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Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

I am Mark DeMars a farmer from Bathgate, North Dakota. Thank you for the opportunity to testify virtually today. I am representing the Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association in support of Senate Bill 2020 and in particular, the appropriations towards the NDSU Extension Service and the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station (ND AES).

Agriculture continues to provide big returns for our rural economies, our state, and our nation. Our production practices, which have been developed, refined, or promoted through the unbiased research of the NDSU Extension and the ND AES, have ensured we offer the safest and most efficient food network in the world. However, other countries are catching up, largely due to their significant increase in public agricultural research. According to the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, China surpassed U.S. total public expenditures on agricultural research in 2008.

NDSU Extensions' work is critical to the success of our farms in North Dakota. They are our trusted advisors and provide answers to our rapidly changing needs as well as specific recommendations based on individualized conditions.

Some specific examples of recent success are:

1. Studying and providing recommendations on managing cercospora leaf spot on sugarbeets. Cercospora is a bacterium that has become our largest production limiter and presents a re-occurring major economic injury to producers and our cooperative.
2. Their research and analysis on choosing proper planting populations and seed plate selections to ensure we have even and timely emergence.
3. And lastly, identifying new weed control methods in sugarbeets like the use of electricity to control weeds that have become resistant to some pesticides.

NDSU Extensions' efforts are leveraged through partnerships with the University of Minnesota, USDA and commodity organizations. It is estimated that their work generates a 40% return on investment.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, the Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers hope you will consider fully investing in the needs of our producers by restoring 100% of the NDSU Extension and the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station budgets. We ask the committee to provide a DO PASS recommendation and offer the above suggestion.

Mark DeMars – Farmer – Bathgate, North Dakota
Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association