



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Law Promotes Food Security and Resilience by Protecting Seed Sharing

Duluth, Minnesota – May 20, 2015 – On Tuesday, May 19, 2015, Governor Mark Dayton signed into law an amendment to the Minnesota Seed Law promoting food security and urban agriculture by removing regulatory barriers to seed sharing activities, including seed libraries. Introduced by Senator Roger Reinert, and attached to the legislature’s agricultural policy omnibus bill, HF1544, this amendment exempts non-commercial, interpersonal seed sharing from industrial labeling, testing, and permitting requirements. The new law is a response to regulatory actions by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture last year that restricted the Duluth Public Library’s ability to operate a seed library.

The need for this legislation arose in 2014, after the Minnesota Department of Agriculture interpreted the state seed law’s testing and labeling requirements for seed sales as applying to the non-commercial sharing of seeds facilitated by the Duluth Seed Library. As part of its national Save Seed Sharing campaign, California-based Sustainable Economies Law Center joined Iowa-based Seed Savers Exchange and several Minnesota-based organizations to advocate for changes to the state seed law that recognized the importance of locally adapted seeds and people’s rights to share seeds within their communities.

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The group applauds Senator Roger Reinert and the Minnesota Legislature for their leadership to promote healthy, more resilient, local food systems. The effort was also supported by urban agriculture organizations and libraries across the state, including the Minnesota Library Association. As Neil Thapar, Staff Attorney of Sustainable Economies Law Center, stated, “this legislation recognizes that a resilient food system starts with a resilient seed system, which is based on locally adapted varieties that represent genetic diversity and a longstanding cultural heritage and tradition of seed saving and sharing.”

Now that the law clearly exempts seed libraries, the Duluth Public Library will resume its seed sharing program in full, including sharing locally saved seeds. Carla Powers, manager at the Duluth Public Library, is relieved, “Now that the bill has passed, we should be able to start operating the seed library as we had originally envisioned it.” Growing West Side, another seed library in the state, has already kicked off their season with seed-focused classes and events, and many more groups are planning seed swaps among friends and neighbors.

Seed sharing legislation has also been introduced in Nebraska, Illinois, and Iowa, as groups across the country are organizing to protect the right to share seeds.

Sustainable Economies Law Center is the organizer of the national Save Seed Sharing campaign promoting education and advocacy around seed sharing and state seed laws. More information about the campaign is at www.theselc.org/save_seed_sharing.

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Sustainable Economies Law Center

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