March 17, 2025

Honored Members of the 34th Alaska Legislature:

Thank you for the opportunity to register our support for the creation of an Alaska Department of Agriculture.

AgWest Farm Credit is an agricultural lending cooperative with more than a century of experience serving farmers, ranchers, timber harvesters, and aquatic producers throughout the West, including Alaska.

Alaska has tremendous potential for agriculture. By elevating Agriculture to a cabinet-level position, the Governor's Executive Order proposes to help provide Alaskan farming families with a more powerful voice that can speak directly to both the Governor and the Legislature—now and in the future.

Creating an Alaska Department of Agriculture will put Alaska on a level playing field at the federal level, with all states having this dedicated department. Many producers and fishermen feel underrepresented, and a strong voice federally will increase recognition and influence. Alaska stands alone – the only state without a dedicated Department of Agriculture. This puts producers at a disadvantage when competing for federal recognition, resources, and influence.

Why Action is Critical:

- Alaskan producers and fishermen lack the strong voice they deserve
- Alaska's extreme climate and remote markets demand specialized solutions
- Untapped agricultural potential awaits proper development
- Food security remains at risk, with 95% of Alaska's food imported

Who Benefits Most:

Native communities, small-scale operations, and beginning producers will gain urgently needed representation. Creating a formal Department of Agriculture will help ensure a more food-secure Alaska.

As a leading private-sector financial institution with more than a century of experience serving farmers, ranchers, timber harvesters, and aquatic producers throughout the West, we urge the Legislature to support Alaska's opportunity for greater food independence by creating a Department of Agriculture.

Sincerely,

Bill Perry
President & CEO
AgWest Farm Credit