



U.S. Durum Growers Association

PROMOTING THE PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF DURUM AND SEMOLINA

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Testimony of Blake Inman USDGA Chairman

December 4, 2019

Chairman Birdsall and members of the State Board of Agriculture Research and Education:

My name is Blake Inman, and I am a farmer from Berthold and the owner of a seed company that conditions and sells certified seed. I am here today as president of the U.S. Durum Growers Association (USDGA). On behalf of USDGA, thank you for the opportunity to provide input on priorities for ag research and extension and for the work you do to strengthen and advance our state's number one industry – agriculture.

USDGA represents durum producers, as well as industry stakeholders across the region. This is done through a contract with the North Dakota Wheat Commission for domestic policy issues related to durum production. We remain committed to advocating for full funding for agricultural research and extension now and into the future, as we recognize the value it holds to the future of agriculture in North Dakota. We appreciate your efforts to prioritize the research needs of the agricultural community.

Ag research and extension are essential tools for the state's producers, and there is a high rate of return to the state's economy for money invested in ag research and breeding programs. Maintaining and enhancing funding for ongoing research is a top priority for USDGA as quality breeding programs, such as those at North Dakota State University (NDSU), take decades to establish and, therefore, can't just be turned on and off. NDSU has the only public durum breeding facility in the northern region and maintaining that program is essential to northern durum growers.

In addition, USDGA recognizes the importance of updated facilities, as well as state-of-the art technology and equipment, to ensuring the growth and strength of the state's agriculture industry and our state. For this reason, USDGA was one of the initial organizations making a financial pledge to the Agricultural Products Development Center. While we understand this is not an item of consideration for SBARE, any assistance in moving the project forward is appreciated as it will take the support of the entire agricultural community to see this important project to completion.

USDGA also supports funding of a new building to replace Waldron Hall. Waldron Hall is well over 50 years old and can no longer provide the space or safety that our researchers need to carry out the research that is so vitally important to the producers in our state and across the region.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the SBARE prioritization process. I'd be happy to answer any questions.