



**Testimony of Agriculture Commissioner Goehring
North Dakota Department of Agriculture
House Bill 1046
House Agriculture Committee
January 7, 2021**

Chairman Johnson and members of the House Agriculture Committee, I am Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring and I am here today in support of HB 1046, which will amend North Dakota Century Code §4.1-01-11 relating to the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Agriculture.

The purpose of the committee is to:

1. examine the concept of sustainability with respect to conventional farming practices and modern technology-based production practices;
2. Examine production practices that are efficient and able to meet current and future global food and nutritional needs;
3. Examine production practices that promote increased efficiencies in resource use, improve human health through access to safe and nutritious food, and enhance economic opportunities for individual producers;
4. Explore metric evaluations to measure the attainment, maintenance, and certification of sustainability;
5. Advise the commissioner regarding the development of a sustainability certification program, and the marketing and packaging of products containing the certification;
6. Explore the standards held by international private sector certifying groups which have the potential to increase sales of North Dakota products; and
7. Report to the legislative council on the status of committee activities.

At the Advisory Committee meeting in 2010, consensus was reached on the following:

1. A definition of sustainability would need to be developed or adopted.
2. The program would not be beneficial to producers and could potentially only benefit a small number of producers. Producers who market their commodities directly overseas would benefit from this program more than producers who sold their commodities at a local elevator.
 - a. A local elevator is unlikely to pay a premium for a commodity that has a sustainable agriculture certificate

3. The program would be cost prohibitive at this point.
4. Delay the implementation of the sustainable certification program to focus on research, education, and promotion of sustainable farming and ranching.
5. Continue to explore better outcome based metrics and tools for a certification program.

Based on the committee consensus, we are requesting the language change from “shall” to “may” to provide flexibility in calling the committee together when there is more demand for a sustainable certification program.

Chairman Johnson and committee members, thank you for your consideration of SB 2049. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.