

# NORTH DAKOTA

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2018-19 EDITION | NDAGRICULTURE.COM



## A Call to ACTION

Neighbors help  
neighbors cope  
with extreme  
drought

## *Dining on* DAKOTA

Schools serve local  
food to benefit  
students, economy

# LARGER THAN LOCAL

Foods produced in North Dakota are enjoyed  
across the nation and beyond



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Brad and Matt VanRay grow potatoes on VanRay Farms in Pingree. *Photo by Steve Voit*



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- Uneven Ground
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- Soil Mixing



Agriculture Commissioner  
Doug Goehring

# WHAT'S COOKING IN YOUR STATE?



## FARM FLAVOR

Find recipes using ingredients grown and raised in your state at [FarmFlavor.com](http://FarmFlavor.com).

# NORTH DAKOTA AGRICULTURE

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Commissioner Goehring is a third-generation farmer who operates a 2,200-acre no-till farm with his son, Dustin.

farmers, ranchers and restaurants; between farms, food processors and schools; between neighbors; between North Dakota companies and international buyers; and so many more.

We'll talk about some of North Dakota's unique crops, tell you about local foods used in area restaurants and schools, and also show you how foods produced in North Dakota are enjoyed across the nation and beyond.

We'll introduce you to women who play leading roles on their farms and ranches, in their communities and in international business.

You'll find stories of farmers and ranchers helping each other through hardship, learn about the partnerships between landowners and beekeepers, and see how the next generation is learning about meat processing and food safety.

North Dakota has been blessed with abundant resources and a varied landscape that enable our farmers and ranchers to produce over 50 different commodities. It is my hope that by sharing an in-depth look at North Dakota agriculture, you will come away with a greater understanding and appreciation for the men and women who produce the wide array of products that are used here and around the world.

While it's my honor to serve as Agriculture Commissioner, I am also a third-generation farmer. My son and I operate a 2,200-acre no-till farm near Menoken in south-central North Dakota, where we raise corn, soybeans, spring wheat, winter wheat, sunflowers and barley. As farmers and ranchers, we want to show you how agriculture touches all of our lives.

Thank you for your interest in *North Dakota Agriculture!*

Sincerely,

Doug Goehring  
 Agriculture Commissioner  
 North Dakota Department of Agriculture

Welcome to the third edition of *North Dakota Agriculture*, a publication designed to showcase the diversity of the state's leading industry.

We invite you to take some time to get to know a few of our 29,900 farmers and ranchers, and explore this vital industry where one in four jobs in the state are supported by agriculture.

The theme of this issue is relationships. Agriculture is about relationships – those between farmers and processors; between

# North Dakota Agriculture

An overview of the state's food, farming and agribusiness sectors

Today, many consumers go through their daily routines without a second thought about agriculture. Yet, the industry plays a crucial role for each and every one of them. Agriculture provides the building blocks of daily life.

In North Dakota, agriculture is big business, and as the main driving sector of the economy, it contributes approximately \$10.9 billion to the state each year.

North Dakota is home to 29,900 farms spread across 39.1 million acres of land. Farms and ranches come in at an average 1,308 acres each.

The state ranks first in the nation for several commodities, including spring wheat, durum, flax, canola, honey, pulse crops and more. In 2016, soybeans ranked as the top crop in value of production for the state, bringing in \$2.2 billion, followed by corn at \$1.6 billion.

The state is also home to 1.86 million head of cattle and calves; 984,500 beef cattle; 15,500 milk cows, tens of thousands of piglets; 147,000 head of market hogs; 70,000 head of sheep and lambs; and more than 670,000 honey bee colonies.

North Dakota provides products for consumers around the world, and the state is the eighth-largest agricultural exporting state in the U.S.

According to the most recent data, North Dakota shipped \$4.5 billion domestic agricultural exports abroad in 2016. The top exported products included wheat, soybeans, oilseeds and products, corn, and feeds and feed grains.

North Dakota agriculture also encompasses agricultural education and agritourism to biofuels and research. The successful industry is only poised for more growth.

29,900

Total Farms



50

Farmers Markets



\$10.9B

Economic Impact

The livestock industry is a major sector in North Dakota, encompassing beef and dairy cattle, bison, poultry, sheep, pigs and more:



Beef cattle rank as one of the state's top commodities, with an inventory of close to 2 million head.



The state has 75 licensed dairy herds that produce more than 40 million gallons of milk each year.



There are approximately 9,500 head of bison in North Dakota. They are raised for meat and hides.



North Dakota ranchers raise about 70,000 sheep and lambs each year and produce 435,000 pounds of wool.



There are nine farms that produce about 1 million turkeys per year. Turkey is naturally low-calorie.



There are approximately 150,000 pigs raised in North Dakota. Each pig represents 371 servings of pork.



## Here's to Hemp

Industrial hemp is proving to be a viable crop in North Dakota. Check out some interesting stats about the product:

- Hemp seed is used for food, feed and oil. Hemp oil is also the basis for cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, inks, detergents and more.
- Hemp fiber is used for textiles, rope, paper and building products.
- In July 2018, North Dakota had 2,800 acres of industrial hemp in active production.
- There were 27 actively participating hemp growers in the state as of 2018.
- North Dakota has four licensed hemp processors.



Sources: *Hemp Industry Daily*, *North Dakota Department of Agriculture*

## Safety First

North Dakota farmers and ranchers understand the importance of food safety – and the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) is working with them to ensure safe, affordable and accessible foods for consumers.

For example, the state has a Meat Inspection Program to ensure that meat products are wholesome and to verify that processors meet food safety requirements. Approximately 17 NDDA employees work hard each day to ensure a safe and economical food supply for consumers. The Food Safety and Inspection Service also plays a role in making sure meat, poultry and eggs are safe for consumers.

For more information about food inspection in North Dakota, visit [nd.gov/ndda](http://nd.gov/ndda).



## Pride of Dakota

Pride of Dakota has been giving consumers the confidence to buy local since 1985.

Created by former Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Jones, the program recognizes products made in North Dakota, including everything from food and beverage companies to service providers. Today, the program has more than 500 member companies – a dramatic difference from the roster of 20 companies at its inception – that receive business development resources, marketing tools and more to be successful.

Discover more about Pride of Dakota at [prideofdakota.nd.gov](http://prideofdakota.nd.gov).

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# What's Growing in NORTH DAKOTA

A glimpse at the state's leading ag products  
based on cash receipts



## SUNFLOWERS

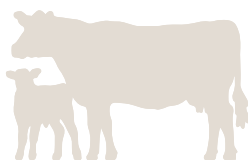
North Dakota is one of the leading producers of sunflowers in the nation, and sunflowers are one of the state's major exports.

# \$190.6M

CASH RECEIPTS



Light in taste and noted for its health benefits, sunflower oil supplies more vitamin E than any other vegetable oil.



## CATTLE & CALVES

Beef cattle are raised in every North Dakota county, and there are about 1.86 million beef cattle and calves across the state – that's more than two cattle for every person in North Dakota.

# \$893.6M

CASH RECEIPTS

## WHEAT

Wheat is produced in all 53 counties in North Dakota, and approximately 19,200 farms across the state grow wheat. By class, 74 percent grow spring, 25 percent raise durum and 1 percent raise winter wheat.

# \$1.6B

CASH RECEIPTS



## WHAT ARE CASH RECEIPTS?

Defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, cash receipts refer to the total amount of crops or livestock sold in a calendar year.

## DRY BEANS

North Dakota is the top producer of dry beans in the U.S., producing 35 percent of the nation's dry beans in 2017. The state has retained its position as the No. 1 producer of dry beans in the U.S. since 1991.

# \$233.5M

CASH RECEIPTS



## SOYBEANS

Cass County ranks as the No. 1 soybean-producing county in the nation by bushels harvested and acres planted in 2017. In addition, North Dakota ranks No. 4 in the U.S. in total soybean acres planted and harvested.

# \$2.3B

CASH RECEIPTS

## FIND MORE ONLINE

Learn more about products grown and raised in North Dakota at [NDagriculture.com](http://NDagriculture.com).

## BARLEY

In 2017, North Dakota produced about 24.89 million bushels of barley. The state accounts for approximately 25 percent of area planted with barley in the U.S.

# \$231.1M

CASH RECEIPTS

## CANOLA

North Dakota produces enough canola oil every year to fill the state capitol's 19-story tower 19 times. In 2017, the state's farmers harvested more than 1.5 million acres of canola, which resulted in a production value of nearly \$445 million.

# \$383.1M

CASH RECEIPTS



## POTATOES

Two of the most popular potato varieties for the U.S. fresh market were bred at North Dakota State University by Dr. Bob Johansen.

# \$241.3M

CASH RECEIPTS

The two varieties are the Red Norland and the Russet Norkotah.



Canola, prized for its seeds that have high oil content, is in the same family as mustard, broccoli and cauliflower.



## SUGAR BEETS

North Dakota farmers harvested 212,000 acres of sugar beets and produced more than 6.4 million tons of the crop in 2017.

# \$275.6M

CASH RECEIPTS



## CORN

In 2016, North Dakota farmers grew 517 million bushels of corn on 3.3 million acres and harvested an average of 158 bushels per acre.

# \$1.2B

CASH RECEIPTS





# LARGER *than* LOCAL

North Dakota foods are enjoyed across the nation and beyond



Many North Dakota farmers work closely with large suppliers, giving them the valuable opportunity to make a national or international impact and connect with consumers far beyond the Peace Garden State.

For example, Fargo-based Cass-Clay Creamery helps those in the Great Plains region access fresh dairy products that contain milk from North Dakota cattle, and thanks to Cavendish Farms, potatoes grown in North Dakota are used to make French fries served in restaurants around the world.

These supplier-farmer relationships make it possible for the public to enjoy quality foods no matter where they are – and get a taste of North Dakota.

## Dairy and Potato Production

Potatoes are one of North Dakota's top agricultural commodities, and it's easy to see why. The eastern portion of the state is part of the Red River Valley Region, which is the largest producer of red potatoes in the U.S. – it's even known as the "Idaho of Red Potatoes."

According to the Northern Plains Potato Growers Association and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the state produced 2.7 billion pounds of potatoes from 74,000 harvested acres in 2017, making it the fourth-largest potato-producing state in the nation.

"North Dakota's nutrient-rich soil and temperate climate create an ideal environment for growing potatoes," says Matt VanRay, who grows Russet Burbank

Opposite page: Brad and Matt VanRay of VanRay Farms grow Russet Burbank potatoes for processing.



## STEAK & POTATOES CROSTINI

### Ingredients

4-8 medium to large Russet or Yukon gold potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch-thick slices	1 1/4 pounds beef flank steak, trimmed of excess fat
1/4-1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided	2/3 cup light sour cream
salt and pepper, to taste	1/2 cup chives, very finely chopped

### Instructions

1. Heat oven to 425 degrees. Spray a large 18-by-13-inch rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. Arrange potato slices on sheet. Brush both sides lightly with part of the olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast 10 minutes or until potatoes are slightly tender and brown. Turn slices over, then roast 8 to 10 minutes more or until slices are thoroughly cooked and browned but still firm and intact. Set aside on cooling rack.
3. Turn oven to broil setting. Raise top rack if necessary.
4. Lightly rub a little olive oil on both sides of flank steak and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place steak on wire rack, then place wire rack on large baking sheet. Broil steak about 5 to 6 minutes per side, until medium rare. Remove steak immediately and let it rest for 5 minutes. Cut into slices about 1/4-inch thick, then in half if pieces are too long.
5. Arrange two steak slices on each potato slice. Top with a heaping teaspoon of light sour cream, then sprinkle with chives. Serve appetizers immediately or refrigerate in tightly covered container.

potatoes on VanRay Farms in Pingree. “It rarely gets very hot here, even in the summertime, and that’s perfect for spuds; they tend to thrive in cooler weather.”

In the state’s dairy sector, NASS reports that North Dakota cows produced 345 million pounds of milk in 2017. In addition, according to the Midwest Dairy Association, North Dakota is home to 75 licensed dairy herds as well as five plants that process dairy products and make it possible for milk to travel from the farm to the grocery store dairy case in just 48 hours.

### Partnering With North Dakota Producers

VanRay, who operates VanRay Farms with his father, uncles and cousins, works exclusively with Cavendish Farms and supplies the company with Russet Burbank potatoes throughout the year.

Along with VanRay Farms, Cavendish Farms – one of the region’s three major French fry processors and North America’s fourth-largest producer of frozen potato products – partners with potato farmers across the state. At their state-of-the-art potato processing plant in Jamestown, Cavendish Farms turns potatoes into French fries that are shipped to a variety of restaurants across North America and beyond, which gives North Dakota crops a global reach.

“Working with Cavendish Farms has been a great experience for us, and my family and I feel fortunate to be part of this supply chain,” VanRay says. “North Dakota grows some of the nation’s highest-quality potatoes, and I’m glad that people all over the world can enjoy the fruits of our labor. Plus, Cavendish Farms promotes our products and helps consumers understand that potatoes are a healthy, nutritious food.”

Cass-Clay Creamery also partners with North Dakota producers, sourcing milk from the state’s dairies to produce milk, yogurt and other items that are shipped to retailers across the state and surrounding areas. As a result, the region’s consumers have reliable, easy access to farm-fresh dairy products, and by purchasing them, shoppers are supporting their local farmers – that’s a winning combination.

– Jessica Walker Boehm

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“North Dakota grows some of the nation’s highest-quality potatoes, and I’m glad that people all over the world can enjoy the fruits of our labor.”

Matt VanRay, *potato farmer*

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# MEAT on the MOVE

Mobile trailer teaches about meat processing, food safety

**A** unique mobile lab puts meat education on the move in southeastern North Dakota.

A nearly 300-square-foot butcher shop on wheels travels among ten schools in the southeast region. When the mobile meat lab arrives for its six-week stint per high school, agriculture students receive an education in food sanitation, kitchen safety, meat quality, meat cuts and processing. The experience – rare to the rest of North Dakota and most parts of the country – provides lifetime skills, even for students who don't pursue careers as meat processors.

“Anybody that grocery shops knows that meat purchases are an expensive part of your grocery bill,” says Dan Rood Jr., director of the Southeast Region Career and Technology Center, which owns the mobile meat lab. “If you can be a smarter consumer, that alone has lifetime value for these kids.”

Today's mobile meat lab is the second 36-foot trailer in the 11-year tenure of the program. The ten agriculture teachers within the territory of the Southeast Region Career and Technology Center receive hands-on training from North Dakota State University to teach the meat courses. The Center provides the teachers with a curriculum and encourages tying meat lessons into their school's animal science unit for students to understand the cycle from animal to plate.

In fact, students often cook and eat their work after processing in the mobile laboratory space, which is representative of the work area behind the meat counter at a grocery store or butcher shop.

“The mobile meat lab is a food-grade trailer,” Rood says. “We have North Dakota Ag Department

inspections on it for food safety. We have standard meat-cutting and processing equipment – everything you need so you can roll into a school and they can do some meat processing.”

The mobile meat lab represents just one of several cost-effective, mobile educational services the

Southeast Region Career and Technology Center provides to schools in its region.

“I'd like to see more places across the country doing this,” Rood says. “It's a great opportunity for kids, and I see them excited and engaged.”

– Joanie Stiers

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# DINING

## on North Dakota

Schools serve local food to benefit students, economy

Empty plates at the cafeteria tables extend the best compliment to the cooks and North Dakota's farmers and food makers.

About 1,700 students and staff at Jamestown Schools dine on pasta from Dakota Growers in Carrington, melons and red peppers from nearby farms, and

French fries from the Cavendish Farms potato plant in town.

"We buy North Dakota foods for our school cafeterias because we want to support our own backyard," says Shelley Mack, food service director and dietitian for the Jamestown Public School District. "We want to support the farmers working for us. It's great

food security for North Dakota, and the products are great. There is really no reason not to buy from North Dakota."

Since 2011, the Jamestown School District has partnered with local farmers for fresh produce. Mack says students especially love the watermelon and corn on the cob. Another requested favorite is pot roast from Cloverdale Foods in Mandan with locally grown roasted potatoes and carrots, a hearty meal served on Pride of Dakota Day.

"For the kids, the No. 1 reason we purchase North Dakota foods is the quality," Mack says. "The quality, taste and freshness are better."

Across the state, food service directors like Mack look first to products grown or made in state, like milk from North Dakota bottling plants, and whole-grain breadsticks and cinnamon rolls from Baker Boy, which is based in Dickinson. In fact, Baker Boy sells an estimated \$800,000 to \$1 million worth of products per year to North Dakota schools through food service distributors.

"A lot of these schools are looking for cleaner-label products with whole grains because whole grains are better," says Craig VanHyfte, director of sales and marketing for Baker Boy. "Over the last 14 years, we've grown our product assortment to 32 different

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Students at Washington Elementary School in Jamestown enjoy North Dakota foods on their lunch trays.

“For the kids, the No. 1 reason we purchase North Dakota foods is the quality.”

**Shelley Mack**, *food service director/dietitian, Jamestown Public School District*

whole-grain items that we manufacture and sell to schools. A lot of these products we developed from our relationship with those schools and learned what they wanted.”

### Benefitting Students and Businesses

Baker Boy proves undeterred by kids’ picky palates. In school cafeterias throughout the state, students may dine on the company’s dinner rolls, biscuits, garlic toast and various sandwich buns while largely unaware of their wholesome

whole-grain content. For breakfast, school kitchens may offer the company’s whole-grain cinnamon rolls or donuts. In fact, Baker Boy’s whole-grain, ready-to-ice long john doughnut is one of the company’s top-selling products, says Guy Moos, the company’s president.

“I think the defining moment for our company and our product line is we make baked goods with whole grains and the kids like them,” he says. “They taste good. That is the defining factor.”

Moos’ father started Baker Boy

in 1955, which transitioned into food service in 1979. Since 1982, the family business has served schools, growing its distribution to throughout the Midwest and West and into Alaska.

“Working with the local schools has always been a really good sales opportunity for Baker Boy because usually if one school has a need, then multiple schools in the same area have that need,” VanHyfte says. “We’ve been able to create and take that same product to other schools.”

To boot, Baker Boy makes its goods with lots of North Dakota ingredients, including butter from Pride Dairy, flour from the North Dakota Mill, yeast from Dakota Yeast and sugar from Crystal Sugar near Fargo.

– Joanie Stiers

# LOCAL on the MENU

North Dakota restaurants feature local ingredients

**A**s more consumers value knowing where their food comes from, North Dakota chefs are getting in on the action, serving seasonal, local dishes that showcase the state's diverse agricultural bounty.

Pirogue Grille in Bismarck was founded by husband-and-wife team Stuart and Cheryl Tracy. Stuart has been the chef at the restaurant since it opened in September 2005.

Stuart says they try to use local ingredients and proteins as much as possible.

"We plan the menu seasonally, so you have your herbs, onions, zucchini, lots of rhubarb and asparagus when they're available," he says.

They source lamb from nearby Oregon and bison has always been from North Dakota. "The bison medallions are by far my favorite dish to make," Stuart says. But the locally sourced ingredients include some of North Dakota's larger commodities as well.

"We use North Dakota Mill flour in our baking, pastries and breads," Stuart says. "Our potatoes come from the Red River Valley and we get our lentils at the local BisMan food co-op."

He adds that most consumers really like to make the connection back to the land with their food.

"Most people in North Dakota who are native North Dakotans are probably only two or three

generations from living off the land," Stuart says. "There still tends to be a connection there that's not that far back."

In Fargo, The Hotel Donaldson has recently stepped away from its reputation as a fine dining establishment to adopt a more casual dining feel. Although the menu has changed and the options are more budget-friendly for consumers, Chef Ryan Shearer says they still pride themselves on quality ingredients and superlative execution of technique.

"We have always worked with

"When you see a farmer bring in a bucket of tomatoes that smell like summer, you can feel the connection not only with these people that work very hard at their craft, but also with the earth."

**Ryan Shearer**, *chef at The Hotel Donaldson*

local farmers," Shearer says. "We like to use produce grown within 100 miles of the hotel, but use plenty of smaller farms in Minnesota as well."

He adds that typically, the menu is based off of growing seasons, using ingredients such as tomatoes, microgreens, asparagus, chives, parsley, squash, onions, mushrooms, oats and more. Not only does this provide fresh food for diners, but it also teaches them

to eat within the season and understand that certain ingredients are not available year round.

"I think the majority of our customers really enjoy knowing where their food comes from," Shearer adds. "Or at least knowing it came from close by. In years to come, I would like to think that knowing where our food comes from becomes even more important."

Shearer says that one thing he appreciates most about his chef-farmer relationship is seeing the care that goes into the production process.

"It's easy to write off fresh produce when you see it come in a box off a truck," he says. "But when you see a farmer bring in a bucket of tomatoes that smell like summer, you can feel the connection not only with these people that work very hard at their craft, but also with the earth. That's something I think a lot of people have forgotten, especially in today's age."

— Rachel Bertone

Chef Stuart Tracy and his wife, Cheryl, own Pirogue Grille in Bismarck. They use local produce and proteins from North Dakota on their menu.



# A CALL TO ACTION

Neighbors help neighbors cope with extreme drought

**E**ven in the face of dire circumstances, North Dakota's farmers and ranchers stand firm together. The drought of 2017 took a strong and stubborn hold on much of the state, adversely affecting many farmers and ranchers, especially those in the western portion.

Over one-third of North Dakota experienced extreme drought and 95 percent of the state was considered at least abnormally dry.

But as steadfast as the harsh conditions were from early spring

into summer, the responses of help were even more pronounced. The extreme droughts that year may have caused upheaval and loss in the agriculture industry, but even more so, they brought to light the sense of neighbors helping neighbors.

"There was a lot of community support," says Paul Sproule, a Grand Forks farmer who helped lead the effort to assist ranchers by providing hay from the northeastern region of North Dakota that wasn't directly impacted by the drought.

"It was just a matter of people in need who didn't have anything. We had it, and it's a vital resource. I just felt led to help them out. When you're in need, you're in need."

## A Simple Phone Call

Sproule Farms, located in the fertile Red River Valley, participates in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that pays landowners to plant grass and other vegetation on environmentally sensitive sections of their land. Word got out that Sproule was involved in CRP, and





Drought relief efforts included a hay lottery, left, as well as farmers donating hay to help those in need feed their livestock.

he was soon hauling hay for feed to those ranchers in need.

“It all started with a phone call,” Sproule says. “It was from a lady who has livestock out in the western part of the state. I have no idea how she got my number. But she said, ‘I’ve heard you have some CRP (land). Would you be willing to let me come and hay it? We’ll pay you for it.’ ... I told her, ‘You can’t pay me for it, I’ll give it to you.’”

“The story of my conversation with the lady got out, probably through social media,” Sproule

says. “It just kind of created a movement, which was very good.”

Sproule ultimately worked with more than 20 ranchers, helping to coordinate the hauling of much-needed hay to western ranchers who would have seriously struggled without it.

“Hats off to our local FSA (Farm Service Agency) officer,” Sproule adds. “They worked very quickly to get things turned around.”

Others in the unaffected areas of the state pitched in as well, including the Farm Rescue organization.

### Operation Hay Lift

Farm Rescue is a nonprofit that helps family farms and ranches during times of crises such as injury, illness or natural disasters, providing planting, haying, harvesting, livestock feeding assistance, and commodity and hay hauling.

Through its program known as Operation Hay Lift, Farm Rescue ended up helping 152 families affected by the drought who also had a major injury or illness. From July 2017 through April 2018, the organization hauled 227 truckloads



Farm Rescue helped **152 families** affected by the drought who also had a major injury or illness.



From July 2017 to April 2018, Farm Rescue hauled 227 truckloads and 8,300 tons of hay over 170,000 miles.

IN 2017, OVER **ONE-THIRD** OF THE STATE EXPERIENCED EXTREME DROUGHT.



Paul Sproule, pictured with his daughters, was instrumental in leading the effort to assist struggling ranchers with hay.

and 8,300 tons of hay over 170,000 miles from not only North Dakota, but also from Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

To get the word out, Farm Rescue sent press releases to media outlets across the state and used social media.

“When we put the press release out, I knew we would get applications, but I didn’t quite anticipate how many we would get in very short order,” says Bill Gross, president and founder of Farm Rescue. “Once the word got out, we got hundreds and hundreds of applications.”

The effort took a financial toll on the nonprofit, but Gross says it was worth it.

“If these ranchers didn’t get their hay for their cattle, it would

obviously affect their livelihood and they’d have to sell off their herd or portions of their herd,” Gross says. “There would be a ripple effect economically.

“We felt it was very, very important to help these rural communities to carry out this operation – not just help the rancher in need but the communities as well.”

Farm Rescue continues to accept financial donations to help offset the cost of Operation Hay Lift. Checks can be mailed to Farm Rescue, P.O. Box 28, Horace, ND 58047, or visit [farmrescue.org](http://farmrescue.org) to make an online donation.

### State Efforts for Drought Relief

State agencies also helped in the drought relief effort. The North

Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) opened a drought hotline and interactive map; helped organize a hay lottery with the North Dakota State University Agriculture Experiment Station; and coordinated a \$1.5 million hay transportation assistance program that reimbursed eligible producers for a portion of hay transportation expenses.

Other state programs and actions included: a water supply assistance program for livestock producers; waivers for various restrictions for drivers of commercial vehicles and farm licensed vehicles transporting hay, water and livestock; lifting of hauling permit fees; drought loan programs and more.

– John McBryde

# Shop and Eat Local

Markets help consumers and producers connect

**A**cross the state, North Dakota residents enjoy easy access to locally grown and produced foods, including many that feature the Pride of Dakota label – a distinction that lets shoppers know when they’re supporting a North Dakota-based company.

In Bismarck, BisMan Community Food Co-op connects consumers and local producers, with several products on their shelves sourced from North Dakota. Open to all, the member-owned grocery store offers a broad selection of fresh produce, much of which comes from local growers, along with locally raised meats and health and wellness products. BisMan Community Food Co-op also features a deli and bakery, as well as a cafe.

“We carry several Pride of Dakota products, and we take great pride in offering our customers as much as we can that’s grown or produced in our state,” says Carmen Hoffner, general manager of BisMan Community Food Co-op. “Plus, we make grocery shopping a fun experience by having unique products available and focusing on education and community connection – that’s something you can’t find just anywhere.”

Nearby, Menoken-based Glimpse of the Prairie is part of the Pride of Dakota program, offering fresh produce and specialty products like goat milk soap and homemade flavored popcorn. Owned by Kara Winkler and her mother, Wanda Burrer, Glimpse of the Prairie operates a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) membership program and recently began offering “Farm in a Box” products that include locally sourced

foods and step-by-step recipes designed to make at-home cooking quick and easy.

“Local products are made by people who are beyond passionate about their businesses,” Winkler says. “It’s very valuable to support someone’s dream. By patronizing local companies, you’re not only being supportive, you’re also receiving high-quality products made with care.”



Red River Market in Fargo offers local fruits and veggies for consumers.

Fargo lays claim to local-food destinations like Prairie Roots Food Co-op and the Red River Market.

Working to build and foster a healthy community, Prairie Food Co-op offers a wide range of foods grown and produced in North Dakota, such as grass-fed dairy products and pastured meats from Morning Joy Farm in Mercer, and the Red River Market supplies customers with vendor-grown fruits and vegetables, vendor-produced eggs, baked goods, canned goods, honey, maple syrup, dried pasta and preserves, and vendor-made health and body-care products.

– Jessica Walker Boehm

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# THE NORTH DAKOTA NICHE

Locally grown crops emerge with a growing statewide and national interest

Prominent commodities such as corn, wheat and beef cattle are staples in North Dakota's booming agriculture industry, but other important crops have a growing impact on the local economy. From hemp seeds and oil to locally made beer and wines, products made from North Dakota's unique and specialty crops are getting national attention.

## Hops and Barley

At Souris River Brewing in Minot, locally grown hops are showcased in their plethora of beers brewed on site. These perennial vines are grown vertically, and their cones are harvested to infuse the beer with their unique flavor.

"We believe in sourcing local, buying local and delivering a good

product," says the brewery's founder, Aaron Thompson.

The brewery, which opened in 2012, has contracts with five local hops growers, sources the beef on its food menu from local ranchers, and relies on local farmers to provide barley for some of the more than 50 styles of beer on tap.

"Barley is a big crop for this state, but with the increase of more craft breweries, we're seeing that barley malted and used for a new purpose," Thompson says.

North Dakota has consistently been ranked as a top-three producer of barley since the 1930s. Souris River Brewing and others source its local barley from Two Track Malting in Bismarck. The company malts barley from local growers – a process that germinates and then dries barley

to be used for brewing or distilling – and provides it to local breweries.

Souris River makes a local IPA once a year from only North Dakota-sourced ingredients. "Sourcing ingredients from our local and regional suppliers strengthens our community's economic base and fosters goodwill between our people."

## Industrial Hemp

Industrial hemp was a predominant crop in most of the United States in the early part of the 20th century. After years of dormancy, the plant has seen a recent increase in demand. North Dakota legalized industrial hemp production in 1999 and was one of seven states to start planting industrial hemp research crops in 2015. Currently, 2,800 acres





Clockwise from top left: Souris River Brewing in Minot; cold-weather grapes; North Dakota hemp.



of industrial hemp are in active production in North Dakota, and the Department of Agriculture has an ongoing pilot program.

This hearty plant grows quickly and stands up well against weeds, and the list of products made from it is constantly growing. Hempseed and hemp oil are good sources of omega-3 fatty acids and can be used as a meat replacement. Hemp oil is also used in a wide variety of body products, and the fiber can be used for textiles. Because industrial hemp fibers are resistant to mold and ultraviolet light, they are good for home furnishing applications and carpeting.

### Cold-Weather Grapes

With long, cold winters and a short growing season, North Dakota may not seem like an

obvious grape-producing state. However grape varieties native to the state have grown along its rivers for hundreds of years, and research has gone into breeding those varieties to withstand the cold and produce delicious wine.

Many native North Dakota grapes have been bred with Concord grape varieties through programs at North Dakota State University and the University of Minnesota. These new varieties can stand the negative-40-degree winters and are harvested for wine production as well as for jams, jellies and juices.

“It is certainly a new and emerging industry,” says Randy Albrecht, president of the North Dakota Grape and Wine Association and proprietor of Wolf Creek Winery

near Coleharbor, which opened its doors in 2014. “We had our first registered grower in North Dakota in 1997 and issued our first winery license in 2002.”

Today, the state has issued 14 licenses for federally bonded wineries and cideries. Locally made wine is sold in 18 retail stores across North Dakota and distributed to 34 states through online sales.

“I really believe this industry is in its infancy and we will begin to see a significant improvement and variety in the products we produce in the coming years,” Albrecht says. “Five new wineries have emerged in the last five years and the quality of our product has already come a long way. This industry really has the potential to grow.”

– Blair Thomas



# FUELING the FUTURE

North Dakota biofuel production provides jobs,  
increases crop value

In a society on the go, cars are no longer a luxury, but a necessity, for many people. It is estimated that 2 billion motor vehicles will be in operation by 2025. For North Dakota's corn growers and ethanol producers, this continued growth means a steady increase in demand for one of the state's fastest-growing industries.

### A Sustainable Fuel

The sugars found in plants like corn can easily and relatively inexpensively be converted into clean-burning renewable alcohol fuels. These biofuels – derived from living matter rather than carbon-based energy sources like coal, oil and natural gas – offer a renewable resource that helps create jobs and increase the value of the country's corn crop.

"The ethanol industry has greatly enhanced the value of corn in North Dakota and across the U.S.," says Dale Ihry, executive director of the North Dakota Corn Utilization Council. The council works with corn farmers to increase the value of their crop, and helps educate and promote corn across the state.

In North Dakota, the ethanol industry contributes more than \$624 million annually and employs more than 1,100 people. While the ethanol industry is relatively new compared to other value-added agriculture enterprises, the infrastructure of corn growers and fuel producers, transportation, and sources of dried distillers grains for livestock feed places the state in a good position for growth in this industry.

### Local Impact

Ethanol was first produced in North Dakota in 1985, but the industry took off in 2007 when Red Trail Energy was built in Richardton. Red Trail manufactures ethanol, grinding approximately 23 million bushels of corn into 63 million gallons of ethanol and

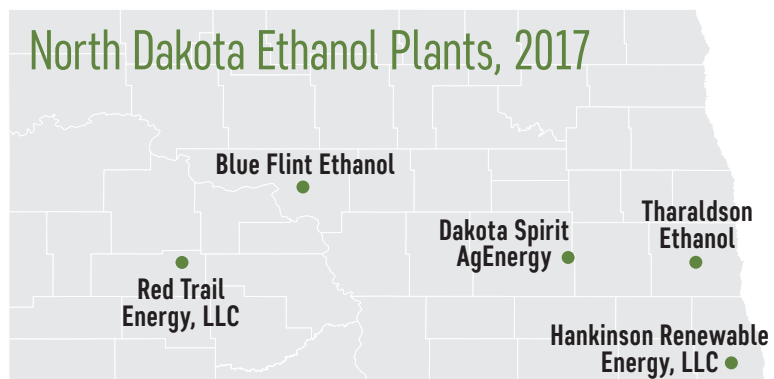
233,000 tons of byproducts including dried distillers grains, modified distillers grains, corn oil and syrup, which feed about 220,000 head of cattle.

"Much of our ethanol goes to states in the Pacific Northwest including Oregon and California, and about 14 percent goes to Montana," says Dustin Willett, chief operating officer. "Our dried distillers grains get shipped to feed lots around the country, a lot to Montana, Idaho and here in North Dakota. Our modified corn oil stays right here."

farmers within a 60-mile radius of our plant," says Ryan Thorpe, chief operating officer at Tharaldson Ethanol. "We grind about 16 million bushels of corn each year for the 185 million gallons of ethanol we produce, which utilizes about 17 percent of North Dakota corn.

"In our ten years of production, we've never had to import corn from outside of North Dakota."

Tharaldson exports its biofuels and byproducts around the state, to the southern U.S., and internationally to countries like China and India.



Red Trail has a \$350 million economic impact on the state and the recent update of coal-fired boilers to natural gas has increased production by 10 million gallons per year.

"We run a lot cleaner and are much more efficient," Willett says.

### A Booming Industry

Since Red Trail was built, four more ethanol plants began operations in North Dakota, including Tharaldson Ethanol plant at Casselton. Collectively, the five plants produce 520 million gallons of ethanol each year. With 160 to 180 million bushels of corn used by these plants each year, nearly half of the state's corn crop is used in biofuel production.

"We buy most of our corn from

"Demand for motorized fuel continues to grow at a constant rate, particularly in areas like China and India that have such rapidly expanding populations," Thorpe says. "We expect the North Dakota industry will continue to grow with it."

### The Future Is Bright

Advancements in production technology and continued education about the importance of cleaner and alternative fuel sources help ensure the future of the biofuel industry.

"I see continuous improvements every day," Thorpe says. "Yields increase, costs decrease. We are learning to make more with less and at a cheaper cost."

– Blair Thomas



# FINDING SUCCESS

How one woman's determination fueled a company's international growth one relationship at a time

**W**hether dealing with a top trading partner like Canada and Mexico, or a hot new market in Africa, North Dakota's leading ag businesses know that contracts get signed because of dynamic personal relationships just as much as for the commodities themselves. But what exporters large, small and new to the scene may not know can be learned by following one local businesswoman's journey to connect North Dakota commodities with buyers worldwide.

## Building Relationships Across the Globe

In Garrison, North Dakota, Beverly Flaten is vice president of international marketing for JM Grain, a company that buys and sells grains like chickpeas, lentils and green peas, and has been exporting these products internationally for over 16 years. During her tenure, she has worked in 30-plus different countries with the motto of always putting the relationship first and letting

business naturally progress from there.

"One of the first and most important things to remember in every situation and every country is that we are people first with unique and special circumstances," Flaten says. "All people want is the best for their children, their families, their communities, and by showing respect for differences in culture, traditions and faith, I find forming connections to be easily accomplished."

As many international buyers

As Vice President of International Marketing for JM Grain, Beverly Flaten has learned that relationships and respect of culture plays a large role in business.

come from family-owned ag businesses, Flaten has found that they respect and appreciate that JM Grain is also owned and operated by family. Instead of focusing on differences, global partnerships are made stronger through similarities, such as sharing the common struggles, challenges and hard work it takes to be successful, particularly in export markets.

“I truly believe genuine respect goes a long way,” Flaten says. “No matter where I am in the world, I honor their customs and traditions by the way I behave and dress. Each interaction adds to the richness of understanding, and building a community between our country and theirs through the business we do.”

As a woman, Flaten faces the added challenge of trading with countries that are traditionally male-dominated, but she does not shy away from who she is.

“They understand that I am a grandmother, mother, wife and sister first, and yet, they respect the knowledge and understanding I have of the agricultural markets, including growing our products, processing and shipping to their country,” Flaten says. “I have been so graciously received in all cultures of our world.” Although, that does not mean she hasn’t faced unique situations because of her gender.

She recalls, “I was in Africa and met with an elderly chieftain who had had seven wives. One of them had died almost a year ago so his traditional tribal clothing was still one of mourning. He asked if I would be his next wife and then he could end his mourning period. I smiled and told him I was already married. He shook his head and said, ‘Why should that matter? I am the king.’ I told him that in our country, things like that sort of mattered. He just smiled and said, ‘Well that’s too bad. Do you have any peas that we could buy?’

---

## Top 10 Export Countries from North Dakota

1. Canada
2. Mexico
3. Australia
4. China
5. Germany
6. Czech Republic
7. Japan
8. Russia
9. United Kingdom
10. Ukraine



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“One of the first and most important things to remember in every situation and every country is that we are people first with unique and special circumstances.”

**Beverly Flaten**, *vice president of international marketing, JM Grain*

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And we went on from there.”

On the other hand, in Cuba, she was able to establish a relationship with the only woman adviser in Fidel Castro’s inner circle. To this day, Flaten believes that when they sold pinto beans to Cuba, their woman-to-woman dealings were the reason payments were received.

These positive experiences have left Flaten both exhilarated and optimistic, knowing that agricultural exports from North Dakota – while critical locally and nationally – are also much-needed around the world.

### Encouraging Others to Find Success

As a business in a small rural community, JM Grain has worked with several people over the years that have been able to stay in their home communities while still

expanding their skill levels. One such story is that of a young, single mom who got a position, continued to grow professionally within the company and now has traveled the world.

Flaten’s advice to other women in agricultural trade also translates well to all fellow exporters looking for growth abroad: “Never, ever give up,” Flaten says. “Consider each mistake or failure a learning opportunity. Develop resilience, patience and respect for all people. And above all, form the relationships first and everything else will follow. Governments and their policies swirl around us, but it really just comes down to people one-on-one, company-to-company, doing business together.”

– Keri Ann Beazell

# What's Best for THE BEEES




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How a centuries-old partnership is seeking new answers to honey bee health

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**J**ohn Miller is a fourth-generation beekeeper who discovered a love for bees at the age of six. Today, he manages Miller Honey Farms, a thriving operation that produces some of North Dakota's finest honey.

But the bees that call Miller Honey Farms home have more than one job to do.

For a few months out of the year, Miller's bees travel to California and Washington to pollinate almond and apple orchards.

## Tale as Old as Time

"The partnership between landowners and beekeepers is as old as beekeeping and agriculture," Miller says. "For hundreds of years

in America, farmers have welcomed beekeepers onto their property because they recognize bees provide beneficial services for all the stone fruits, vine crops, legumes, fruits, vegetables and nuts."

Similarly, beekeepers have understood for years that without a farmer to husband the crops, honey bees would starve.

"When we go grocery shopping, we go to the store," Miller says. "When a honey bee alights from the hive, she's also grocery shopping. But unlike us, she's flying in the local landscape."

## A New Era

It all sounds charming and romantic, harkening back to the

days when our ancestors lived exclusively off the land. But today, things are a little different – both for the average American and the humble honey bee.

Between the increasing acres of row crops and loss of conservation lands, North Dakota has seen a sharp increase in hive mortality and decrease in per-hive honey production. And it's impacting more than commercial beekeepers.

Walking into a grocery store, consumers are immediately confronted with rows upon rows of food. They can fill your cart in minutes. The honey bee doesn't share this luxury.

"Honey bees have an intimate and personal relationship with the supply of food in their

neighborhood,” Miller says.

While a field of corn may fill the bellies of hungry humans, it offers no nutrition to a honey bee. Instead of stopping to fill her grocery cart, so to speak, she’s forced to move on – and she’ll continue searching until she finds the nutrients she needs to thrive.

“Americans aren’t confronted with obstacles like that,” Miller says. “Our food is cheap, readily available and in supersize abundance.”

Because honey bees are critical to crop pollination, their decline impacts agriculture in the western territories and the rest of the world.

### The Bee Integrated Project

Fortunately, beekeepers like Miller and Zac Browning, owner of Browning’s Honey, are actively involved in turning the tide with groups like the Bee Integrated Project (BIP).

“We’ve been involved in the Bee Integrated Project since its founding,” Browning says. “BIP is the first successful effort in North Dakota to bring science to the bee yard.”

The group brings together beekeepers and landowners to support bee health with better science and management practices. One of the most important factors, Browning says, is habitat.

“Diverse natural forage is the most basic component in maintaining healthy, productive hives,” Browning says. “Honey bees love sweet clover, alfalfa, sunflowers and buckwheat.”

Partnering beekeepers with farmers who are invested in improving hive conditions through better agricultural practices gives the honey bee a good shot at making a comeback.

### A Lasting Partnership

Also involved in the Bee Integrated Project, Miller says the real champion is the farmer who agrees to take a parcel of his land

out of normal production to further hive health research.

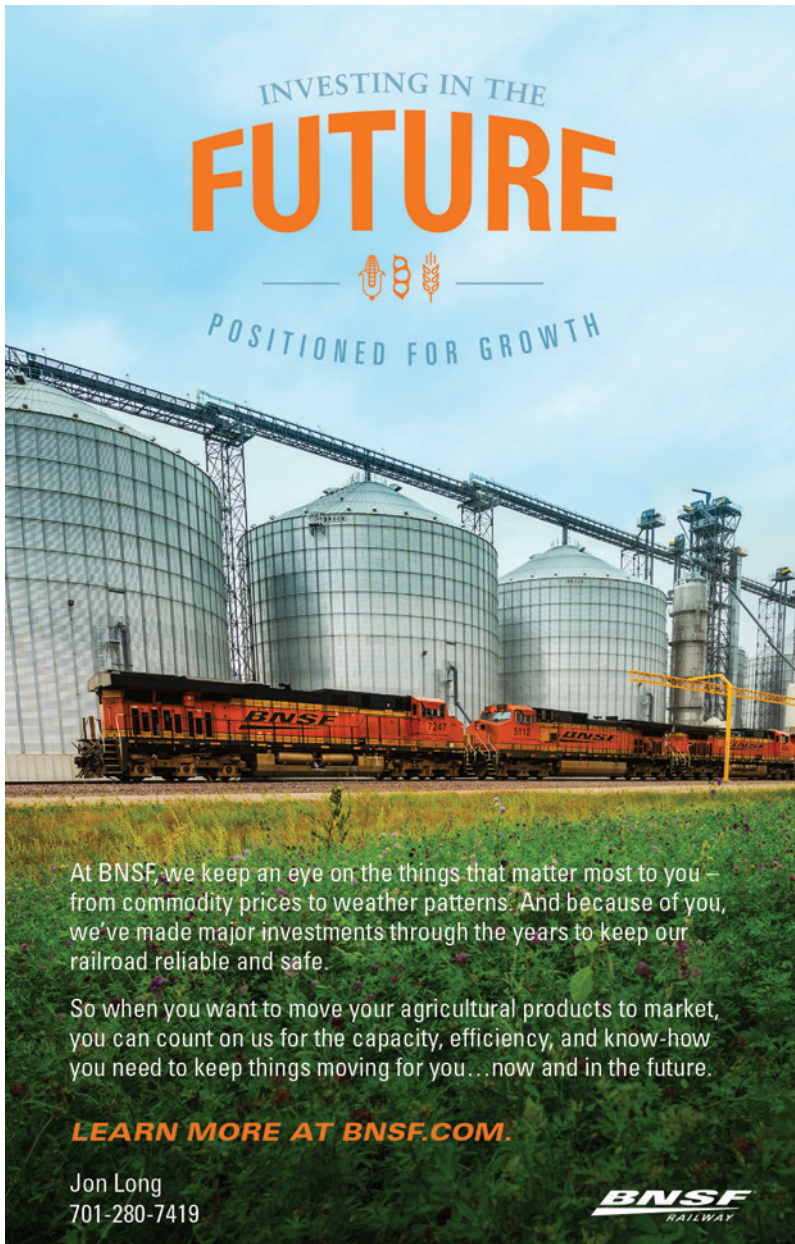
This age-old camaraderie between beekeepers and farmers gives the western honey bee a fighting chance to not only survive, but to thrive for years to come.

“There’s a link between beekeepers who leave plenty of honey in the hive for winter,” Miller says, “and the farmers who leave some crop in the field for the wildlife.”

– Kayla Walden

## Honey bees support billions of dollars of U.S. and Canadian agriculture through pollination services.

Source: Honey Bee Health Coalition



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# Women at WORK

Female farmers are a driving force in North Dakota agriculture

Farming has traditionally been seen as a man's profession, but in the last few decades, that view is shifting. Women have become a driving force in agriculture, both in North Dakota and across the U.S. Whether on the farm or out in their communities, women have been adapting to the challenges and excelling in their agricultural roles.

Take Mardee Reich of Zap in west-central North Dakota. Her role in agriculture began after she married her husband, Jack, who worked on his family's angus cattle ranch.

"It's my husband's family's ranch, and goes back at least 60 years," Reich says. "We got married in 1996 and decided to partner up with Jack's dad. Our registered operation started with 20 head and grew into what it is now. My introduction came when I married Jack. I was very hands-on with him and learned along the way."

In 2012, Reich's role changed dramatically after tragedy struck. Her husband and 10-year-old son, Vander, were killed in a car

accident. Mardee was with them, but survived, and now runs the ranch with her other son and daughter.

"I went from being the support with Jack and doing what I could, to basically being at the forefront," Reich says.

She says that along with simply getting back on her feet after the

Reich says that one thing she's certain of from her time in agriculture is that the agricultural community is extremely tight-knit.

"There are no better people than those in agriculture. And women have a huge amount to offer," Reich says. "Sometimes they get looked over, but they are a huge support, even if they're not in the forefront.

**"Women have a passion and desire to make what they have better. We have to prove ourselves every day not only to the community, but to ourselves."**

**Misty Steeke**, *farmer and ag educator*

accident, some challenges included assuring people she had the same business principles that Jack had.

"We have a production sale every February and Jack usually dealt with all the buyers. People had to know that, going forward, it would be with me and that I had the same principles Jack had," she says.

They're behind their husbands and keeping everything together at home. It's very much a team effort."

Misty Steeke also knows the important role of women in agriculture, as she has been a part of the industry her entire life.

"I was born and raised on a farm southwest of Rhame, where I reside

Mardee Reich operates her husband's family's ranch in Zap, North Dakota, with her daughter, Kaydee, and son, Will. Bottom right: Misty Steeke has been involved in agriculture and 4-H her whole life.

Number of women farmers  
in North Dakota:

# 11,332

Learn more about  
women in agriculture  
at [NDagriculture.com](http://NDagriculture.com).



13-year-old Kaydee Reich helps  
on her family's ranch in Zap.

currently with my husband, Trevor, and four kids," Steeke says. "We have a cow/calf operation consisting of 450 head. We also have 200 head of ewes, 40 head of boar goats and sometimes raise butcher pigs that we sell to local consumers. We also raise forage crops, small grains, corn and sunflowers."

Along with working on the farm, Steeke is an agricultural education teacher at Scranton Public School, teaching grades eight through 12.

She says much of her love of agriculture can be attributed to her parents, who allowed her to be involved from a young age.

"I have been teaching agricultural education for 16 years and have been involved

in 4-H for over 20 years as a leader. I was the oldest of three kids and my parents had to rely on me to help with operating the farm to make a living," she says.

As a woman, Steeke says that agriculture has taught her responsibility, and the women in her life, including her mother and grandmother, have shown strength, making her a stronger agriculturalist in turn.

"Women have passion and desire to make what they have better. We have to prove ourselves every day not only to the community, but to ourselves," Steeke says. "Being a farm or ranch mom or wife doesn't always stop at the breakfast table, but in our daily responsibilities of relieving our families from daily tasks or chores. If we all take part in knowing and understanding the work that is sacrificed and knowledge that is gained, we can all be better agriculturalists."

— Rachel Bertone

Female farmers  
in North Dakota  
contribute  
\$136.5 million to  
the economy.



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ARE WOMEN

PHOTO: STEVE WOOT

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For more information about CommonGround North Dakota, please email Suzanne Wolf at [swolf@ndsoybean.org](mailto:swolf@ndsoybean.org)

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