

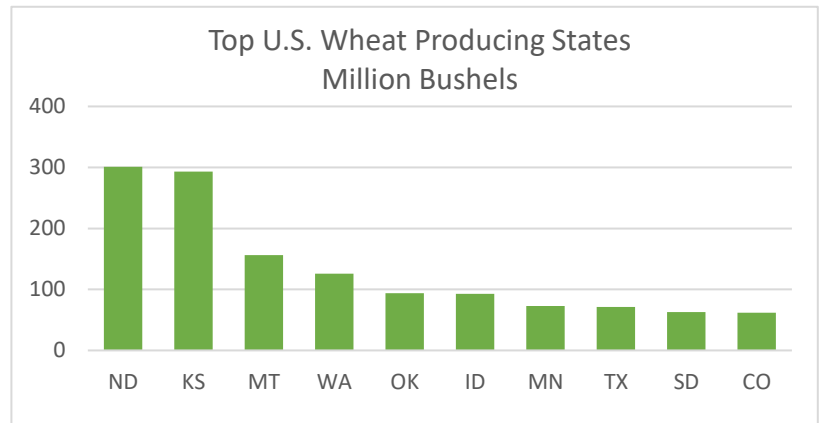
North Dakota State Board of Agricultural Research and Education

December 10, 2025

North Dakota Wheat Commission Testimony

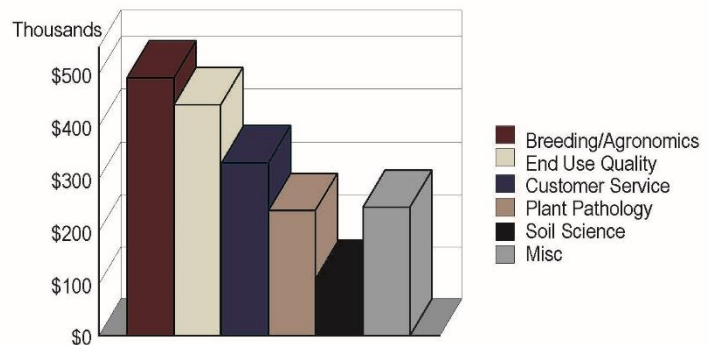
www.ndwheat.com

North Dakota is the nation's leading producer of both hard red spring wheat and durum. North Dakota is often the largest producer of all wheat in the country as well, with average production of just over 300 million bushels with a producer level value of \$2.1 billion.



The North Dakota Wheat Commission works to expand the use of wheat grown by North Dakota farmers by creating worldwide market opportunities by maintaining and expanding overseas and domestic markets, promoting the health benefits of wheat foods, funding varietal development and other research efforts, and influencing domestic and trade policy efforts. Wheat producers fund these programs with a checkoff of two cents on each bushel sold. Our board of seven wheat producers make all programming and budget decisions, with input on priorities from our elected representatives at the county level across the state.

A key priority of the Commission is research, with funding in recent years averaging around \$1.5 million annually. Key areas include durum, hard red spring (HRS) and hard red winter (HRW) breeding program support, end-use quality analysis, disease, pest, soil health and other agronomic issues, and customer service.



North Dakota produces quality classes of wheat that customers pay a premium for. Funding research endeavors that promote agronomic opportunities for producers and enhance the end-use quality customers expect is a cornerstone of the Commission's mission. The Commission would like to thank the SBARE committee for their past efforts in prioritizing agricultural research funding. For years, a top priority of the Commission was a new home for Harris Hall, headquarters of the NDSU wheat quality labs. Today, the Peltier Complex is the new home for those labs, providing modern space for pertinent wheat research. Also, the Bolley Agricultural Lab construction is well underway, providing modern facilities for plant pathology, breeding, soil science, agronomy and other departments. Our Commission will have some additional

insight after our annual research review meeting in March which will allow us to provide more specific priorities. However, given the importance of research to the Commission, we do have some general priorities that we would like to present.

1. **Operating funds:** The NDWC recognizes this has been a priority in the past for SBARE and has noted other invested entities have made this request during the current listening sessions. Our board believes it continues to be an important need. The Commission and other commodity groups have seen research funding requests continually increase in recent years. Our annual budget is dependent on production and the pace of producer sales, and can vary substantially from year to year, depending on yield and price. Operating costs in every sector have increased, and research programs are not immune. In order to continue to produce innovative and high-quality research results, having sufficient operating funding is crucial. We also need to realize that programs which are inadequately funded for operating needs now, stand no chance of responding to unanticipated disease, pest or other crop threats in a timely manner. The Commission encourages state funding for operating costs to keep research programs running effectively, both at state-wide REC's and the main station. Specifically, the Commission supports increased state operating funds for the NDSU spring wheat, durum and winter wheat breeding programs, NDSU spring wheat and durum quality labs, statewide REC's and salaries for county Extension agents.
2. **Graduate research assistantships.** The NDWC recognizes this has been an SBARE priority over the years and our board believes it continues to be an important need. The stipends for graduate research assistantships have increased, and rightfully so. Remaining competitive in this space is imperative to attracting and retaining the best and brightest students to produce quality research and become the next generation of agricultural professionals. Graduate students not only represent the next generation of agriculture professionals, but their research work during their graduate programs is crucial to producing research results that benefit North Dakota agriculture and the state in general. In almost every proposal the Commission receives, the majority or significant portion of the budget is for salaries and graduate or Ph.D. student assistantships. The Commission supports funding these budget categories, but cannot continue to maintain the level of increases we've seen in recent years. The Commission encourages state funding for operating costs to keep research programs running efficiently and for graduate research assistantships that enable key research to move forward and expand the source of available funds. Specifically, the Commission supports funding for graduate research assistantships in the departments of Plant Pathology, Plant Science, and Soil Science.
3. **Wheat pest management.** Producers cite Bacterial Leaf Streak (BLS), wheat stem sawfly and ergot as the most impactful wheat production issues in recent years.
 - a. BLS is a disease that has been increasing in incidence in recent years and has the potential for significant yield loss impacts. Research has shown there are no effective seed treatments and host resistance is the best mode of action.

- b. Wheat stem sawfly incidence has fluctuated over the years, with producers in regions of the state reporting higher incidence and instances of devastating yield impacts. Once again, host resistance is the recommended most of action.
- c. Ergot in wheat can have major impacts to producers' bottom lines as ergot infested lots can be heavily discounted or rejected at the elevator due to strict maximum limits from customers. There are some recommended management strategies to help mitigate the impacts of ergot, but continued research is needed, especially as some end-use customers are becoming even more strict on ergot specifications.

The NDWC supports funding for research that explores the management of these wheat pests via operating funds in the wheat breeding, entomology and plant pathology programs, as well as producer education and Extension efforts.

- 4. **Center for Agricultural Policy and Trade Studies (CAPTS):** North Dakota wheat producers are heavily reliant on exports with roughly half of the state's annual wheat production being exported each year. Trade policy has progressively become more complex and having the data and tools to support beneficial trade policy for North Dakota producers is extremely important to maintaining and expanding market opportunities with economic benefits expanding beyond just producers to the whole state. The Commission requests continued funding support for FTE's and other operational costs related to CAPTS' research efforts.

Thank you for your time and consideration today.