

1/20/23

Chairman Luick, and members of the committee.

My name is Brad Nilson from Hoople, ND. Together with my partners we raise certified seed potatoes, wheat, and soybeans in Walsh and Pembina counties. I represent Northland Potatoes on the ND State Seed Commission.

I am here to ask for your support of HB1332 to provide additional infrastructure funding for the \$450,000,000.00 Agristo Potato processing plant to be constructed in Grand Forks, with site preparations planned for spring 2025.

I have had the privilege to get to know many of the Agristo group over the past 3 years. Agristo is a family run business started in 1986 in Belgium with 3 processing facilities in Belgium, 1 in the Netherlands, 1 in India and 1 under construction in France. Their first questions of growers were, would they and their culture would be accepted and welcomed in North Dakota? Next question of course was interest in growing potatoes for them and land availability. The response was overwhelming. Their philosophy presented to growers early on was employees, growers and customers in that order. Another part of their business model was profitability for growers.

In January, Agristo hosted about 20 seed potato growers and industry people, including myself, for a week in Belgium and in the Netherlands. We toured 2 of their processing plants, visited several potato farms and 2 potato breeding companies. It was soon apparent that what they had communicated to us growers the past years is exactly as they operate in Belgium and the Netherlands. Their factories were efficient, large, very clean, quiet and produced no odors. Their average employee age was 34 years. The retention of employees was very high, with many moving up to better jobs within the company.

Agristo will produce 300,000 mt of finished product/year. They will need 12 million cwt of raw potatoes/year, approximately 28-32,000 acres of potatoes produced on both dryland and irrigated acres. North Dakota currently raises about 71,000 acres of potatoes. Those acres will also require an additional 3,000 acres of certified seed potatoes.

In closing I firmly believe HB1332 offers Agristo a commitment from the State of North Dakota to provide great opportunities to not only the ag communities of North Dakota, but will also benefit all of North Dakota as Agristo will consume large amounts natural gas, electricity, transportation, sunflower and canola oils and many other goods and services from our great state.

Thank you for your attention, I would welcome any questions.