



# NORTH DAKOTA Farm Research

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Agricultural Economics

I was born on a Minnesota farm that was originally deeded by President Lincoln to Ezra Cornell, founder of Cornell University. It was part of a grant of land made under the Morrill Land-Grant College Act (1862), named after Representative (and later Senator) Justin Morrill of Vermont, which would grant each state or territory 30,000 acres per Congressman. The proceeds were to be used for the promotion of education in agriculture and the mechanic arts. This land grant was dwarfed by the acres granted by the Homestead Act (1862) and railroad grants, but it is likely that the Morrill Act exceeded both in terms of long-run importance.

Many of the eastern states had no remaining land in the public domain, so they had their choice from states farther west. That's how my grandfather's farm was included in the grant to New York and the establishment of Cornell University.

This educational system was something new. The earlier American colleges were little more than high schools teaching the classics and preparing young men of wealth for careers in law, medicine, and the ministry. In contrast, Ezra Cornell captured the feelings of the time when he declared that he would found a school where anyone may receive instruction on any topic. It was clearly an attempt to provide education for the masses instead of the privileged few.

This legislation was followed by the Hatch Act of 1887, which provided for the establishment of an Agricultural Experiment Station in each state, and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, which established the Cooperative Extension Service and placed the benefits of on-campus teaching and research at the disposal of farms and homes throughout the country. These acts indicate the early contribution of the federal government to the three major parts of the land-grant university: classroom teaching, research, and extension.

The original provision of the federal government for higher education has been continued by the obvious support of the people of North Dakota. The rewards are numerous.

1. It has brought higher standards of living to the people of the state.
2. It has prepared their sons and daughters for higher paying positions both within and outside of agriculture.
3. It has helped developing countries as we have "exported" trained professionals in the form of students who have returned to their home countries after completing their studies here.

The land-grant college was born during the bitter conflict of the Civil War with its confusion and uncertainty. Today, the country is not divided by bitterness but, as a nation, faces confusion and uncertainty. NDSU, in the land grant tradition, offers students a wide variety of educational opportunities for careers that are personally rewarding and make this world a better place to live in and provide leadership and vision to help overcome the uncertainty and confusion.

## In This Issue

North Dakota Aerial Spray Analysis Program <i>Vern Hofman, Art Lamey, Harvey Hirning, Mark Berge, Dennis Kopp, Dean McBride</i> . . . . .	3
Natural Conditions of Salt Accumulations in North Dakota <i>Alex Maianu</i> . . . . .	9
Forage Preferences Exhibited by Cattle on a Short Duration Grazing System <i>Mark Pessin, Donald Kirby and Gary Clambey</i> . . . . .	12
Contribution of Seed Hull Characteristics to Resistance of Sunflower to Blackbird Damage <i>J.R. Mason, M.A. Adams, R.A. Dolbeer, R.A. Stehn, P.P. Woronecki, and G.J. Fox</i> . . . . .	16
Field Trials of Sunflower Resistant to Bird Depredation <i>R.A. Dolbeer, P.P. Woronecki, R.A. Stehn, G.J. Fox, J.J. Hanzel, and G.M. Linz</i> . . . . .	21
Eating Patterns of Overweight Rural and Small Town Women and Men <i>Francie Berg</i> . . . . .	25
North Dakota Wives' Contribution to Family Income, 1970-1980 <i>Sheila Mammen, Richard Rathge, and Mary Whan</i> . . . . .	29
Comparison of Personal Income 1969-1984: United States, West North Central Census Region and North Dakota <i>Carol Dobitz and Clifford Dobitz</i> . . . . .	35

**On the Cover:** As the 1985-86 academic year winds to a close, Gordon Erlandson leads an agricultural economics seminar. Erlandson, who will retire from the faculty June 30 after 21 years of teaching, has received both the Robert Odney Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Alpha Zeta Outstanding Teacher in Agriculture award. In this issue he gives his thoughts on the land grant system. Photo by James Berg.

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