



**North Dakota Corn Growers Association
Comments to the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education
December 12, 2023**

Thank you, Chairman Lovas and members of the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education, for allowing the corn producers of North Dakota to state their positions on the research and educational needs of the future, specifically used in planning for the 2025 Legislative Session.

My name is Brenda Elmer, and I have the pleasure of serving for the last three and a half years as the Executive Director of the North Dakota Corn Growers Association (NDCGA). I will highlight research and educational needs for the future of corn production and use in the state.

A year ago at this time, those of us working in the policy area were thrilled to help unveil an NDSU study that tells the story of agriculture's economic contribution to North Dakota. Your researchers stood with the Governor to tell the story of the nearly \$40 billion economic contribution agriculture makes in this state. This is a powerful tool and we value and rely on the work and results from our partners in North Dakota agricultural research and education.

North Dakota Corn represents one of the highest value crops in North Dakota, specifically when looking at all uses of the corn crop. ND corn production is used in ethanol production, livestock feed, and some food consumption, and the rest exported through the Pacific Northwest. Since the increasing development of the ethanol industry in North Dakota the last 15-20 years, our state's production has grown and now is typically in the top 11 states for corn production. And this growing season North Dakota is forecasted to have produced a record corn crop.

The goal of our organization is to make corn production in North Dakota a healthy and profitable business. And a key objective towards that is to educate policy makers on state funding needs to support this end, and to encourage policy development that will be beneficial to our growers and to educate on and deter policy that would be detrimental to our industry.

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To this end, research and education funds are necessary to support our ag industry in North Dakota. We have been pleased to actively support and advocate for SBARE's priorities during the North Dakota state legislative sessions. Most recently, the significant state support of \$87 million for Waldron Hall and the ag field lab facility. In addition, at the Capitol we were active to support the following legislative outcomes in 2023: Employee compensation increases essential to build a strong ag research institute of higher education. Funding for the purchase of land at the Hettinger REC, and \$2 million to complete prior one-time funding projects approved by the 67th and special legislative bodies. In addition, the 2023 funding for the following SBARE initiatives: \$40,000 in operating support; \$200,000 for a swine specialist and \$50,000 in operating support; \$125,000 for farm and ranch health and safety; \$80,000 for 4-H program support; \$220,000 for operating support for NDSU Extension; \$150,000 in operating support for the State Soil Conservation Committee. Additionally for the Agricultural Experiment Station: \$250,000 for an agronomist at the Dickinson REC, \$400,000 for operating support at Oakes Irrigation site, \$300,000 for NDAWN (the one FTE and \$80,000 in operating support). Capital Improvements: \$500,000 for deferred maintenance, \$1.9 M for construction of proper storage facilities for machinery, and \$1.7 million for the Nesson Valley irrigation research site.

The following areas represent North Dakota Corn Growers priorities for SBARE's consideration going forward:

- Continued funding of the NDSU ***Extension and Research*** mission areas. This includes the education of growing and marketing corn; research of corn trial test plots, to ensure ND producers have vibrant and potentially cost-effective corn seed options; and funding of continued work on precision agriculture. This includes research in support of increasing corn profitability especially further west and southwest in the state. This includes research that will support the goal of increasing the availability and affordability of irrigating corn that is much more prevalent in other Midwest states.
- Funding that generally supports ***valued added agriculture***, including:
 - Use of corn as ethanol including the by-products of corn and ethanol,

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and dried distiller grains for feed for livestock and other uses.

- Research to advance the marketability of home-grown biofuels such as ethanol and sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), especially in a world that places a high value on lowering carbon emissions.
- Continued funding of **soil health initiatives**, including the effects of soil salinity in the soils and effectiveness of tiling towards reduced runoff and erosion, and other nutrient and water management tools to enhance the productivity of our soils.
- Continued funding of research programs that will combat noxious **weeds and other diseases** that rob our producers of yield and profitability.
- North Dakota is severely lacking in animal agriculture. Our corn growers want to advance value-added ag efforts that will grow this industry, that will create greater demand for the production of our state's key commodities. We need funding for research efforts that show the value of increased livestock population in North Dakota; including education supporting the establishment of livestock enterprises; legal partnerships; manure values; and related ag businesses. Furthermore, we support **funding that will advance animal science at the university level to support precision livestock production in our state**. The resources to develop a smart swine facility at NDSU will also aid in these efforts.
- And finally, **funding for the Center of Agriculture Policy and Trade Center** that establishes North Dakota as the premier research institution working to enhance net farm income through in-depth trade and agricultural policy research for crop producers, ranchers, and decision makers in private and public sectors in the Northern Plains region. In addition to stable operating funding, the center needs three FTEs who will work to **advance the demand for our commodities, focusing on agriculture policy, markets and trade, and economic impacts**.

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In the policy and regulatory arenas, too often success is based on interests of various stakeholders, preconceived outcomes, emotions, society's expectation, sheer politics. Our conflict with our Mexican trade partners sudden pivot to non-GMO corn; the EPA's direction on Endangered Species Act compliance that insists the prevalence of species in our state that we as locals know to be otherwise – are a few examples of decisions that affect our state's corn producers immensely yet are not necessarily based on sound research, science or facts. This is where we rely heavily on your priorities, so that we may use the outcomes for the betterment of North Dakota agriculture.

My colleague from the North Dakota Corn Utilization Council, that focuses on the funding of research, education programs, and market development efforts will elaborate on further specific needs for our industry.

In conclusion, the NDCGA has highlighted areas for priority consideration by SBARE. We have confidence in the NDSU Agriculture Research and Extension efforts of the past and continue support of their functions into the future.

Thank you for your partnership, time and consideration.

Brenda Elmer
Executive Director
ND Corn Growers Association

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