SBARE Testimony

NDSU Agronomy Seed Farm

December 12th, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Gulleson, members of the SBARE committee. My name is Brian Otteson, I am the director of the Agronomy Seed Farm at Casselton ND. Today I would like to speak to you about the Agronomy Seed Farm and its involvement in Ag Research at NDSU as well as what I feel are some of the Ag Research needs that affect the Agronomy Seed Farm.

NDSU Agriculture is a driving force for North Dakota producers with many producers relying on fair, unbiased data to make informed decisions on crop production. The Agronomy Seed Farm helps facilitate this important research into new and improved crop varieties as well as providing land for variety trials. The Agronomy Seed Farm provides an important ROI for NDSU Ag Research by distributing new and improved crop varieties to seed producers and farmers across the state. Although the seed farm is 100% self-supportive, we rely on a continuous stream of new crop varieties to be released each year in order for us to maintain our budget through adequate seed sales. It is in our best interest to help facilitate and support these research projects through varietal development.

First of all, for those of you new here, I'll give a brief background on the Agronomy Seed Farm as well as the status of our current operations and how we are involved with the main station scientists and the Research Extension Centers across the state. The seed farm is located just 20 miles west of Fargo, or about 1 mile west of the Casselton exit on the north side of I-94. We have just 3 full-time employees. The Agronomy Seed Farm's primary mission is to produce a supply of high-quality Foundation seed for the seed producers of ND. However, we also provide support to the main station scientists. We accomplish this by helping assist with land preparation in the spring prior to planting as well as cleaning up their research plots following harvest so we can prepare the land for next year's crop. We also provide uniform rotational ground for various research plots and breeding nurseries.

The Agronomy Seed Farm is comprised of roughly 1400 acres of cropland that we utilize at Casselton, Prosper and Fargo. Of those acres, about 1100 are for seed production and 300 acres for research plots. We raise Foundation grade seed of winter wheat, spring wheat, barley, oats and soybean. This past year we distributed over 25,000 bushels of Foundation seed to producers across the state including nearly 8,000 bushels of the new ND Stampede hard red spring wheat. The Agronomy Seed Farm was involved with the initial breeder's seed increase of ND Stampede which was distributed to REC's across the state for further Foundation seed increase before release to growers this past spring.

We work closely with the plant breeders in NDSU Plant Sciences, but also work with researchers in soil science, plant pathology, cereal science, entomology, Ag & Biosystems Engineering, and others. The seed farm assists with increasing experimental lines that may be up for release and works closely with the plant breeders to ensure the seed is pure and of very high quality before it goes out to farmers and seedsmen. We also work closely with the REC's that produce Foundation seed to help distribute newly released varieties through the county seed increase program to eligible seedsmen who wish to produce Registered and Certified seed of these varieties. That is a brief overview of the Agronomy Seed Farm. Now, I'd like to switch gears and talk about the Ag Research needs affecting the seed farm including operating budgets, a seed storage warehouse and support of ag research at NDSU

The Agronomy Seed Farm works closely with the REC network, especially the Foundation seed producing REC's at Minot, Williston, Carrington and Langdon. The North Central Research Extension Center needs a new seed storage warehouse. The NCREC is a central hub for seed transfers among the REC network due to its more centralized location in the state. The Agronomy Seed Farm often ships seeds of new varieties in tote bags to the NCREC for further distribution to seedsmen in the area. A new seed storage warehouse at the NCREC would greatly benefit our seed distribution system as well as seed producers in the state.

Operating budgets continue to be a struggle for most state agencies including the REC's and Experiment Station. The Agronomy Seed Farm relies on seed sales to support our budget. We, like other agencies, have had to deal with increased costs of production and have adjusted our budgets to deal with these increased costs as well. Your support of all our budgets is critical to continue the important ag research within the NDSU Experiment Station network.

As I mentioned earlier, the seed farm is 100% self-supportive so we do not ask for any funding. This has been the case since the seed farm was established 75 years ago. However, as I mentioned earlier, we do rely on consistent releases of new and improved crop varieties which is why investment in all aspects of Ag research is so important. Our Foundation seed production is the culmination of years of crop breeding and research here at NDSU and is the final step before these varieties are released to producers across the state for their benefit.

With that, I would like to thank you for your time today and answer any questions you may have?