

Good morning, Chairman Wonzek and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. For the record I am Chris Augustin and serve as director of the Dickinson Research Extension Center. I am a farm kid from Pembina County, the product of 4-H, and have tried to make the best better my entire life. The “best” being North Dakota! Thank you for this opportunity to communicate to you the value of the Dickinson Research Extension Center.

The Dickinson Research Extension Center (DREC) conducts agricultural research and outreach that empowers people. We perpetuate agriculture through research and education. The DREC improves food systems and natural resources for today and tomorrow.

Thank you for your past support. We are all grateful for last session’s salary exercise. I am pleased to report that the lab/shop funded by the special legislative session in 2021 is nearly complete. We have a temporary certificate of occupancy and are using the facilities. I anticipate us acquiring a permanent certificate this spring. Senator Rich Wardner has been a champion for North Dakota agriculture. I am thrilled to inform you that the State Board of Higher Education approved to honor Senator Wardner and name the new building the Wardner Agricultural Laboratory! I am excited to invite you to our annual agronomy field day this coming July where we will have a ribbon cutting ceremony and barbeque.

Dr. Krishna Katuwal our research agronomist whose position was funded during the 2023 legislative session is making progress addressing the needs of southwest North Dakota farmers. I am thankful of the hard work and perseverance of our team. They are all dedicated, hardworking, and live the land-grant mission.

I support the SBARE priority list for the Ag experiment station, capital improvements, and NDSU Extension. The Extension Livestock: Precision Management and Animal Health

Initiative would empower ranchers to utilize technologies like virtual fencing or drones to identify sick animals. The Center for Agricultural Policy and Trade Studies would build bridges that our farmers and ranchers could use to better market North Dakota products. That could have a positive direct impact on their livelihood and our tax base.

Enhancing our operating budget is crucial to fulfill our charge. During my five years of serving at the DREC, I have seen our operating costs increase immensely. Fuel, motor pool, and seed/feed/fertilizer/herbicides costs alone has risen 41, 9, and 18% respectively (Figure 1).

The SBARE capital improvement request to construct Equipment Storage Sheds is needed. Storing the equipment in sheds is vital to maximize the investment for the equipment by prolonging their life. Our combines may only have a five-foot header, whereas a farmer's combine has a 30 foot or larger header. However, despite this size difference, the two pieces of equipment share a similar price.

Thank you for your time and support. I am proud of the Dickinson Research Extension Center team and look forward to future impacts for the people we serve.

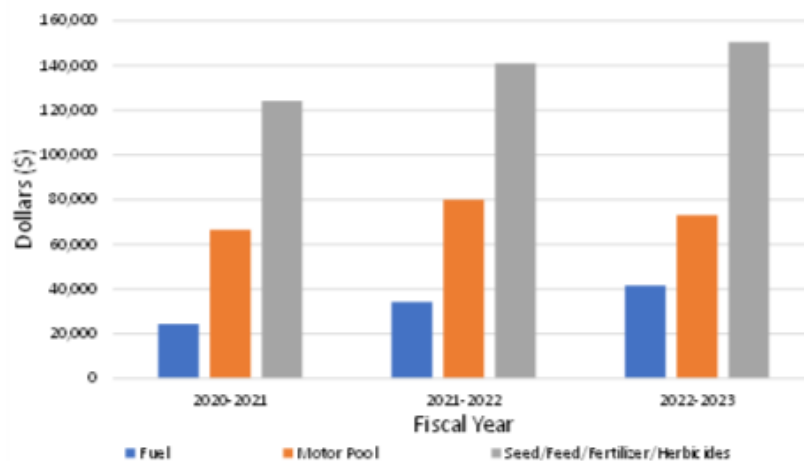


Figure 1. Comparison of costs for various categories at the Dickinson Research Extension Center.