

**HB1020**

**Government Operations Division of the House Appropriations Committee**

**1/16/2023**

**Sarah Hall Lovas, SBARE Chair**

Chairman Monson and members of the Government Operations Division of the House Appropriations committee. My name is Sarah Hall Lovas and I am an agronomist from Hillsboro, ND. I currently serve as the Chair of State Board of Agricultural Research and Education (SBARE). Thank you for this opportunity to come before you today and share with you some information about the North Dakota Agricultural Research Station (NDAES), NDSU Extension (Extension), and SBARE. Thank you for your previous support for the NDAES and Extension.

The State Board of Agriculture Research (SBAR) was established by legislative decree in 1997. It was responsible for the budgeting and policy making associated with the supervision of the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station. The law was amended in 1999 to include responsibility for the North Dakota State University Extension Service and the name was changed to the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education (SBARE).

SBARE within the policies of the State Board of Higher Education, is responsible for the budgeting and policy making associated with the NDAES and NDSU Extension. Our role applies equally to both. I won't go through all the duties of SBARE, but they can be found in North Dakota Century Code and are also outlined on page 1 in your budget book. As required by

the ND Century Code, SBARE develops the biennial budget report by receiving grassroots information from individual producers, commodity groups, organizations, extension leaders, researchers, and agribusinesses across the state.

This past biennium, SBARE started receiving stakeholder input on November 2, 2021, and stakeholder input was concluded on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Stakeholder input was received via two in-person, oral input sessions with locations in Dickinson and Fargo, by mail submission, and electronic submission. We received input from across North Dakota and many diverse groups were represented. We heard about many diverse needs for North Dakota's Agriculture and the people of North Dakota. After stakeholder input was received, we began the prioritization process to rank programmatic initiatives based on the input we received. The Extension and NDAES programmatic priority lists, and the NDAES Capital Improvement list are in your budget book. Dr. Greg Lardy will follow me and go over our priorities in more detail. However, I do want to make this committee aware of two significant conversations that SBARE had during our prioritization process: 1) The need for a Field Lab Facility (Waldron Hall Replacement); 2) The need to enhance North Dakota state employee compensation.

Chairman Monson and Committee Members, the agriculture industry has a significant contribution to North Dakota's economy. Dean Bangsund and Nancy Hodur recently completed research to determine the contribution of North Dakota's Agriculture industry to North Dakota's economy. On December 5<sup>th</sup> in Bismarck, Governor Burgum hosted a press conference about the results of this research. Many elected leaders and others were also in attendance. The research results are astounding! Agriculture has a \$30.8 billion dollar contribution to North Dakota's economy! Agriculture accounts for about 19% of all North Dakota's employment and 20% of all

labor income. If you have a dollar in your pocket, twenty cents of that dollar would be attributed to North Dakota's agriculture industry. At the same time, agriculture research has an ROI of 25%. This is a very good return on investment. Simply put, there is no better investment for a dollar than into agriculture research and this investment improves a major economic driver for North Dakota's economy.

Those are the impacts in dollars and cents. However, there is more to this story than just the dollars and cents. I would like to share with you a bit about how Extension and the NDAES has impacted me and the State of North Dakota.

When I was a youth, I was involved in 4-H. This program taught me many important life skills which I still use today. Some of these skills I learned are practical such as sewing and cooking. However, I learned so much more through my 4-H experience. I learned how to start a project and see it all the way through, even when things don't exactly go according to plan A. I learned how to present a concept to a group of people in a logical, understandable manner. I learned the value of volunteering, service work, and giving back to your community. I learned leadership skills including how to work with people and run a meeting with parliamentary procedure. In my adult life, I have served on many boards. I'm confident that I would not have had the skills to serve in these capacities had it not been for 4-H and this includes my current role as Chair of SBARE. I look forward to hearing the testimony the 4-H'ers will give later today.

As time has moved on in my life, Extension and the NDAES have been critical to my career in agriculture. As I began my agronomy career, Extension provided crop scouting schools which provided practical education for a beginning agronomist. Since then, I continue to seek information from Extension and the NDAES. NDAES provides research that is relevant to North Dakota farming operations and Extension presents this information in manner that we can use and apply in real-world field and farming applications. Extension and NDAES provides unbiased information regarding various agronomic practices including soil and soil fertility management, managing weeds, diseases, and insects in various crops. Like other agronomists in North Dakota, I know the NDAES researchers and Extension Educators well and call them and visit with them to learn from them and stay up to date on these practices. I also continue to attend their educational events to remain a relevant agronomist. This information is the basis for majority of my agronomic recommendations to farmers.

Keep in mind that my career has focused on crop production and so I have had few interactions with livestock research and education within Extension and the NDAES. However, I have had the opportunity to tour the Hettinger REC, Streeter REC, Dickinson REC, and Carrington REC and visit with their livestock faculty and staff. I was impressed with the number of livestock producers in attendance, and I learned a lot from those presentations.

It is important to highlight the work the NDAES and Extension does to support the specialty crop production in North Dakota. Crops like dry beans and pulse crops are important to North Dakota farmers. According to recent research, dry beans and pulse crops contribute \$875 million

and \$405 million, respectively to North Dakota's economy. However, nationally, there are not many acres of these crops. This lack of acres reduces private industry interest to invest into breeding new seeds for these crops or conduct other research related to the production of these crops. Therefore, the programs developed by NDAES and Extension such as plant breeding programs and disease management are even more important to producers of specialty crops.

Into the future, I'm sure the NDAES and Extension will be important for me and my family. I can't wait to see my son involved in 4-H. I know that he will learn the fortitude to see projects all the way through to the end, gain valuable leadership skills, and learn the value of giving back to his community. Further, his first word was, "tractor", and he wants to farm when he grows up. I can't wait to help him learn how take soil samples and ID weeds, which are skills I learned from Extension and the NDAES faculty and staff. I already know some agronomic and crop scouting Extension programs for him to attend and extension resources that I will give him as he grows.

Thank you for the time this morning and I would be happy to answer any questions you have about SBARE, our priorities, or my involvement in agriculture.

**Request:** Please support the SBARE Priority list. Please support the Field Lab Facility request. Please support enhancing state employee compensation packages.