

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY – NDSU AGRONOMY SEED FARM

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Testimony by: Brian Otteson, Director

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Good morning, Chairman Wanzek, members of the Government Operations 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 over the past two years.

First, I'd like to thank you for your past support with our budget, especially the salary compensation package last biennium. The salary adjustments have been very important for retaining high quality employees. Speaking of employees, my role as Director has changed this past year. I have taken on a new role as Director of the Foundation Seedstocks project on campus at NDSU so there is an ongoing search for my replacement. I will remain in this role and continue to carry out many of the Director duties until a replacement is found.

The Agronomy Seed Farm began operating in 1950 and will celebrate its 75th anniversary this year. The seed farm produces high quality, pure Foundation seeds of newly released public varieties by the ND Agricultural Experiment Station. The seed farm provides seed producers and farmers across the state with direct access to these new varieties each year. The seed farm produces Foundation seeds of winter wheat, spring wheat, barley, oat, field pea and soybean. On average, we produce 25 varieties for seed each year and distribute 33,000 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 uniform rotational land for the research plots at the Casselton, Prosper and Fargo sites. In addition, we work closely with plant breeding projects on new variety development and assist with initial breeders' seed increases at Casselton. We also collaborate with the ND Crop Improvement and Seed Association and the NDSU Foundation Seedstocks project on distribution of newly released varieties each year.

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. When the seed farm began operations in 1950, 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 75 years that the seed farm has been in operation and continues today. We continue to operate well within our current budget.

Finally, I'd also like to encourage support for the Langdon seed plant that is #2 on the SBARE capital improvement projects list. There is a need to update the facilities at the Langdon REC which will benefit seed producers and farmers in the northeast part of state.

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.