

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY – NDSU AGRONOMY SEED FARM
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS DIVISION

Testimony by: Brian Otteson, Director

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Good morning, Chairman Monson, members of the House Appropriations Government Operations Division. For the record, my name is Brian Otteson, I am the Director of the Agronomy Seed Farm at Casselton ND. Today, I would like to give you a brief update on the Agronomy Seed Farm and our activities over the past two years along with the impacts we've had on North Dakota agriculture.

First, I'd like to thank you for your past support with our budget, especially the salary compensation package last biennium. The salary adjustments have been very important for retaining high quality employees. Our budget remains mostly unchanged from year to year, with only small increases for salary adjustments and health care premium increases. The seed farm is 100% self-supportive through its seed sales with no state general funds included in this budget. This has always been the case for the past 75 years that the seed farm has been in operation and continues today. We continue to operate well within our current budget.

The Agronomy Seed Farm began operating in 1950 and will celebrate its 75th anniversary this year. Our mission is to produce high quality Foundation class seed of public varieties developed by the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station for the seed producers and farmers of North Dakota. The seed farm provides producers direct access to these new and existing varieties of winter wheat, spring wheat, barley, oat, and soybean each year. We also collaborate with the ND Crop Improvement and Seed Association and the NDSU Foundation Seedstocks project on distribution of newly released varieties each year.

At the Agronomy Seed Farm, we produce on average 25 varieties for seed each year and distribute on average 33,000 bushels of seed each year. Our customer base includes seedsmen and farmers from across the entire state, as well as into neighboring states. These newly developed seed varieties benefit producers from across the state by adding value to their farming operation through seed sales to farmers in the region. The seed growers raise the Registered and Certified seed at a premium which results in additional revenue for their operation. For example, NDSU will be distributing a new high yielding wheat variety called "ND Stampede" this spring across the state that will benefit producers for years to come.

In addition to producing Foundation Seed, we also provide support to the main station scientists at NDSU. We work closely with plant breeding projects on new variety development and assist with initial breeder's seed increases at Casselton.

The seed farm has just three FTE's and one part time seasonal student employee.

Finally, I'd also like to encourage support for the Langdon seed plant that is #2 on the SBARE capital improvement projects list. There is a need to update the seed cleaning facilities at the Langdon REC which will benefit seed producers and farmers in the region.

Today, I am not asking for any general fund appropriations since we are 100% self-supported, but rather, I am just asking for your support in approving our budget so we can continue to operate as we have in the past. Thank you for your time today and I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Brian Otteson, Director

NDSU Agronomy Seed Farm

15449 37th St SE

Casselton, ND 58012

701-793-4743

brian.otteson@ndsu.edu