

Testimony to North Dakota Senate Appropriations Committee: SB 2020
North Dakota State University
North Central Research Extension Center, Minot, ND
January 2025

Chairman Wanzek and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to address you today and share some of the significant research and extension impacts of the North Central Research Extension Center (NCREC) that directly benefit North Dakota farmers and ranchers. For the record, I am Shana Forster, director of the NCREC in Minot, ND.

At the NCREC, our mission areas include agronomy research, pulse crop breeding, Extension education in livestock management, forage production, and soil health, foundation seed production, weed science, and winter-hardy grape research. We provide unbiased, science-based information to support farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses in the region.

I would like to update you on some of our current accomplishments, but first, I want to thank you for the state-appropriated project from the previous session. This funding supported the construction of a new 70' x 110' steel-framed machine storage shed at the NCREC. This facility will shelter valuable research equipment, extending its life and ensuring it continues to support our work. We also thank you for the generous compensation and benefits package, in addition to the equity adjustments, provided in the previous session.



A FEW OF THE NCREC MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Research Updates

Weed Science

Dr. Brian Jenks has been conducting research on herbicide resistance, particularly in yellow and green foxtail, and more recently in kochia. This research helps farmers make better decisions on herbicide use and crop rotations. For example, after reports of ineffective kochia control in 2022, Dr. Jenks discovered that some kochia populations in western ND have developed resistance to commonly used preplant burndown herbicides. This finding is crucial for farmers as it significantly impacts their herbicide options.

Agronomy Research

Dr. Leandro Bortolon, joined the NCREC as a research agronomist in September 2023, and has significantly expanded our agronomy research efforts. His expertise in agronomy and soils-based research will allow us to address critical issues like nutrient efficiency, soil acidity, biological inputs, cover crops, and crop management. These are key issues for local farmers, and his work will include on-farm research to provide more relevant, regional data.

I would bring to your attention SBARE priorities ranked for the ND Agricultural Experiment Station, specifically the request for research specialists. I cannot stress how vital the hard-working and knowledgeable research specialists are to our research programs. The NCREC agronomy research program has been without a state-supported research specialist for many years. In addition, the NCREC grape research program has been supported by primarily soft funds since its inception.

Funding Requests

Research Specialist for Agronomy Research

The NCREC agronomy program has been without a state-supported research specialist for years. As our research efforts grow to meet the needs of farmers, it is essential to have additional technical support. We ask for your support in funding a state-supported research specialist to help manage the expanded agronomy research program.

Research Specialist for Grapes/Vineyards

The NCREC grape program has yielded valuable data, resulting in the release of two grape varieties suited to North Dakota's climate. We have had a research technician supporting the program, but we need state funding for a full-time position to continue this critical work. The NCREC grape vineyard in Minot has been instrumental in evaluating winter-hardiness, but this program requires state-funded support in order to continue.

Thank you for your continued support of the NDSU REC network and SBARE initiatives. The success of our programs depends on your ongoing investment in agricultural research and extension, which directly benefits North Dakota's farmers and ranchers. I appreciate your time and consideration.

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