physical infrastructure to support breeding, agronomic research and food science activities.

The Forever Green Initiative (FGI) at the University of Minnesota is developing perennial and winter-annual crops that protect soil and water while driving new economic opportunities for growers, industry and communities.

By combining these novel crops with traditional annual crops like corn, soybeans and wheat, farmers can keep the soil covered all year round. Farming with such “continuous living cover” can greatly enhance the efficiency and sustainability of Minnesota agriculture: a 2023 analysis found that this approach could boost on-farm profits by 20%, while reducing losses of nitrate (-23%) and sediment (-35%) and improving the ag sector’s carbon footprint.

The FGI portfolio includes over 15 crop development platforms, each supported by a team with expertise in genomics, breeding, agronomics, natural resource sciences, food science, sociology, economics and commercialization. Uniquely, FGI combines basic research with crop commercialization efforts in a comprehensive approach that moves new crops out of the lab and onto the landscape, where they can make a difference for society.

Forever Green crops diversify economic opportunities for Minnesota’s farmers through the production of new sources of food, feed and high-value biomaterials like low-carbon fuel, in ways that complement current annual production systems.

Forever Green is a “win-win” for our farmers, our economy, our rural communities and our environment.

With Forever Green crops we can:

- Enhance farm profits
- Diversify crop portfolios & farm income streams
- Attract investment in new rural agricultural industries
- Protect drinking water
- Improve soil health & resilience
- Reduce emissions
- Enhance wildlife and pollinator habitat

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