

SB-2020 – Support

Request – Hold Even Budget for North Dakota Experiment Station and Extension
Respectfully Submitted – Sarah Lovas, Hillsboro, ND (Traill County, District 20)

I am a farmer and independent crop consultant from Hillsboro, ND. I testify today to support funding the North Dakota Agriculture Experiment Station (ND AES) and North Dakota Extension and ask for a hold even on these budgets.

Throughout my career as an agronomist and farmer, I have come to depend on the ND AES to produce useable, unbiased, information applicable at a field level that improves the agronomic crop production. Certainly, many farmers rely on their crop consultants to provide them with agronomic information. My clients have told me that this is part of my job. Approximately, 80% of the information I provide to my growers is ND AES research information.

The ND AES is critical to North Dakota Agriculture due to the crop diversity in this state. In 2020, North Dakota was nationally ranked the first, second, and third producer of 16 agricultural crops. Many of these crops are specialty crops such as dry edible beans, sugarbeets, and lentils. The diversity of North Dakota's cropping systems adds economic stability to individual farming operations and to the state's overall agriculture economy. The ND AES is a leader for research and breeding programs for these specialty crops. Without the work of the ND AES, it would be difficult to find research information on these crops or have seed genetic improvements. The ND AES is also critical in providing local research information for major crops like corn, soybean. North Dakota has different soils and weather compared to other major growing areas in the nation. It not surprising that research has shown a 40% ROI to money invested in agriculture research.

My experience with Extension started when I was only 8 years old as a 4-H member. 4-H provided many opportunities for agriculture and domestic education that I would not have had otherwise. Most importantly, the leadership and communication skills I learned in 4-H I have used throughout my whole life. Currently in my professional career, Extension has become a critical information delivery entity responsible for relaying most of the agronomic information that I deliver to my customers. I depend on Extension to deliver pesticide certification training. This spring, when the commodity markets crashed during the onset of COVID, Extension did an excellent job providing weekly webinars about the economic situation we were facing. This was a rapid response to a situation that quickly developed and provided timely information to farmers, including myself. I have also participated in the Lead Local training program. This program helps prepare individuals to participate in boards, councils, and committees.

These are few ways how Extension has impacted my life. I think Extension benefits North Dakotans differently. One North Dakotan may use Extension differently than another and I think we sometimes forget how vast Extension programming is. Extension programming also includes programs such as: The Master Gardner Program, The National Diabetes Prevention Program, Parenting Classes, Personal and Family Finance educational programming.

Throughout my life, I have seen the impact of the ND AES and Extension and realize how important it is for our State. I hope that the ND AES and Extension are viable and thriving the future of North Dakota.