



SBARE Session November 2, 2021

Comments of the North Dakota Wheat Commission

Good morning, my name is Neal Fisher, I am the Administrator of the North Dakota Wheat Commission.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

The NDWC has tremendous respect for SBARE, the process, and the achievements accomplished through agricultural research programs since the creation of SBARE nearly 25 years ago. We should also acknowledge that North Dakota agricultural interests were generally pleased with outcomes of the 2021 Legislative Session. Research and Infrastructure priorities included in HB 2020, SB 1431 and several other Bills included provisions with positive direction and opportunities for all of North Dakota Agriculture.

North Dakota's wheat producers invest an average of \$1.5 million per year in wheat research conducted here at North Dakota State University. The level of producer investment has ratcheted upward as other sources of traditional funding have slowed or in some instances suffered reductions.

Producer checkoff investment currently represents about 15 percent of total annual expenditures in wheat related research projects conducted at NDSU. Other commodity groups have similar research arrangements in place. These leveraged partnerships allow producers to have 'skin in the game' and provide a sense of ownership and pride in the results generated by these time proven programs.

“Research Matters”

Agriculture is one of North Dakota’s greatest assets and as such, is one of the largest generators of new wealth in our great state.

The ROI on agricultural research as you know is impressive, estimated at a rate of 40 to 1.

“Results Also Matter”

In terms of actual value or what is often referred to as ‘Farm Gate Value’, North Dakota agriculture currently generates an average annual value, (simply price X production) of about \$10 Billion, based on USDA (NASS) annual commodity production and price calculations. Annual values have become more stable over the past decade and have grown to higher levels than perhaps ever before in our state’s history, projecting an image of growth, progress, and unprecedented ‘Resiliency’.

Four main pillars; wheat, soybeans, corn, and livestock, account for nearly 80 percent of total value; and a dozen or more high value specialty crops make up the remaining 20 percent. Enterprise diversification adds to the resiliency and dependability of our primary industry today, something our fathers and grandfathers could have only wished for.

‘Food Security’, one of the many important benefits of agricultural research, is also very closely linked to ‘National Security’, which makes the efforts of everyone in this room all the more important in our world today.

NDWC ‘Priority’ Topics for Consideration: (Not Ranked)

--Continue support for existing SBARE Priority List: i.e., “Next up priorities” on the existing list

--Waldron Hall: The Top Priority Capital Improvement Project, and a very important consideration. Nearly all ND agricultural research has a chapter that begins in or is processed through Waldron Hall Labs. (Examples: Seed Testing, Soil Sampling Analysis, Pathology, Other Pest Analysis, Etc.)

--Bacterial Leaf Streak: (BLS) is perhaps next 'Big Thing' in terms of yield and production robbing disease issues affecting Wheat and Barley in North Dakota and the surrounding region. BLS was first observed in Minnesota a decade ago; the area affected is spreading and losses have been mounting when conditions are favorable for the bacterial pathogen to proliferate. No effective treatments to date. Known resistance appears limited as well. Other emerging Bacterial and perhaps Viral pathogens also threaten Corn, Soybeans, Sugar Beets and other important crops as well. Bacteriologist/Virologist Consideration?

--FHB (Wheat and Barley Scab): First apparent in Northern Regions in 1993, and continues to threaten yield and quality in important crops. Significant progress in tolerance and some level of resistance achieved, most notably in HRS Wheat, yet remains elusive in durum and HRW. Considerable progress/improvements also noted in threat detection and timing of preventative measures related to improved fungicide treatments/management strategies, which also continue to evolve under the guidance of scientists here at NDSU and in the region.

--Soil Fertility Issues: Basic Issues of Production, Soil Health, Growing Awareness of Soil Alkalinity and Loss of Productivity. Rapidly rising cost of inputs/Declining Availability are currently pressing the issue with greater urgency. Interest is growing rapidly in Precision Application Technology and exciting new technologies in Seed Placement and Nitrogen/Nutrient Efficiency. (Affects all agricultural enterprises)

--Operating Funds: Ongoing but increasingly important issue. Key Scientists and Technician Teams are the heart of these important research programs. (Team Experience is extremely valuable and Critical to Success) 'Must Pay the People'

--Retention of Top Caliber Scientists/Faculty: Other institutions recruiting our talent. Consider expansion of incentive programs: Endowed Chairs; Endowed Professorships; Distinguished Professors. Perhaps other incentives necessary to retain our best and brightest. Foundations and Commodity Groups are increasingly involved in these efforts at other top, research institutions.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

If you have any questions I will try to answer them.