



NORTH DAKOTA Farm Research

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Guest Column



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Is there a long-term basis for optimism about the future of North Dakota Agriculture? Yes, of course there is, "cautious optimism," as football coaches are wont to say. It is deeply rooted in the rich land of this region, in our record of past performance, the intelligence and industry of our people, and the skills and knowledge we have developed.

But the reasons for caution are many as well. Last summer, we had a Symposium on World Agricultural Trade on our campus in connection with the Northern Crops Institute. The idea for that symposium had germinated with a pair of bright, young North Dakota agricultural producers. It was a good idea.

During the course of an intensive, day-and-a-half-long program a succession of thoughtful, well-informed speakers representing government and the agricultural producing and marketing sectors presented their views on what has happened, what appears to be happening and what can happen in the future. They were not uniformly optimistic.

The list of problems with which agriculture is confronted on the global scene could certainly bias a person toward pessimism: since the mid-1970s, everyone and his brother seems able and eager to grow wheat — Argentina, Australia, Canada and the Common Market countries — and to sell it very competitively with us; the strength of the U.S. dollar, which hampers our ability to trade; the weakness of third world economies, which hampers their ability to buy much-needed food; various governmental policies of our own and other countries' that discourage the free flow of trade. All of those are sources of our continuing concern, not to mention the perpetual vagaries of climate, crop diseases and insects.

But we know a great deal about producing agricultural products in America — more than anyone else, I would wager. And we are increasingly learning more and more about marketing those products. Therein, I feel, is the basis for long-term optimism. Over the years, North Dakota agricultural producers have shown immense resilience and ingenuity in adapting to the requirements of competition. We continue to be equal to that challenge. The key, I feel, is that this is

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On the Cover: Orville Banasik, chairman of cereal chemistry, inspects bread from milling and baking trials. In this issue Banasik reviews his department's history and makes some projections for the future. Photo by James Berg.

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Down the road, Anderson sees all kinds of useful knowledge coming from the Livestock facility. Knowledge he thinks the public needs to improve its day-to-day operations.

“We look forward to seeing a definite increase in production with our cross-breeding and terminal rotation

programs, and we’ve barely seen the beginning—barely scratched the surface—of the efficiency and production benefits of drylot management.”

But, no matter what directions research takes at the Unit, Anderson is still certain the same goal—benefiting the public—will remain constant.

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not the time to back off on our efforts to produce more efficiently and to market our products more effectively.

The NCI represents a positive step in that direction. Last summer’s symposium was another. We have tended to focus on production in the past. We have taken some criticism on that. But I will make no apology for that emphasis. We simply need to broaden our research efforts in the area of post-production processing and the marketing of those products.

The name of our Department of Cereal Chemistry and Technology is soon to be changed to Cereal Science

and Food Technology, and that is more than a cosmetic change. It represents a change of direction, with real emphasis on what can be done with our agricultural products to enhance their marketability. Professor Orville Banasik, who will be retiring in July of 1985, has been a visionary pioneer in moving NDSU in this direction, his efforts culminating in the creation of the NCI.

I suppose the crux of my message is very predictable: this is not the time to back off on our research efforts. They have served us well in the past. They continue to serve us well. The knowledge research generates is our best hope for the future.

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tal pollution while reducing processing, storage and distribution costs. Increased emphasis is needed on developing products that upgrade diets, fit consumer needs and compete in export markets. Basic knowledge regarding the properties of foods and maintaining wholesomeness and safety of food supplies also needs to be upgraded.

Broadened emphasis in these areas could have major implications for NDSU in terms of academic offerings, research and service to producers, processors and marketers of North Dakota products. Increased levels of food processing in North Dakota, rather than exporting raw materials for processing elsewhere, could make

such academic training and research even more important in the future. Or, to look at the other side of the coin, having expertise and training in food processing available might even play a role in expanding North Dakota’s industrial base.

With a long history of excellence in agricultural research to build on, NDSU needs to prepare to meet the changing needs of North Dakota Agriculture. The new plateau of service and research Orville Banasik envisions for cereal chemistry is a vital part of new plateaus of service and research provided by the total university.

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