

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY – AGRONOMY SEED FARM

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Testimony by: Brian Otteson, Director

Bill No. 1020; Budget No. 649

January 16th, 2023

Good morning, Chairman Monson, members of the committee. My name is Brian Otteson, I am the Director of the Agronomy Seed Farm at Casselton ND. We are part of the NDSU Agricultural Experiment Station. Today, I would like to give you a brief update on the Agronomy Seed Farm and our activities the past two years.

Many of you may be familiar with the Agronomy Seed Farm, but for those who are not, the Agronomy Seed Farm has been in operation since 1950, located just 1-mile SW of Casselton. It began as an idea from the ND Crop Improvement Association to start a seed farm dedicated to producing high quality, pure Foundation seed of newly released public varieties by the ND Agricultural Experiment Station. Seed producers in the state have direct access and first choice to these varieties every year. The seed farm produces Foundation seed of winter wheat, spring wheat, barley, oat, field pea and soybean. On average, we produce 25 varieties for seed each year and distribute 33,00 bushels of seed each year. Our land base includes approximately 1400 acres across three locations at Casselton, Prosper and Fargo. The seed farm utilizes about 1100 of these acres for seed production while the remaining 300 acres are dedicated to the research plots and breeding nurseries for the main station scientists.

In addition to producing Foundation Seed, we also provide support to the main station scientists at NDSU. Our support primarily consists of land management and providing crop rotations for the research plots at the Casselton, Prosper and Fargo sites. In addition, we work closely with the plant breeding projects on new variety development and initial breeders seed increases. We also collaborate with the ND Crop Improvement & Seed Association and the NDSU Foundation Seedstocks project on distribution of new seed increases to the seed growers across the state.

The seed farm has just three FTE's and one part time seasonal student employee. Our budget remains mostly unchanged from year to year, with only small increases for salary adjustments and health care premium increases. Beyond normal operation expenses, we continue to replace and update aging farm equipment as the budget allows. When the seed farm was set up, the intention was for it to be 100% self-supportive with no state general funds included in this budget. This has always been the case for the past 73 years that the seed farm has been in operation and continues today. We continue to operate well within our current budget.

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.