



U.S. Durum Growers Association

PROMOTING THE PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF DURUM AND SEMOLINA

P.O. Box 1091 • Bismarck, ND 58502 • (701) 214-3203
office@durumgrowers.com • www.durumgrowers.com

**Testimony of Steve Perdue
Policy Committee Chair
SB 2020
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Chairman Monson and members of the Committee, my name is Steve Perdue, and I am a farmer from Ray and serve as the policy committee chair for the U.S. Durum Growers Association (USDGA). On behalf of USDGA, I would like to express support of SB 2020 as we recognize the significant importance of ag research and extension and the Northern Crops Institute to the future of agriculture in North Dakota.

USDGA has represented the nation's durum growers for more than 60 years. Today, we represent grower and industry members from 10 states, with North Dakota producing 50-60 percent of the nation's durum.

USDGA supports the efforts of the State Board of Agriculture and Education (SBARE) in prioritizing the needs of the state's ag community. USDGA participated in the SBARE information gathering process, as did dozens of other ag organizations, and would urge the Committee's favorable consideration of its priorities.

Specifically, USDGA cannot overstate the importance of ag research and extension as essential tools for the state's producers. In addition, they have proven a high rate of return to the state's economy. Continued funding for ongoing research is essential to North Dakota's quality breeding programs, utilized by producers. Breeding programs, such as those that have been established at NDSU, take decades to establish and, therefore, can't just be turned on and off. With North Dakota producing more than half of the nation's durum, NDSU's durum breeding program is essential as no significant other public or private breeding programs exist. The program is known around the nation, if not the world. Continued research, especially for scab management and resistance and quality management in durum, is also of utmost importance.

Your continued support of the Northern Crops Institute (NCI) is also encouraged. Its collaborative efforts to support the promotion and market development of crops grown in a four-state region is more important than ever. NCI's educational and technical programs are essential to not only maintaining but expanding domestic and international markets for northern-grown crops, including durum.

We understand past and current budget situations. However, agriculture is and will continue to be the foundation of our state's economy. Even in times of low commodity prices, our families will continue to be here buying groceries, patronizing local businesses and contributing to the state's economy. We appreciate your past support and urge your continued support of ag research and extension.