

## Testimony for SBARE

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I'd like to start off by thanking you for taking the time to get testimony from farmers and ranchers all over ND who have been fighting the weather this year. My years of farming in southeastern Cavalier County since 1975 have told me there is no such thing as a normal year. Every year is different. I have to say this is one of the harder ones I've experienced, however.

It started off as a near perfect year for me. We usually pray for a drought in my area as more often than not we have excess moisture. This year the ground was dry enough to get into the fields in early May yet moist enough to get the crops to jump out of the ground in good time. I got every acre seeded with not a single pothole. All summer people not too far away from me were experiencing large rain storms of up to 2 or 3 inches at a time, but I was missing the deluges and getting nice timely rains of an inch or less. All the hail and wind missed me too. Not too far away from me I had friends who were experiencing very dry conditions, too. I have to say my crops responded nicely to my perfect conditions, and it looked like I was heading for a bumper crop of nearly everything. Even my alkali spots were looking great. The only poor crop I had was one field of wheat that I sprayed just before a rain and the spray washed off, so I had an inordinate amount of kochia that sprung up there. Over all though, this was one the best crops I'd raised in my 45 years.

Then my luck ran out. About the time we were ready to start harvest we started to get a lot of rainy days. I got my peas off with great yields, but the moisture was 16 and up; not bad but I had to put them in air bins. I got about 70 bushels per acre when I had bin space for only 55 bushels per acre, but who can complain about that?

Then I got to my barley. The peas had taken longer to harvest than I expected so I was getting at my barley late. I swath most of my barley and was hesitating to lay it on the wet ground. I picked a week that the weather looked like it would hold and laid it down. I don't ever remember swathing barley that good. The swathes were 6 feet wide. I had it contracted at a great price if I could get it off without sprouts and with low enough moisture. I left some standing when the weather looked bad thinking I would try it straight and put it in an air bin. Well, it worked. I got the standing barley off in good shape without losing too much to breaking down, but 15 to 16 percent moisture meant another air bin (actually 2 since it went nearly 100 bushels per acre). Next I tackled the swathed barley. It had rained some on the swathes, but I was able to run it through the combine. Over 105 bushel per acre tough barley goes through the combine slowly. Like 2.5 mph slowly. Needless to say it took me an extra week to get the barley in the bin. Another couple air bins were needed. By now I was out of air bins and had no wheat or canola done yet. My electric bill was higher than I'd ever seen it.

Once September came it started raining for real. We got about 10 inches of rain in September. I got a little wheat off, nothing dry, but thought the canola would take the

excess rain better than the wheat. I hauled most of my wheat to the elevator tough until the elevator had no room for wet wheat. Then the propane supply dried up so they couldn't dry it and shut farmers off completely. I, fortunately, had filled my propane tanks the week before that happened so I was able to fire up my old dryer and keep going with wheat anywhere from 15 to 18 percent moisture. 70 bushel wheat takes up a lot of space.

Now it is October and they started talking about this monster snow storm bearing down on us. I figured I better get any standing crops combined before that hit. I had my daughter-in-law combining canola straight while I was combining wheat straight well into the night until we nearly finished all the standing crop. We had a few acres we couldn't get across some drainage ditches, but we were as prepared as we could be for an October 9<sup>th</sup> snow storm. Who would have guessed we'd get 30 inches of snow? I figured that was the end of the combining. I had all my trucks full of wet canola and wheat and all my air bins full of wet peas, wet barley, and some wet wheat. Besides that I had a number of bins full of wet barley and peas without air. I just pray I can move that out before it spoils on me. At least it went into the bin cold and is around 15 to 16 percent moisture.

Well, miracles do happen and most of the 30 inches of snow melted. So I went back out and tried canola swathes. The canola was fairly dry at 12 percent moisture or less, but the wet ground under the swathes as well as the little snow left on the swathes made the mud and dirt stick to the sieves. Well, small as canola seed is, it doesn't fall through a sieve caked with mud very well, so the return elevator plugged constantly. I finally just opened the trap door and let whatever didn't fall through on the first pass go out on the ground. I figured whatever I got was better than leaving it in the field until spring. I got off nearly 80 acres that way at about 1800 pounds per acre. I can only imagine what I would have gotten if I'd have gotten it in a timely fashion instead of in November. Unfortunately, small snows of an inch or two finally ended my combining just before Thanksgiving.

I could mention my faba bean fiasco and how I plugged my straw chopper in about 100 yards taking out a \$1200 clutch to get about 5 bushels of really wet beans, but my time is about up. I have signed the papers for my Federal Crop Insurance now, so I have officially called an end to this year. It was a great year for those who got their crop all harvested in my area. It was a terrible year for those who waited to get their crop off dry. I never harvested one bushel of anything that was truly dry or fit. I don't think any of my neighbors did either. My electric bill is a killer, my nerves are shot hoping my wet crops keep in storage until I can get them dried or hauled out, and I pray my banker is in a good mood this Christmas. My heart really goes out to those young farmers just getting started. This was quite a year for everyone, but especially hard on those not well established. I believe there will be a lot of farmers out of business next year. Suicide among farmers is already taking a toll, too. I know Governor Burgum and Commissioner Goehring are working on getting hope for those feeling there is no where to turn, and I'd like to give them a thank you for getting in front of that problem.

With that I'd be happy to answer any questions and thank you for listening to my 2019 farming experiences. It wasn't one for the record books, but it was definitely a tough one.