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SBARE December 12, 2023

How many of you are operating your businesses with equipment purchased in 1960?

It's a rhetorical question, obviously, but the analogy is valid.

Those of us in the certified seed business promote certified seed as a value added product and that Foundation seed is produced to the highest industry standards, but when a customer pulls up to our Langdon facility, I'm sure they wonder if we share their commitment to quality.

### Impact

The Langdon REC Foundation Seed Program is a vital part of the ND Foundation Seed Program and they have proudly served seed producers and farmers for over 70 years.

But that seed plant is in a position now that it needs to be replaced or risk closing its doors.

The Langdon REC Foundation Seed Program has far-reaching impact. They have a customer base of 132 growers in 29 counties and 2 states. They serve growers far beyond NE North Dakota. They have customers as far west as Bottineau and Ward counties and in Burleigh, Emmons and McIntosh counties in southcentral part of the state. They also serve Minnesota customers from Roseau to Albert Lea.

According to State Seed Department statistics, the Northeast part of the state routinely accounts for over 40% of the certified seed production acres in the state.

Losing the Foundation Seed Program there would leave a huge void.

### NDSSD stats

Seed Department records indicate that the LREC has produced 69 unique varieties of 7 different crops since 1995. In those 29 years they have produced almost 9,100 acres and over 200,000 bushels of high quality Foundation Seed. On average they have grown 7 different varieties of 3 different crops each year. They have grown as many as 11 different varieties in one year.

Producing certified seed requires a lot of extra effort. Each field must meet standards for field eligibility including previous crop history and isolation. Each crop and variety means cleaning planters, combines, trucks, augers, bins and the seed conditioning equipment, kernel-clean between each variety. Randy and his team have consistently met those requirements.

In the last 10 years, production at the LREC has increased with demand. The average number of acres in seed production for the last 10 years has increased 37% compared to the previous 10-year period from 2004 to 2013. (360 acres per year vs 287 acres). Likewise, the average number of finished, certified bushels has increased 57% during the last 10-year period.

Randy and his team have consistently done an excellent job, achieving nearly a 99% pass rate for their fields and 95% pass rate for seed lots conditioned at LREC.

## **Antiquated equipment and design**

Looking back at official certification records, LREC has principally produced 4 crops; barley, durum, wheat and flax. Most durum production has shifted from east to west due to disease issues so the last durum crop they produced was in 2012. Agriculture has obviously changed over the years, but Randy has looked for other opportunities to serve his customers and add value to the station.

In 2017, they diversified and added faba beans, field peas and soybeans. These large-seeded crops required different cleaning ability which the LREC was incapable of providing. Even though their plant was constructed with generally accepted design and equipment for 1960, that facility is woefully inadequate for today's needs.

Many seed conditioning facilities built long ago utilize gravity to move seed through the equipment, which means elevating the seed, then dropping it into seed cleaners. That may have been ok for hard small grains and flax, but it is unacceptable for fragile seed like pulse crops and soybeans. Langdon has a 30 ft drop in their facility that will damage fragile crops, reducing germination percentage.

Seed Department statistics show that field pea seed production has increased 40% statewide. In the northeast part of the state it has increased almost 50% so we know there is a need for high quality seed. Over the last 10 years, they have averaged about 9,800 bushels per year. Randy estimated they could easily double the size of their program with a new seed plant.

Even though the LREC has the capability and desire to produce high quality seed, they lack the facility to condition that seed. Old equipment, that is now nearing 70 years old, while well-maintained by their staff, simply cannot handle the increased volume efficiently.

As a work-around, they tried contracting with local seed plants for the service but the seed lots failed to meet state certification standards due to contamination. Utilizing outside contractors for conditioning at ANY of our Foundation seed is not practical. We have witnessed this at other stations in the system and they have had similar results. Seed lots failed due to contamination. Moreover, one is always at the mercy of their schedules which may not be ideal. Fragile crops such as pulse crops and soybeans cannot be conditioned during cold weather as this can increase the likelihood of mechanical damage to the seed.

The scale of their program is limited by the capacity of their conditioning equipment. The seed plant at Langdon is capable of only cleaning 15 bushels per hour.

To put that in perspective, a semi-trailer holds 1,000 bushels. It would take 67 hours of cleaning to fill one semi. A week and a half!

A new seed plant would address both the inadequate design and capacity issues.

## **Looking to the future**

A new facility would open the doors for the Foundation Seed Program at Langdon and would allow them to resume their expansion into other crops important to the region and better serve their customers.

Field peas really emerged as an important crop in North Dakota 20 years ago. In 2000 the Seed Department inspected 2,600 acres. This year we inspected 22,000 acres. NDSU recognized the importance of pulse crops to the state and addressed that issue by adding a pulse breeding program. That program has already released two new field pea varieties but unfortunately the LREC is not able to provide its customers with Foundation seed of these new varieties because they lack the proper equipment.

Moreover, the ND Crop Improvement and Seed Association is licensing varieties into the state and relies on the ND Foundation Seed program to increase those varieties. The condition of the seed plant at Langdon limits their ability to produce seed of these other varieties.

Area producers would benefit by having a facility nearby to grow, condition and distribute that seed to the high standards necessary and expected.

Maintaining strong seed programs at all of our stations is critical. Sales revenues are an important part of the station's annual budget, supplementing the biennial appropriation.

A couple decades ago, the Foundation Seed Program recognized the need for providing support for upgrading infrastructure at its facilities. They established an infrastructure fund and designated 10% of the revenues generated from Foundation seed sales specifically for future infrastructure needs. Randy has done an excellent job of managing that fund and has saved about \$250,000 for infrastructure.

## **In summary**

The LREC has the land resources available to increase their seed production efforts.

They have the desire and motivation to increase the crops they produce to serve its customers.

However, they lack the facility to efficiently condition that seed.

Improving the facility will help ensure area customers have an adequate supply of high quality Foundation Seed AND help ensure the financial stability of the station for many decades into the future.

SBARE has a long history of supporting worthy projects within the public programs. I ask for your thoughtful consideration and look well into the future and support a new seed conditioning facility for the Landon REC.