

Testimony to North Dakota Senate Appropriations Committee: HB 1020
North Dakota State University
Dickinson Research Extension Center, Minot, ND
March 9, 2023

Chairman Wanzek and members of the senate appropriations committee thank you for this opportunity to talk about the needs of for a research agronomist at the Dickinson Research Extension Center. For the record, I am Chris Augustin and serve as the director of the Dickinson Research Extension Center. I'm a farm kid who grew up in Pembina County and want to share a story of how NDSU greatly helped my family farm via a nearby Research Extension Center research agronomist.

My family farm weathered the tough times of the 1980's crisis where 1 in 4 farms failed. We were very close to losing the farm. I remember my parents constantly argued about money and we lived off of the deer we hunted and potatoes we grew. It was 1990 and my Dad was looking for a way to diversify the farm to improve our family livelihood.

About that time, my Dad started to learn from our Extension agent about a new oilseed crop called canola which the nearby research agronomist at Langdon Research Extension Center had been studying. That crop was added to our farm, became an important crop to us, and is now an important commodity to North Dakota.

Fast forward to 1993 and a shift to a wetter climate occurred. Devils Lake started to fill, pulling stuck combines and tractors became the norm, and scab plagued our wheat. Again, local research paired with outreach helped my family immensely. The LREC research agronomist teamed with main campus breeders and pathologists to find solutions to this troublesome disease. Learning from our county agent, we planted new NDSU scab resistant varieties. My Dad bought a new high-volume sprayer to properly apply fungicides that would protect our grain.

I want Dickinson area family farms and all of North Dakota to benefit like my family did. The Dickinson Research Extension Center does not currently have the capacity to collaborate with crop breeders who develop varieties that thrive in our soils and environment. We are unable to conduct disease, weed, and insect management trials. Our ability to answer the agronomy research needs of our area is very limited. A research agronomist at the Dickinson Research Extension Center will improve the lives of North Dakotans that we serve. This position is part of the #1 programmatic initiative that SBARE has for the Agricultural Experiment Station. Our team will continue to work hard for North Dakota. However, I feel we are not operating at our full potential without a research agronomist.

In closing, I thank you for your past support especially for the funding for the lab/shop project provided in the 2021 special session. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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