

12/07/2023

Re: SBARE - NDSU Center for Policy and Trade

To Chair Lovas and the SBARE Board,

AgCountry Farm Credit Services fully supports the North Dakota State University (NDSU) Center for Agricultural Policy and Trade Studies' request for funding. NDSU provides a world-class experience for students and educational outcomes that benefit the state of North Dakota and Midwest farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses.

AgCountry Farm Credit is a farmer-owned cooperative that provides competitive access to credit and financial services to farmers and ranchers across most of North Dakota, western Minnesota, and north-central Wisconsin along with agribusinesses around the country. Our mission is to serve agriculture and rural America. We accomplish this through a holistic approach by offering credit, financial services, customer education, community outreach, volunteerism, philanthropy, and agriculture advocacy work.

NDSU and Extension are long-standing valued partners to AgCountry. We have worked together to deliver continuing and advanced education to farmers and ranchers on commodity marketing, crop insurance, and farm finance.

AgCountry's work with agribusinesses has grown considerably in the last 20 years, and we saw the need and opportunity for further talent development in the agribusiness area. NDSU's Agribusiness and Applied Economics Department, the Commodity Trading Center, and the Finance Department provide an opportunity for further curriculum development around agribusiness finance. Recently, NDSU and AgCountry announced the formation of the AgCountry Endowed Chair of Agribusiness at North Dakota State University. This endowment will provide funding for research and education in agribusiness, and it will help to ensure that NDSU remains a leader in this important field. Creating an Endowed Chair of Agribusiness Finance within the Commodity Trading Center brings focus to the curriculum and coursework that will help advance education and direction in agribusiness in this region. Further development and expansion of agribusinesses—such as crush plants, renewable fuel plants, and livestock processing—add value to our local agriculture production, bringing more value to farmers and ranchers in our region.

NDSU and AgCountry have a long-standing partnership to provide qualified candidates for the agricultural workforce. This partnership is crucial in addressing the industry's growing need for skilled workers and ensuring the continued success of the agriculture sector in the upper Midwest. Through our multifaceted partnership, NDSU and AgCountry work together to bridge the gap between education and employment in the agricultural sector,

ensuring a pipeline of skilled and knowledgeable professionals who will contribute to the continued growth and prosperity of the agriculture industry. We are proud to employ numerous highly skilled NDSU graduates who help us serve our member-owners.

The purpose of a land-grant university and NDSU is to educate the people of the state and solve problems through academic, research, and Extension programs. We believe the request from the Center for Agricultural Policy and Trade Studies expands the research purpose and aligns well with the goals and vision of the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education. The Center's initiative will enable them to address key agricultural challenges, promoting informed decision-making and driving economic growth in North Dakota.

The Center's goal of addressing demand-side agricultural issues is important to North Dakota's agriculture sector, which is integral to the state's economy. Most of North Dakota's agricultural production is exported to other states and countries for processing and consumption. Our state's agriculture economy is unique from other agriculture-producing states in that it is highly dependent on product demand. Research on trade policy, markets, transportation, and infrastructure is critical to the success of the state's farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses. The Center will provide essential insights to navigate the complex global, federal, and state policies and markets. It will also offer critical insights into agricultural policy changes and market dynamics, enabling their stakeholders to make informed decisions in a rapidly evolving landscape.

The Center will equip North Dakota farmers, agribusinesses, lawmakers, and other decision-making stakeholders with the knowledge needed to demonstrate returns on agricultural investment and assist in resource allocation. This is particularly crucial for North Dakota's farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses, who rely on up-to-date information to navigate the complex landscape of regulations, market conditions, and complex trade partners.

The agriculture industry in North Dakota is in the beginning stages of an exciting integration of agriculture and energy. The production of biofuels, such as ethanol, biodiesel, renewable diesel, and sustainable aviation fuel, derived from crops, will contribute significantly to the country's energy needs. By exploring innovative approaches to enhance the synergy between agriculture and energy industries, the Center aims to strengthen North Dakota's energy landscape and further support the agriculture industry.

The Center is seeking funding for the creation of three key positions, each serving a vital role in achieving its objectives:

The first position is an Agricultural Policy Analyst. This position will provide vital information to policymakers, agribusinesses, farmers, and ranchers about the impact of

policy changes and market conditions on the agricultural sector. Public policy, government interaction, and regulation is closely intertwined with production agriculture and agribusiness. This area continues to grow and develop as we use agriculture for more energy, a means to combat climate change, and produce our food and fiber needs.

The second position is a Markets and Trade Analyst. As mentioned previously, most of North Dakota's agricultural products are exported to other states and countries. Commodity markets, trade and trade agreements, transportation, and infrastructure all have a significant impact on North Dakota agriculture. This position will enhance the competitiveness of agribusiness stakeholders through comprehensive agricultural trade and policy information and analysis.

The third position is an Economic Impact/Contribution Specialist. The purpose of this position is to equip stakeholders, decision-makers, and the public with analyses that facilitate systematic and thoughtful debates on public policy issues. The goals of the first two positions are the analyses of policy and trade. The third position brings the others together to determine the resulting net income to North Dakota producers and the resulting impact on the state's economy. This is extremely important and invaluable as we seek ways to increase animal agriculture and further develop bioenergy opportunities in North Dakota.

In summary, this funding will help strengthen our agricultural sector, attract investments, and solidify North Dakota's leadership in agricultural research, policy analysis, and trade expertise in the Midwest. By supporting this initiative, North Dakota has a unique opportunity to position itself at the forefront of sustainable development and economic growth. The Center will be a valuable resource, fostering innovation and driving long-term prosperity for our agricultural and energy sectors. We encourage the Board to support the Center's request.

Sincerely,

Howard Olson
SVP Government and Public Affairs