



Photo by Dr. Kanjani S. Bajgain

FOREVER GREEN INITIATIVE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Minnesota’s Forever Green Initiative is leading efforts to create a new agricultural system that can fight climate change using profitable new crops that keep agricultural lands covered with living plants year-round. Perennial grains like Kernza® and new winter annual “cash cover crops” can amplify carbon storage in plants and soils while also building climate resilience, protecting water quality, improving soil health, and creating new economic opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

- Unite plant breeders, agronomists, economists, and businesses to advance perennial grains and winter annual crops.
- Support efforts to increase yields of perennial grains to wheat levels, reducing the amount of land needed to grow these crops.
- Work with businesses to integrate grains into commercial products like beer, creating new markets for perennial crops.

PATHWAYS FOR SCALING



Policy: The USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, the Inflation Reduction Act, and incorporation of Kernza into the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) are recent examples of federal policy that could advance perennial grains and similar crops Forever Green is developing.



Entrepreneurship & Investment: Accelerate dedicated, innovative start-ups like Perennial Pantry and Perennial Promise Growers Cooperative to develop products and scale-up markets for perennial grains.



Basic Research: Continued public and private investment in basic research (breeding, agronomy, environmental and food sciences) on perennial grains and winter annuals is essential to increasing their viability on-farm and in the market.

LOCATION

Minnesota

FUNDING AMOUNT AND SOURCES

\$4.3 million for FY 2022-23; MN Clean Water Funds. Additional funding from other state sources, USDA National Institute of Food & Agriculture, Department of Energy, and private philanthropies.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

Minnesota Department of Agriculture, The Land Institute, Minnesota Environmental Partnership, Friends of the Mississippi River, Green Lands Blue Waters, Perennial Pantry, Perennial Promise Growers Cooperative, Agricultural Utilization Research Institute

SUCCESSES TO DATE



Received permanent funding by the Minnesota Legislature to support development of perennial & winter annual crops.



Developed a pilot grant program to support entrepreneurs to scale value chains for these crops.



Expanded a pilot program to de-risk grower adoption and increase acreage of new perennial and winter annual crops.

For more information about this and other innovative and scalable projects implementing Natural Climate Solutions in the U.S., please visit www.usnature4climate.org/building-ambition/.