

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY – AGRONOMY SEED FARM
SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Testimony by: Brian Otteson, Director

Bill No. 2020; Budget No. 649

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Good afternoon, Chairman Holmberg, members of the committee. My name is Brian Otteson, I am the Director of the Agronomy Seed Farm at Casselton ND. We are part of the NDSU Agricultural Experiment Station network. Today, I would like to give you a brief update on the seed farm and our activities the past two years.

The Agronomy Seed Farm began operating in 1950 after a group of seed producers with the ND Crop Improvement & Seed Association decided a seed production farm that specialized in Foundation seed production would be beneficial to seed producers in North Dakota as a way to access high quality pure Foundation seed released by the NDSU Agricultural Experiment Station. The goal was to have the seed farm large enough to be self-supportive, which has been the case for the past 70 years.

The seed farm produces Foundation seed of wheat, barley oats and soybean. We typically grow between 25-30 varieties for seed each year and sell, on average, about 33,000 bushels of seed per year across the state. We also maintain an inventory of approximately 15 varieties from previous years that are still in demand. Our land base includes approximately 1400 acres providing the necessary land base for proper rotations.

In addition to producing Foundation seed, we also provide support to the main station scientists at NDSU who are involved with various crop research projects and plant breeding efforts. Our support primarily consists of land management and providing crop rotation for the research plots at the Casselton and Prosper sites. In addition to working closely with the plant breeding projects on new variety development, we collaborate with the ND Crop Improvement & Seed Association and ND Foundation Seed stocks project on new seed increases as well as distribution newly released varieties to the seed growers across the state.

The Agronomy Seed Farm has just three FTE's, which has remained the same for many years. Our budget remains mostly unchanged. Any increases have been from small salary increases or health care premium increases. Beyond our normal operating expenses, we continue to replace and update some of our aging pieces of farm equipment each year as the budget allows. We continue to operate well within our current budget.

Today, I am not asking for any general fund appropriations since we are 100% self-supported, but rather, I am just asking for your support in approving our budget so we can continue to operate as we have in the past.

Thank you for your time today and I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.