

In Support Of

House Bill 1020

Senate Appropriations Committee

Monte Peterson, North Dakota Soybean Growers Association

Chairman Bekkedal and members of the committee, my name is Monte Peterson and I wish to express my support for H.B. 1020. My wife and I have a farm south of Valley City in Barnes County where we grow Soybeans, Corn and Wheat.

For committee members, who may not be familiar with me, along with farming the last 42 years, I have volunteered time back to my fellow soybean growers during the last 15 plus years to promote the state's soybean industry. First, I served as a director and Chairman of the North Dakota Soybean Council for seven years and as its Research Chair for a couple of years within that time.

I am currently serving as a director for the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association and the American Soybean Association, both advocacy organizations. I am also the immediate Past Chair of the U.S. Soybean Export Council which is tasked with building a preference for U.S. soy worldwide.

I wanted to preface my testimony with that so that you may better understand my perspective about Agricultural Research.

Going back 35 years ago when I planted my first soybean field, it was nothing more than an experiment. As I became more familiar with the state's soybean industry some 15 years ago, you could say it was still just beginning to blossom. Today we know, the state's soy industry has changed dramatically.

Without the research that has been invested at NDSU by the state and by the Soybean Council, we would never be where we are today. The need for that continued research is stronger today than it was in the beginning. Without the continued unbiased, science-based information we receive through extension, we could not continue to make the strides that we have. Sure, private industry can and will offer choices, but it is land grant driven research that ground truths those options.

Whenever a crop is introduced into a new area, it needs the help of a plant breeding program that can identify a best cultivar and variety potential for the area in which it is grown. Whenever a new crop becomes established in a new area, it needs help from an initiative that will specialize in finding answers to the ever-evolving pathogens and diseases that are affecting our crops.

Just over my time with the industry, we have witnessed an increase of soybean planted acres from roughly 2 million acres to as high as 7 million acres in 2021. What started out as a crop that was planted in just a couple of counties in the southeast part of the state has grown statewide. I believe every county in the state has reported planted acres of soybean at some point. That would not have happened without the investment in research and extension that has been made.

I like to remember how commodity groups also leverage their dollars with these public funds to create an even bigger bang for the buck and remember how the value-added industry has now committed to building here in North Dakota. This investment pays dividends.

Production agriculture across the U.S. and here in North Dakota is changing rapidly and how quickly we build on using precision agriculture and big data and utilizing the climate smart resources we have available to us to become more sustainable is imperative. Our customers are depending on us to become more ecologically sustainable. We need research to help us with this equation.

To do all this we need qualified people, and those people will need to be fairly and equitably compensated. Those on board now and those that are additionally needed must have the necessary laboratory and facilities to get the job done. I encourage the continued investment into North Dakota research and extension and your support for this bill.