

SB2020

Government Operations Division of the House Appropriations Committee

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Sarah Hall Lovas, SBARE Chair

Chairman Wanzek and members of the Government Operations Division of the Senate Appropriations Committee. My name is Sarah Hall Lovas and I am an agronomist from Hillsboro, ND. I currently have the opportunity to serve as the Chair for the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education (SBARE). Thank you for this opportunity to come before you and share some information regarding the research conducted by the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station (NDAES), NDSU Extension (Extension), and SBARE.

First, thank you for your past support of the Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension. The investments that the Legislature has made into the Agricultural Experiment Station research and Extension education have resulted in significant and positive impacts for North Dakota agriculture and will last for future generations. Thank you.

SBARE within the policies of the State Board of Higher Education, is responsible for the budgeting and policy making associated with the Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension. Our role applies equally to both. I won't go through all the duties of SBARE, but they can be found in North Dakota Century Code and are also outlined on page 1 in your budget book. As required by the ND Century Code, SBARE develops the biennial budget report by receiving grassroots information from individual producers, commodity groups, organizations,

stakeholders, constituents, and agribusinesses across the state. Through this process, SBARE creates three priority lists, which include: 1) The programmatic education request list for Extension; 2) programmatic research request list for the Agricultural Experiment Station; and 3) the Capital request list for the Agricultural Experiment Station.

SBARE takes the process of receiving stakeholder input and creating these priority lists very seriously. This biennium, we began receiving stakeholder input on September 14, 2023 and concluded receiving input on January 3rd, 2024. Stakeholder input was received via three in-person input receiving sessions held in Minot, Dickinson, and Fargo as well as by mail submissions and electronic submissions. Once input was received, the prioritization process started on January 10, 2024 and concluded on February 21, 2024, and it took a total of three SBARE meetings over four days to develop these priority lists. The SBARE members worked very hard digesting the stakeholder input it received and formulating the priority lists you see before you. SBARE has a goal to develop priorities that are sound investments for the future of North Dakota's agriculture industry and address agriculture issues in a state with an extremely diverse agriculture industry. Vice-President Lardy will explain the priority lists in detail during his testimony.

North Dakota's agriculture industry has a significant economic impact to North Dakota's economy! In 2023, a study was released that showed that Agriculture has a \$30.8 billion dollar contribution to North Dakota's economy! Agriculture accounts for about 19% of all North Dakota's employment and 20% of all labor income. If you have a dollar in your pocket, twenty

cents of that dollar would be attributed to North Dakota's agriculture industry. Please note, since this study was released in 2023, North Dakota has had two additional soybean crush facilities built along with additional investments proposed in livestock operations and other agricultural processing endeavors. The recent announcements of new dairy operations and a new potato facility coming to the Grand Forks area highlight North Dakota's continued prominence as an agricultural leader. Further, these new developments are indications that North Dakota's agriculture industry continues to expand its' economic impact. While the agriculture industry has a great impact to North Dakota's economy, agriculture research has an ROI of 25%. This is very good return on investment! Simply put, there is no better investment for a state dollar than into agricultural research and extension!

Those are the impacts in dollars and cents. However, there is more to this story than just the numbers. There is the "People of North Dakota" aspect to consider as well. I would like to share a bit about how the research of the Agricultural Experiment Station and NDSU Extension has impacted me as well as the state of North Dakota.

When I was a youth, I was involved in 4-H. I know there are some 4-H youth here and I will let their testimony speak for itself. However, I do want this committee to know, that among other skills learned through 4-H, I learned leadership skills. This includes how to work with people and run a meeting with parliamentary procedure. It is because of 4-H that I am able to serve effectively on SBARE as well as many other boards and committees.

It is important to highlight the work the Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension does to support the specialty crop production in North Dakota. Crops like dry beans and pulse crops are important to North Dakota farmers. According to recent research released in 2023, dry beans and pulse crops contribute \$875 million and \$405 million, respectively to North Dakota's economy. However, nationally, there are not many acres of these crops. This lack of acres reduces private industry interest to invest into breeding new varieties for these crops or conduct other research related to the production of these crops. Therefore, the programs developed by NDAES and Extension such as plant breeding programs and disease management are even more important to producers of specialty crops.

At the beginning of my agronomy career, Extension provided crop scouting schools which provided practical education for a beginning agronomist. Since then, I continue to seek information from Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Station. The North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station provides research that is relevant to North Dakota farming operations and Extension presents this information in manner that we can use and apply in real-world field and farming applications. NDSU Extension and the research of the Agricultural Experiment Station provides unbiased information regarding various agronomic practices including soil and soil fertility management, managing weeds, diseases, and insects in various crops. Like other agronomists in North Dakota, I know the Agricultural Experiment Station researchers and Extension Educators well and call them and visit with them to learn from them and stay up to date on these practices. I also continue to attend their educational events to remain a relevant agronomist. This information is the basis for a large proportion of my agronomic recommendations to farmers.

Keep in mind that my career has focused on crop production and so I have had few interactions with livestock research and education within Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Station. However, I have had the opportunity to tour the Hettinger Research Extension Center (REC), Streeter REC, Dickinson REC, and Carrington REC and visit with their livestock faculty and staff. I was impressed with the number of livestock producers in attendance, and I learned a lot from those presentations. Further, I believe I will be interacting with these researchers more into the near future. There is a proposed dairy coming to my town of Hillsboro, ND and having access to livestock researchers and educators will be critical as I learn how to help my local farmers implement livestock production into our area cropping systems.

Looking into the future, I know that the research provided by the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station and educational information from Extension will continue to be important to me and my family. My son wants to farm or be an agronomist when he grows up. I can't wait to see all of his 4-H projects. I know as farming and agronomy changes in North Dakota, my career will continue to utilize the Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension.

Thank you for your time today. Thank you for your support of the NDAES and Extension. I would be happy to entertain any questions you may have.

Request: Please support the SBARE Priority List.