



Northarvest

# BEAN GROWER

SPRING 2024 **AGWEEK**

## Beans around the world

NBGA members go on dry bean-focused trade missions

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A LOOK AT THE AGRICULTURAL FERTILIZER RESEARCH AND EDUCATION COUNCIL

PG. 12

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Fargo, ND 58102

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### PUBLISHER

**Katie Pinke**  
701-261-9494  
kpinke@agweek.com

### EDITOR

**Jenny Schlecht**  
701-595-0425  
jschlecht@agweek.com

### SPECIAL SECTIONS COORDINATOR

**Ann Bailey**  
218-779-8093  
abailey@agweek.com

### LAYOUT DESIGN

**Jamie Holte**

### ADVERTISING

ads@agweek.com

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Dry bean producer Cordell Huebsch visited India and other locations on trade missions to learn about trade and to spread the message of dry beans from the Northarvest region. Contributed



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Sharing hopes for a cooperative spring



**Eric Jorgenson**  
President,  
Northarvest  
Bean Growers  
Association

Hello, fellow members of the Northarvest Bean Growers Association,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and we're all looking at what we hope will be a cooperative spring. Before I go into this Spring 2024 issue, I'd thank you for your support and dedication to growing dry beans. The world will always need to keep food in their pantries and on their

kitchen tables. We're grateful for your efforts, and we do our best to make sure we're putting in the hours to support our growers with ours.

In this issue of Northarvest BeanGrower, our partners at Agweek do a great job covering an awful lot in these pages. There's information on the \$35 million in contracts recently awarded by USDA-Agricultural Marketing Service for Dry Packed & Canned dry beans under Section 32, which is a permanent appropriation to support commodities that were not supported by other mandatory farm support programs. There's also sharing some positive developments with USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant program and Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council (better known as AFREC). These are absolutely critical for our industry and help greatly increase funding for bean-related research projects.

In these pages, you can also learn about some of the current outreach efforts from our board members and staff, including trade missions around the world as well as marketing efforts regionally here in North Dakota. I'd like to thank Cordell Huebsch and Dexter Cronquist for going so far to represent dry bean growers, as well as NBGA Executive Director Mitch Coulter for traveling to Hope, North Dakota, to speak with the Marketing Club. NBGA likes to continue to build and strengthen industry relationships around the world for the good of dry beans, but we sure like being able to make sure we're connected at home, too.

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# Northarvest Directory

## Executive Director

**Mitchell Coulter**  
4844 Rocking Horse  
Circle S, Suite 2  
Fargo, ND 58104  
701-365-5103

## Marketing and Communications Director

**Jed Brazier**  
4844 Rocking Horse  
Circle S, Suite 2  
Fargo, ND 58104  
701-365-5101

## Finance Director

**Jennifer Hansen**  
4844 Rocking Horse  
Circle S, Suite 2  
Fargo, ND 58104  
701-365-5102

## NORTHARVEST BEAN GROWERS ASSOCIATION

### Garrett Thompson

District 1 - Director  
728 E. 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Grafton, ND 58237  
701-360-1259

### Tony Richards

District 4 - Treasurer  
13273 4<sup>th</sup> St. SE  
Hope, ND 58046  
701-430-3287

### Eric Samuelson

District 7 - Director  
30966 280<sup>th</sup> St. SW  
Crookston, MN 56716  
218-289-0310

### Dexter Cronquist

District 2 - Director  
400 Eastern Ave.  
Gilby, ND 58235  
218-791-6260

### Joe Mauch

District 5 - Vice President  
8753 167<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE  
Hankinson, ND 58041  
701-640-1687

### Cordell Huebsch

District 8 - Secretary  
38132 470<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
New York Mills, MN 56757  
218-841-2364

### Eric Jorgenson

District 3 - President  
6509 55<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE  
Leeds, ND 58346  
701-739-6189

### Leann Schafer

District 6 - Director  
5810 19<sup>th</sup> St. NE  
New Rockford, ND 58356  
701-847-2568

### Jeff Kosek

District 9 - Director  
18766 110<sup>th</sup> St.  
Brownton, MN 55312  
320-510-1828

## NORTH DAKOTA DRY BEAN COUNCIL

### David Wieler

District 1 - Council Member  
12965 County 1  
Walhalla, ND 58282  
701-265-2883

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212 S Park St.  
Northwood, ND 58267  
218-779-6498

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District 2 - Treasurer  
8424 64<sup>th</sup> St. NE  
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701-739-7744

### Joshua Ihry

District 4 - Council Member  
P.O. Box 161, 401 Bates Ave.  
Hope, ND 58046  
701-261-6712

### Justin Retterath

District 6 - Council Member  
P.O. Box 645, 2626 8<sup>th</sup> St.  
Washburn, ND 58577  
701-315-0082

## MINNESOTA DRY BEAN RESEARCH & PROMOTION COUNCIL

### Jacob Faugstad

Area 1 - Chair  
39157 310<sup>th</sup> St. SW  
Climax, MN 56523  
701-215-2438

### Ryan Ammermann

Area 3 - Vice Chair  
3085 140<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE  
Clara City, MN 56222  
320-295-8486

### Mark Dombeck

Area 5 - Council member  
48041 County Road 13  
Perham, MN 56573  
218-371-9527

### Norm Krause

Area 2 - Treasurer  
21608 Briarwood Lane  
Nisswa, MN 56468  
218-296-0920

### Dan Ohden

Area 4 - Secretary  
15650 120<sup>th</sup> St. SW  
Raymond, MN 56282  
320-894-6411

## NORTHARVEST COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Norm Krause, Mark Dombeck, Jacob Faugstad, Karl Jodock, Jeff Kosek, Joe Mauch, Dan Ohden, Ryan Ammermann, David Wieler, Eric Samuelson, Ex Officio Eric Jorgenson

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*NOTE: The Northarvest Board President is Ex-officio member of all committees*

## ‘Getting it Right’ series offers multitude of dry edible bean management lessons By Jenny Schlecht | Agweek

North Dakota dry bean farmers account for 37% of the total dry bean production in the United States, Northarvest Bean Growers Executive Director Mitch Coulter said to introduce the 2024 “Getting it Right: Dry Bean Production” series presented by North Dakota State University Extension. Neighboring Minnesota adds 18% of the production, meaning more than half of the U.S.’s dry beans come from the Northarvest region.

Given that output of production, Coulter said outreach on topics that can improve dry bean growing and marketing is vital.

“It’s really important to the Northarvest Bean Growers Association and our 2,400 farm members across North Dakota and Minnesota,” he said.

Along with introducing the Getting it Right series, Coulter also mentioned two other projects NDSU is working on for the dry bean industry: a life cycle assessment and an economic contribution report.

“Those two projects should separate us from other bean regions in the U.S.,” he said, noting the information could make the region one of the preferred vendors in the world for dry beans.

The 2024 Getting it Right series includes a total of seven videos on bean production, including the introduction video from Coulter. You can find the playlist on the Carrington Research Extension Center YouTube channel. Here is a look at what you can learn from the other videos:

### **Variety Performance and Agronomy**

Greg Endres, NDSU Extension agronomist at the Carrington Research Extension Center, talked about NDSU’s Dry Bean Variety Trials and Selection Guide. The guide features 20



**The 2024 Getting it Right series included information about planting dry beans into rye cover crops. Contributed / North Dakota State University**

*“Don’t go into debt trying to get that last pound of beans out of it, because I don’t think you need to.”*

**- Dave Franzen,  
NDSU Extension soils specialist**



pages of information, with site-by-site detailed listings of how varieties performed at locations across the state. Growers can compare days to flowering, days to maturity, yield, seed weight and more, with some sites offering information about height, disease and other factors.

Endres discussed research into plant establishment factors that can impact yields, including plant population, seed inoculation, fertilization methods, planting time and more. He also delved into tillage methods in dry edible beans. Conventional tillage, he said, can lead to increased soil erosion and plant damage in the event of wind events. The rate of conservation tillage methods, like no till, strip till or minimum till, did not change much from 2018 to 2022, according to grower surveys, but he said research is showing significant advantages in adopting those methods.

Endres also talked about using winter rye preceding a dry edible bean crop and what it means for soil erosion, soil moisture and weed control, the effects on plants with post-emergence rolling, and row spacing and plant population decisions.

### **Soil Considerations and Plant Nutrition**

Dave Franzen, NDSU Extension soils specialist, explained research that has been done on fertilizer needs of dry beans.

For nitrogen, Franzen said he tells growers they have three choices: do nothing, use an inoculant or fertilize with about 100 pounds per acre. All three could be the right decision given different scenarios and different soil, he said. He gave research result examples to how nitrogen fertilizer impacted yield in different scenarios, mostly in University of Minnesota trials. In some cases, fertilizing with nitrogen did not increase yield or did not increase yield more than using less nitrogen.

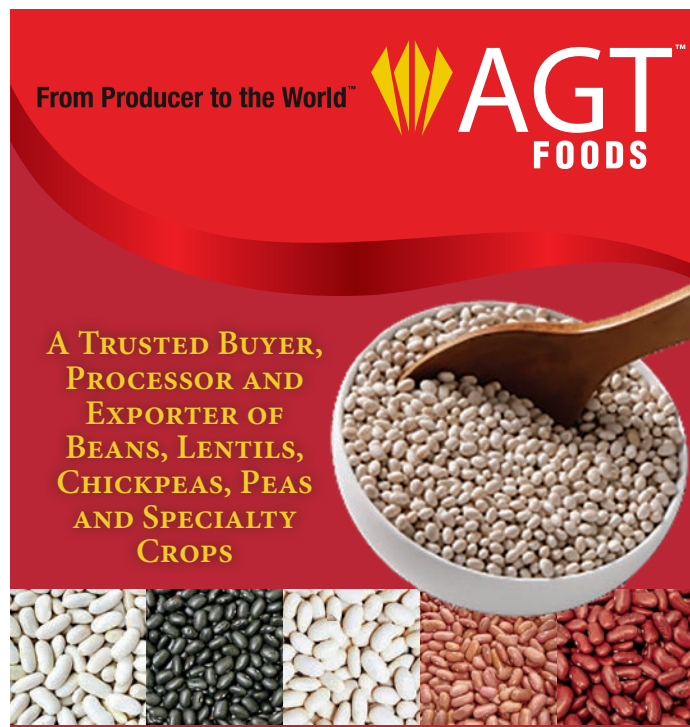
“Don’t go into debt trying to get that last pound of beans out of it, because I don’t think you need to,” he said.

His takeaways about other fertilizer components: Potassium recommendations are based on old data, sulfur and zinc need more research, and inoculants need to be studied more to address the disconnect between what’s being marketed about them and their ability to compete with what’s already in the soil.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**



**Using too much fertilizer on dry edible beans does not seem to pay off, according to NDSU Extension and University of Minnesota Extension research. Erin Ehnle Brown / Grand Vale Creative LLC**



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# Getting it right

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Franzen also discussed the issue of salinity and said beans are highly intolerant of saline soils. He recommends farmers screen their fields carefully for saline areas and not plant beans in those areas. Planting an entire field of beans when small portions won't grow is not a good economic decision, he said. Instead, he said, put oats or barley in those places that are particularly saline while planting beans to the other areas and "actually make some profit from it."

## Market Update

Frayne Olson, NDSU Extension crop economist and marketing specialist, told producers about the state of the dry bean markets. North Dakota production was down 14% in 2023 as compared to 2022, and U.S. production was down 7%.

That means that, depending on acreage and production this year, there is an expectation that supplies of pinto beans and navy beans could get tight.

Olson discussed the main markets for pintos and navies. Both have strong domestic markets, especially pintos for which domestic sales make up about three quarters of demand. But both also have regular markets elsewhere that tend to be variable depending on prices, infrastructure and shipping, and their own crop outlooks.

Olson advised that prices for dry edible beans tend to stay stable until around planting season, when markets may have to bid for acres. However, he said beans tend to not get priced too high as too many acres planted to beans could mean oversupply that could hurt the market down the road.

## Weed Management

Joe Ikley, NDSU Extension weed specialist, explained changes to herbicide labels for dry edible beans, reviewed herbicide research and explained research on the impact of rolling beans on weeds.

The major change for beans was the approved usage of Dual Magnum for post emergence. Ikley said the label for Dual Magnum indicates use in dry beans for pre-emergence and allows use post-emergence "after the first trifoliolate stage." While the label does not

indicate an end date or stage for post-emergence use, Ikley indicated in the weed guide that it should be used "up to flowering."

"Just for a crop safety standpoint, we want to make sure once we're flowering, hopefully that dual magnum is already on if we decide to use that," he said.

Ikley also said research shows that using a residual herbicide when rolling ground with beans is essential in stopping weeds that may get worse from soil compaction.

## Disease Management

Malaika Ebert, NDSU assistant professor, and Sam Markell, NDSU professor, discussed dry bean disease management in separate sessions.

Ebert explained how the 2023 dry bean disease survey went. The survey included scouting for root rot, bacterial diseases, white mold, rust and anthracnose. The 2023 survey found root rot, which is commonly sighted during surveys, Ebert said. The survey also showed a high number of common blight, brown spot and halo blight, which are bacterial diseases. There also were some plants that had white mold found in the 2023 survey, but the number of fields it was found in was not high. There was no rust or anthracnose found.

Ebert also discussed different types of fusarium and how they respond to treatment, and the importance of identifying bacterial diseases and screening varieties for their levels of resistance to them.

Markell talked about white mold and soybean cyst nematodes in dry beans.

Markell focused on fungicide timing, based on research done by researcher Michael Wunsch, on white mold treatment.

He gave a few takeaways from Wunsch's research:

- When using a single application and the canopy is open, delay application until 70 to 85% of plants have pin pods.
- When using two applications and the canopy is open, delay the first application

until 50 to 70% of plants have pin pods, and follow with a second application 10 to 14 days later.

- When using a single application and the canopy is closed, delay application until 60 to 80% of plants have pin pods.
- When using two applications and the canopy is closed, delay the first application until 10 to 20% of plants have pin pods, and follow with a second application 10 to 14 days later.


Markell said it's also important to increase droplet size as the canopy closes, that it makes little difference in research whether 10 gallons per acre or 25 gallons per acre were applied, and that there are multiple effective fungicides.

Markell also discussed soybean cyst nematodes, which impact soybeans and dry edible beans. The nematodes move with soil, and they have spread from the southern United States since the 1950s.

Markell said intensive sampling funded by the North Dakota Soybean Council has identified hot spots for SCN in North Dakota to be along the eastern counties, though positive tests have been returned from numerous parts of the state.

He recommends sampling for SCN near harvest time. The best places to sample are around field entrances and shelter belts, and tests should be dug 6 to 8 inches below ground, since SCN feeds on roots.

Management options right now for SCN in dry edible beans include using crop rotation and genetic tolerance. Crop rotation is very important, Markell said, and since there are more management tools for SCN in soybeans, working toward controlling SCN in soybeans will help with control in dry beans, too. On the genetics side, Markell said NDSU researcher Guiping Yan has been studying genetic resistance to SCN. So far, no dry edible bean varieties are completely resistant, but none are completely susceptible, either. There are varying degrees of tolerance in varieties used in the state.

Seed treatments for SCN are not yet available for dry edible beans, he said. 

# 3 board members reelected to Northarvest Bean Growers Association board

By Michael Johnson | Agweek

Three board members were reelected to serve on the Northarvest Bean Growers Association board during their annual election in January 2024.

Here's a brief look at those reelected board members.

## Garrett Thompson

Garrett Thompson was reelected to his second term on the board. He is from Grafton, North Dakota, in District 1.

Thompson grew up farming but started his own operation in 2010. His three main crops are dry beans, wheat and sugarbeets, but he also dabbles in corn, canola and sunflowers.

In his second term, he looks to continue to make crop insurance work for producers.

## Justin Retterath

Justin Retterath was reelected to his fourth term on the board. He lives in Washburn, North Dakota, in District 6. Retterath grows spring wheat, pinto beans and soybeans on about 5,500 acres. Retterath currently serves on the education and sponsorship & the marketing & communication committees.

Retterath looks to continue to see improvements in the market for beans domestically and abroad. He said he's looking for 2024 to be a very big production year for

dry beans under the current grain price crunch.

## Jeff Kosek

Jeff Kosek was reelected to his second term as a director on the Northarvest Bean Growers Association board. He is from Brownton, Minnesota, in District 9.

Kosek grows black beans and dark red kidneys on about 1,000 acres with his wife and son. He got his start in dry beans in 1988 with navy beans. Kosek looks forward to continuing work to improve crop insurance for producers. He said another goal in the coming year is to promote beans through growth in food aid and school lunches. NBGA



**Garret Thompson, Grafton, North Dakota, farmer.**  
Contributed / Northarvest Bean Growers



**Justin Retterath, Washburn, North Dakota, farmer.**  
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**Jeff Kosek, Borwnton, Minnesota, farmer.**  
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Mayville, ND – Keaton Flanagan  
Phone: 701-786-2997  
Mobile: 701-331-2615  
kflanagan@kelleybean.com

Oakes, ND – Deon Maasjo  
Phone: 701-742-3219  
Mobile: 701-678-4384  
dmaasjo@kelleybean.com

Perham, MN – Dave Hartmann  
Office: 218-346-2360  
Mobile: 218-841-1701  
dhartmann@kelleybean.com

Cavalier, ND – Curt Kirking  
Mobile: 701-520-0116  
ckirking@kelleybean.com

Hatton, ND – Dean Nelson  
Phone: 701-543-3000  
Mobile: 701-238-5228  
dnelson@kelleybean.com

Regional Manager – John Bartsch  
Mobile: 612-759-5868  
jbartsch@kelleybean.com

Perham, MN – Dale Shultz  
Mobile: 218-371-1443

# Dave Franzen

## Dave Franzen prepares to retire after a long career improving North Dakota soils

By Ann Bailey | Agweek

FARGO, N.D. — The health and fertility of the soil underneath Dave Franzen's feet has been top of mind for him for nearly 50 years, initially in the private sector and then at a public university.

In a few months, Franzen will close out his career of conducting soils research and teaching farmers about nutrient management and nurturing the soil.

Franzen, North Dakota State University Extension soils specialist, will retire on Aug. 2, 2024.

He has worked as NDSU Extension soils specialist since June 1994. Before that, Franzen worked for 18 years in the private sector as an agronomist and manager in the retail fertilizer business in east-central Illinois.

Franzen's expertise in soils issues and his ability to advise farmers about crop production topics, including fertilizer application, helped land him the job with NDSU Extension, he said.

Though he didn't grow up on a farm — instead, in the Chicago suburb of Joliet, Illinois — Franzen's soils classes and research at the University of Illinois-Urbana, where he earned his undergraduate, master's and doctorate degrees, gave him a strong background in agricultural crops production. Meanwhile, he enjoyed talking to his farmer customers, a skill that was important in his job at NDSU Extension, which emphasizes education and outreach.

"I hit the ground running," Franzen said. "The first summer I rode around a lot with Duane Berglund and Jim Helm."

Berglund, a broadleaf crop agronomist, and Helm, a small grains agronomist, told him about spring wheat, sunflower and dry bean production — crops with which Franzen wasn't familiar

"Except for corn and soybean I knew nothing. I just bent their ear and they talked to me," he said.

Meanwhile, he learned about sugarbeet production from Al Cattenah, a sugarbeet agronomist.

"Just question after question about 'When does it grow in the ground?,' crops, production," Franzen said.



**NDSU Extension soils specialist Dave Franzen, left, stands in front of a field of corn with Brady Goettl, who will become a soils specialist in May 2024, just months prior to Franzen's planned retirement.**

*Contributed*

In the fall of 1994 Franzen studied the efficacy of applying urea in the fall and winter and researched different sizes of grid sampling.

One of the things Franzen learned early in his job at NDSU Extension is that the soils vary vastly in North Dakota from Illinois where they are fairly uniform.

Franzen used the precision agriculture skills that he had learned at his previous job in the Illinois fertilizer industry to develop zone sampling in North Dakota, over the years using funding from grants, including from the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to study it.



Now zone sampling in North Dakota, which makes site-specific fertilizer applications possible, has replaced grid sampling and is the most used method.

The knowledge that soils' nutrient needs were dependent on a variety of factors, such as topography, led Franzen to do research on whether yield-based nitrogen fertilizer recommendations needed to be updated to reflect his findings.

They did, and during his career in NDSU Extension he updated the nitrogen recommendations for crops including corn, spring wheat, durum and sunflowers.

"Pretty much everything has been overhauled," Franzen said.

Franzen also updated nitrogen recommendations for dry beans, advising farmers that they don't need to add inoculants to the crop if their soil is in good condition — not salty, not stressed and has grown the

crop successfully in the past. First-time dry bean farmers and farmers whose soil has shown that their yields are lower than optimal should apply inoculants or nitrogen fertilizer, Franzen recommends.

Franzen believes that applying fertilizer efficiently is beneficial for both farmers and the environment.

Brady Goettl, who will begin working as NDSU Extension soils specialist May 16, 2024, plans to emphasize the importance of that balance.

Goettl wants to ensure that the recommendations he makes will help farmers maximize crop production and at the same time will not harm the environment. For example, he plans to conduct research in nutrient management strategies such as planting cover crops and applying livestock manure.

"Right now there aren't a lot of recommendations for using manure," he said.

It is important to research ways to improve soil fertility that are alternatives to synthetic fertilizers because there is increasing pressure on farmers to reduce their use, Goettl said, noting that is already an issue in Europe.

There the countries' governments are implementing rules about fertilizer use that aren't always backed by scientific evidence.

Goettl, who will graduate from NDSU with a doctorate in soil science on May 11, 2024, looks forward to starting his Extension position several days later and working with Franzen for a few months before Franzen's retirement.

Franzen's expertise in soil science, connection to farmers and knowledge of NDSU Extension will help Goettl with the transition from student to specialist.

Franzen also is looking forward to seeing Goettl make that transition.

"It's exciting to see the next generation come up," he said. **NBGA**

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# Midwest Dry Bean Coalition elects 2024 officers

By Kennedy Tesch | Agweek

The Midwest Dry Bean Coalition recently elected new officers for 2024 to lead the new organization. The group aims to advocate and help identify better markets for dry bean producers.

"Our primary goal is to expand the usage and demand for beans grown in our region," Midwest Dry Bean Coalition President John Berthold said. "Food banks, school nutrition programs, things like that. Just trying to increase awareness of beans in our region."

Jacob Faugstad, secretary and treasurer of the Midwest Dry Bean Coalition, says that this new organization comes at a time when many felt that it was necessary to come together to form a united voice on issues regarding pipelines, market share and carbon scores as they become important topics in agriculture.

"It's things like that, that were just making it evident that we had to get together and work together," Faugstad said.

One goal of the board is to conduct a full life cycle assessment of Minnesota and North Dakota dry beans.

"That just looks at management practices of farmers, the energy efficiencies, and then that can get your carbon score for the North Dakota and Minnesota crop," Faugstad said.



**The Midwest Dry Bean Coalition hopes to advocate for and identify better markets for dry edible beans.** Ann Bailey / Agweek

Another priority on the group's agenda is to advocate for dry beans to have a higher ranking in the government's school lunch program as guidelines were recently changed from offering three cups of dry beans a week down to 1 ½ cups.

"We just thought that we needed a voice to say, you know, dry beans are good for you. We have a good story to tell, we just thought we could have a bigger voice together," Faugstad said.

The group is also working with North Dakota State University's economics department to do a complete economic analysis study of dry beans in Minnesota and North Dakota to help give the region a better understanding of the economic impact of the dry bean industry.

"It's the type of organization that our industry has been trying to put in place for more than 30 years where we have a cooperation between the growers side and the private business side," Midwest Dry Bean Coalition vice president Dylan Karley said. "It's great to see that we finally got it together and really looking forward to seeing what we can do with this organization."

Berthold will serve as the president of the board for 2024 and is currently the president of Green Valley Bean Company. He grew up in Mayville, North Dakota, and graduated from North Dakota State University with a degree in agriculture economics.

Karley will serve as the vice president of the board for 2024 and is from Johnstown, North

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Dakota. Karley is a dry bean farmer and current manager of Johnstown Bean Company and North Central Commodities, pinto and black bean processors based in Johnstown, North Dakota. He also serves as a board member for the North Central Bean Dealers Association and a delegate to the United States Dry Bean Council.

Faugstad will serve as secretary and treasurer of the board for 2024 and is from Fisher, Minnesota, where he grows black and pinto beans.

Dan Fuglesten will serve as the dealer at large and Tony Richards will serve as the grower at large for the 2024 board. [NBGA](#)



**John Berthold is the owner of Green Valley Bean Co. in Park Rapids, Minnesota, and a founding member of Midwest Dry Bean Coalition. Contributed / John Berthold**



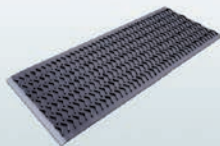
**Jacob Faugstad. Contributed / Northarvest Bean Growers Association**



**Dylan Karley, North Central Commodities general manager in Johnstown, North Dakota, meets with customers around the world that buy black beans and pinto beans. Ann Bailey / Agweek**



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# Fertilizer researcher

## Fertilizer research funding in Minnesota could run dry in June

By Noah Fish | Agweek

The Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council has funded 19 research projects for \$1,263,694 in the past year, but its current funding structure is set to expire this summer.

Since 2008, funded research through the Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council has helped raise public awareness on everything that farmers can do to help the environment and save on fertilizer costs.

Jeff Kosek is a director of the Northharvest Bean Growers Association and one of 12 members of the Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council. Kosek, along with his wife and son, raise around 3,800 acres of corn, soybeans and edible beans, as well as about 200 head of cattle.

"About 1,000 acres of edibles every year," Kosek said of their farm located west of the Twin Cities, near Hutchinson. "Black beans and dark red kidneys."

The research council has funded 19 research projects totaling over \$1 million since the beginning of last year. Current projects include quantifying soil carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorus after subsurface drainage installation; yield and quality responses of Ivory Russet and Russet Burbank Potatoes to P rate, banded P application, soil fumigation, and mycorrhizal inoculation in high-P soils; and advancing continuous corn with mid-season application of nitrogen and sulfur.

Most of the research is done by the University of Minnesota Extension and goes to benefit the range of commodity groups represented in the council. Kosek said the unified support across producer types is a testament to the functionality of the council.

"I think it's very valuable to everybody," Kosek said. "It's open to the public, so people can see what we're doing, what's going on in research to be better for water quality, the environment, and farmers."

### Tax extension

The fertilizer tonnage fee (40 cents of every ton of fertilizer) that goes to fund AFREC research is slated to end on June 30 of this year.

"It doesn't matter if you're putting two bags of fertilizer on your lawn or whatever, there's a percentage of that that comes back to the AFREC, then through the Minnesota Department of Ag," he said.

Kosek said the council is in an "uphill battle" currently trying to urge Minnesota legislators to continue the overall funding structure for the program. He said they recommend an extension for another 10 years, as the ongoing research is of great value for farmers across the state



**Forty cents from the sale of every ton of fertilizer in Minnesota goes to fund Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council research. The fee is scheduled to expire on June 30, 2024. Lowell Anderson / Alexandria Echo Press file photo**

and Midwest, who are able to use the data bank to make important application decisions.

"Some of the fertilizer rates from the Minnesota Department of Ag haven't been updated for 15 years," Kosek said. "Since George Rehm first put them out years ago."

Others in ag agree.

"Our belief is that those funds that go to AFREC are well placed," Minnesota Farm Bureau President Dan Glessing said. "They are doing some good things all across the state, and we would really like to see AFREC continue as it is, and not have it harmed in any way."

Rehm, a University of Minnesota Extension specialist in nutrient management who died at the age 82 in January, is credited for organizing the council after seeing a need for funded soil fertility research in the state.

"It's just nice to stay in tune, because our yields change, and our varieties change," Kosek said. "No farmer wants to put more fertilizer out there than you have to." **NBGA**



**Jeff Kosek.**  
Contributed / Northharvest  
Bean Growers Association

# Specialty crop block grants play special role in dry bean research

By Ann Bailey | Agweek

U.S. Department of Agriculture specialty crop block grants play a significant role in funding dry bean research, according to the Northharvest Bean Growers Association.

Each year, the USDA specialty block grants are used to support research on issues related to dry bean production and end-use products. Northharvest Bean Growers Association supports the research funding and highlights its importance in letters to the USDA specialty block grant program administrators at the North Dakota and Minnesota departments of agriculture.

The USDA awarded \$124,533 in Minnesota in 2023 in specialty crop block grant funding for a research project on optimizing nutrient management. The study is being conducted at the University of Minnesota by researcher Daniel Kaiser. The specialty crop block grant program is administered in Minnesota by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

In 2023, USDA awarded North Dakota about \$773,000 in specialty crop grants, which are administered by the North Department of Agriculture. The following were North Dakota 2023 dry bean research projects, the researchers and the amounts of the USDA block grants:

- Increasing the availability of a diagnostic panel to survey for herbicide resistance in kochia populations. Zack Bateson, National Agricultural Genotyping Center, Fargo, North Dakota: \$271,945.
- Developing dry bean-based bakery products from stone milled flours. Fatemeh Zare: \$22,330.
- Identifying dry beans and rhizobia that can withstand soil salinity and waterlogging. Tom DeSutter, North Dakota State University: \$160,380.
- Identifying dry bean germplasm and genetic regions with resistance to new soybean cyst nematode populations. Guiping Yan, NDSU: \$126,062.

The research underway in both states is important to dry bean farmers because it targets production and end-uses that have potential to result in more income for farmers.

For example, the goal of the herbicide resistance research that Bateson is conducting at the National Agricultural Genotyping Center is to eventually put into place a method that can identify families of weeds that cause damage to crops, said Mitch Coulter, Northharvest Bean Growers Association executive director.

Specifically, the aim is to build a molecular diagnostic panel for genetic markers associated with herbicide resistance in kochia and to validate the diagnostic panel on kochia populations in research trials that are underway and the samples that farmers send them, Coulter said.

Now, research on herbicide resistance is being conducted in a greenhouse, which is important but time consuming, Bateson said.

First, weeds have to be harvested from a field. Then the seeds have to be removed and planted, and then grown in the greenhouse. Finally, the weed plants are tested for herbicide resistance.

The new research project involves farmers cutting a leaf from a weed they believe is resistant and sending it into the National Agricultural Genotyping center where it is analyzed.

The aim is to have test results available within a few days. Bateson said.

Helping farmers develop new uses for dry beans also is important because that has potential to increase demand.

The dry bean industry, similar to other commodities, is considering value-added processing opportunities that will diversify the products

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



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produced from the raw seed, Coulter said. Dry beans are a nutrient-dense commodity that has a lot of untapped potential, he said.

The objectives of the research that Zare is conducting include comparing the benefits of hammer milling and stone milling while at the same time looking at physical and quality characteristics for dry beans that are commonly grown in North Dakota, and to use the milled flour in nutritional and sensory comparisons of the milling types used in formulating tortilla, crackers and chips, Coulter said.

The research will focus on pinto beans, black beans, navy beans and dark red kidney, all which are grown in North Dakota, Zare said. The research will study the characteristics of the flour produced by the stone and hammer mills.

The dry bean flours will be analyzed to determine how much should be used in the products, which also will contain wheat flours. 



Specialty crop block grants have been used to help research production issues for dry bean farmers as well as work on market development for beans. *Mikkel Pates / Agweek file photo*



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## Minnesota Ag in the Classroom connects teachers to the bean industry

By Kennedy Tesch | Agweek

Minnesota Ag in the Classroom offers kindergarten through 12th grade teachers with tools and resources to incorporate agriculture into various subjects. The month of January was focused on sharing information about the bean industry.

"We wanted to share information, lesson plans and videos about beans as well as dry edible beans that are grown in Minnesota," said Sue Knott, education specialist for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Minnesota Ag in the Classroom. "One thing that we did during this month was host a professional development session over Zoom, and the idea was really focusing on those Minnesota grown beans — how they're grown and how they're raised here in the state and then also how they're used throughout the whole world."

The event consisted of three different speakers: Minnesota Soybean Growers Association Executive Director Joe Smentek, Soya & Grains Alliance Communications Director Shane Frederick and Northarvest Bean Growers Executive Director Mitch Coulter.

"Each of those speakers have experience with beans and how they're trading, how they're exporting to all over the world, which is really cool," Knott said.



**Minnesota Ag in the Classroom had a bean focus for January 2024, as seen in the program's e-newsletter.**

*Courtesy / Minnesota Ag in the Classroom*

The teachers were able to ask the speakers questions and then were given demonstrations that took the topics they learned from the speakers and turned them into lessons they can use in the classroom.

"Some of the teachers received a clip that has a ton of different types of edible beans that are grown in Minnesota with samples of each of those and some of them received another lesson that had all of the materials to grow bean seeds in your classroom," Knott said.

"Other teachers received a complimentary or free registration to one of our summer tours."

*"Each of those speakers have experience with beans and how they're trading, how they're exporting to all over the world, which is really cool."*

**- Sue Knott, education specialist for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Minnesota Ag in the Classroom**



Smentek said he spoke to the teachers about bean exports and the value of the industry to the state of Minnesota.

"For the overall health of our planet and profitability for our farmers, export markets are really, really, really important, and it's not something I think a lot of farm kids stop to think about in all the opportunities that they would have, whether it's working in the foreign ag service, one of these companies exporting or doing export themselves straight from there, whether it's specialty soybean or whatever, straight to the foreign markets," Smentek said. "It's not something that's always top of mind, so more people interested in those opportunities help solve agriculture in the state." [NBGA](#)



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# Excess beans are bound for Haiti, food shelves and school lunch rooms

By Michael Johnson | Agweek

This spring, tons of excess beans grown in the U.S. are making it into food shelves and school lunch rooms across the country and even into international markets dealing with conflict and hunger.

Red kidney beans from Green Valley Bean LLC and pintos from P.W. Montgomery are among those. Pat King, owner at P.W. Montgomery LLC, in Fargo, North Dakota, explained that there is a great need right now for beans domestically and internationally for places that are in need of nutrition. This is where the USDA-Agricultural Marketing Service is able to step in to bid on these excess commodities, which are then distributed to markets in need under the Section 32 appropriation. This



An example of the 1- and 2-pound pinto bean packages.  
Courtesy / Patrick King



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*“There’s a lot of need with food banks around the country. It’s hard to believe, you know, the extent of hunger in the U.S. — you don’t think it’s there until you talk to these folks at the food banks.”*

**- Pat King, owner at P.W. Montgomery LLC**



section authorizes USDA to support prices of commodities in surplus by purchasing them in the marketplace and also authorizes USDA to distribute commodities domestically.

This practice has been going on since it was first appropriated in 1935. It has totaled nearly \$10 billion annually in recent years.

King said in working with the US Dry Bean Council, bean processors are able to reach these markets with canned bean products, generally for schools, and packaged beans for food shelves. Both are shelf-stable and nutritious foods. King explains that the Section 32 program is a major help to market these excess commodities and get them into the hands that need them.

“USDA has been really friendly to our industry,” King said.

King said this recent contract for beans was bid last summer and approved for delivery this spring. But this contract is not a “one-off.” Instead, these sales come up quarterly and emergency funding is appropriated when needed. These funds may increase in coming years as the hunger needs continue to press in, both domestically and abroad.

“There’s a lot of need with food banks around the country,” King said. “It’s hard to believe, you know, the extent of hunger in the U.S. — you don’t think it’s there until you talk to these folks at the food banks.”

Dry beans work very well in these situations to provide nutrition in a shelf-stable product.

Part of the pinto beans from P.W. Montgomery, about 1,370 tons, are set to be delivered to Haiti in April. Work needs to be done to shore up the port to Haiti though due to unrest and gang violence there, King said. He expects the shipment may be delayed for a short period.

On March 15, the United States Agency for International Development approved another \$25 million to address the humanitarian crisis in Haiti — that’s in addition to the \$146 million already provided to the country since October 2022.

Green Valley Bean LLC in Park Rapids, Minnesota, was also part of a group of processors that won contracts this spring. Green Valley Bean President John Berthold said their portion of the Section 32 program award includes 900,000 pounds of kidney beans, or about 20 truckloads. Their beans were bagged in 1- and 2-pound packages that will go to food banks domestically.



**Packaged beans like this are delivered to food shelves through an excess commodity program. Contributed / Patrick King**

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"The Section 32 program is very important just by the purpose of it," Berthold said. "It's to purchase up and use excess commodities and get them out where they can be used the most."

Berthold is in his 32nd year in the bean business. He said they've not had to pursue Section 32 contracts much in the past because they have been able to balance the supply and demand quite well. Section 32 is valuable to growers during times of excess, but Berthold said the goal is to have enough demand that they would not have to look to these competitive bidding contracts to market their product.

While all producers compete for the market, the entire dry bean industry works together to grow the market and consumption of beans, King said.

Both King and Berthold are proud of the quality of edible beans produced by their growers and look forward to continuing to expand their markets.

With strong prices, bean growers are expecting to see more acres being added for dry edible beans in 2024 in what looks to be an early planting year. **NBGA**



People buy eggs after Haitians were allowed into a market for needed essentials and trade, as gang violence continues in the aftermath of the resignation of Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry, at a farmer's market in the border town of Dajabon, Dominican Republic, March 18, 2024. Fran Afonso / Reuters

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Northarvest Bean Growers Association Bean Day 2024 drew a large crowd and a full slate of vendors to the Holiday Inn in Fargo, North Dakota, on Jan. 19, 2024. *Jenny Schlecht / Agweek*

## Bean Day 2024 hit on markets, sustainability and research

By **Jenny Schlecht and Ann Bailey** | Agweek

FARGO, N.D. — Northarvest Bean Growers Association Bean Day 2024 pulled in big crowds from the dry edible bean industry, including farmers, marketers, researchers and others who gathered to hear from a loaded lineup of speakers.

The day featured panels and speakers on sustainability, research and markets, as well as awards from Northarvest Bean Growers Association.

NBGA recognized Holly Jolyn Jensen of Stephen, Minnesota, for being the 2023 scholarship recipient; Hans Kandel of North Dakota State University for the Bean Industry Achievement Award; Steve Savell of Bush Brothers & Company for the Friend of Bean Award; Don Stueve and Ryan Peterson for their board service; and Dan Ohden and Ryan Ammermann for being new board members.

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**Paul Scheetz, director of climate smart ag origination for Archer Daniels Midland, was a highlighted speaker at Bean Day 2024 on Jan. 19, 2024, in Fargo, North Dakota. *Jenny Schlecht / Agweek***



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# Bean day

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## Sustainability focus

Like many other sectors of agriculture, the dry edible bean industry is working on issues of sustainability and telling its story of continual greater production with fewer inputs. Bean Day featured a series of speakers on sustainability issues.

Paul Scheetz is the director of climate smart ag origination for Archer Daniels Midland. The company is working on benchmarks for a program that will incentivize farmers to use climate smart practices.

"As long as we see that the consumer is asking for a little bit more transparency and a little bit more positive environmental impact, and it creates a business opportunity to the farmer," he said. "So ultimately, there has to be financial incentives. When it comes to executing programs to farmers, their time is worth as much as anybody else's time."

Efforts to quantify carbon footprints are going on throughout the supply chain.

Chippewa Valley Beans has been working on a sustainable development goal report for about seven years. The company's biggest customer in Europe is interested in carbon footprint data. Not having that data in time could mean losing that customer, said Charles Wachsmuth, vice president of Chippewa Valley Bean, who spoke on a sustainability panel at Bean Day.

"We want to be the supplier of first choice. We want people to say wait, we need kidney beans, let's go to Chippewa Valley Bean," he said. "And the only way we can stay in that space is by continuing to push forward across all areas quality service and sustainability."

Scheetz says it's the right time for farmers to "dip their toes" in climate smart programs.

"If you just look at what we've done over the last 40 years, and know what we're going to do in the next 40 years, because farmers are evaluating their land every single day, and they're making investments in their land, they want to protect that land every single day that

it gives the agriculture industry an opportunity to differentiate itself from everybody else," he said.

"When I think of our growers, I think of everybody being a good steward. And that's a word that's bandied about quite a bit, but we are," Wachsmuth said. "We're multigenerational businesses that are involved with keeping the soil and the environment healthy. This is what we do. Let's find ways to tell this story in a measurable way. And we'll have a really good story to tell."

## Market outlook

Farmers will need to carefully weigh the amount of pinto beans they plant in spring 2024 so they don't tip the scale too far to the supply side, an agricultural economist told farmers at Bean Day.

"The challenge is to increase acreage without overdoing it," Frayne Olson, North Dakota State University Extension agricultural economist, said during his presentation.



Charles Wachsmuth, vice president of Chippewa Valley Bean, answers a question at Bean Day 2024 in Fargo, North Dakota, on Jan. 19, 2024. Jenny Schlecht / Agweek

Prices of pinto beans, a specialty crop which is not publicly traded like soybeans, are sensitive to over- or under-production, and prices farmers receive can fluctuate greatly depending on whether there are too many or too few beans to meet demand.

In 2023, U.S. pinto bean production declined, the result of lower acreage and reduced production. In North Dakota, the top U.S. producer of the crop, pinto bean farmers harvested 374,000 acres in 2023, 37,000 fewer than in 2022, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

North Dakota pinto bean farmers produced 6.02 million hundredweight of pinto beans in 2023, 20% less in 2022, NASS said. North Dakota production accounted for 70% of total U.S. production of 8.61 million hundredweight.

"What happens here does have an impact on the market, especially with pintos," Olson said. "We are the dominant player with pintos."

While U.S. production fell in 2023, pinto bean exports are projected to rise sharply during the 2023-24 marketing year, according to the USDA Economic Research Service estimates.

The bulk of those exports will be to Mexico, the U.S.'s top pinto bean customer. Already by the end of October, the U.S. had exported more than 39.6 million pounds of pinto beans to Mexico for the 2023-24 market year that began Sept. 1, compared to just more than 4.1 million in the same period of the 2022-23 market year.

However, domestic use, which makes up 75% of pinto bean demand, typically is steady year to year, Olson said.

The balance between too many pinto beans in the U.S. supply chain and too little is delicate.

"We are going to have to look at a slight increase in acreage to supply the export market," Olson said. "The challenge is going to be to increase acreage without overdoing it. We get these big swings back and forth."


The "yo-yo" in acreage results in significant price swings so not overdoing production in 2024, and it would be preferable to find the "sweet spot," Olson said.

He expected the pinto bean market to be stable during January and February, but there may be some price "pops" in March when U.S. farmers are determining how many acres of the crop they will plant this year.

"We tend to have a lot of volatility in the spring and right after harvest," Olson said.

Typically navy bean prices also rise in the spring, when companies raise them to encourage farmers to plant the crop so they will have enough supply and in the fall when they are determining their actual needs, he said. NBGA

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# Edible bean producers travel the world to learn more about the industry

By Ariana Schumacher | Agweek

Cordell Huebsch, a dry bean producer, attended the Global Pulse Confederation annual meeting in New Delhi, India Feb. 14-17.

The conference brings pulse growers together from around the world.

“Basically, anyone that is in the global pulse business — that’s peas, lentils, chickpeas, dry beans — anyone that moves those commodities, a lot of them are a member in this organization,” Huebsch said.

Relationship building is a key part of creating trust in the pulse industry.

“This business, as I am finding out, has a lot to do with those relationships and so this meeting allows people to come together and



**Cordell Huebsch, a dry bean producer, attended the Global Pulse Confederation. Contributed**



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meet each other," he said. "If people show up every year, that probably means they are honorable."

Edible beans came up short this year, which was a large topic of conversation at the conference.

"A lot of the world is very short on beans," Huebsch explained. "Mexico had a terrible crop, Argentina didn't have a very good crop, and so even with American beans and pulses being a little higher, there is still a lot of demand from around the globe."

India is the biggest market at 1.6 billion people for those pulse crops.

"As Americans we don't move a lot of product into India now, basically because we are probably the most expensive game in town relative to some of those other countries," he said. "But I think that is getting better."

It's improving because of the lack of tariffs.

"Those have been removed so there is no tariffs on dry beans, there is no tariffs until March of next year on peas and lentils, and chickpeas are available to go in right now until basically the end of this month tariff free," Huebsch said.

One of Huebsch's biggest takeaways from the trip was a better understanding of the value of his product and the value of the market in India.

"The point was we have an expensive product, but we have the best product in the world," he said. "Even if we sell 1% of the 1.6 billion people



CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 **Cordell Huebsch, left, at the Gulf Food Show. Contributed**

An advertisement for Trinidad Benham Corporation. The background is a large, brown field with several green and yellow tractors and harvesters working. The text is overlaid on the image. In the top left, there is a green triangle logo above the text "Trinidad Benham Corporation". In the top right, there is text in green: "From Bean Planting to Harvest, Trinidad Benham Can Help with Your Needs". In the center right, there is text in blue: "THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR GROWING BUSINESS". In the bottom right, there is text in white: "CONTACT US: Alek Berg, Plant Manager (701) 671-0043 Nathan Renard, Field Rep (701) 640-1157 LOCATIONS: Colgate, ND (701) 945-2580 Courtenay, ND (CHS) (701) 435-2471 Pilsbury, ND (701) 945-2709". In the bottom left, there is text in white: "303.220.1400 www.trinidadbenham.com".

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23**

that premiere product that are willing to pay the extra amount, that's still a huge market. So, we need to be in India."

Before the conference began, Huebsch was able to attend a farm tour, where he was able to see agriculture in India, as well as get to know 16 other producers from around the globe.

"It was a great mix of different people," he said. "Being a farmer, not actively trading and in the business, not knowing anybody going into it, it was pretty awesome to make those relationships, hear about how the market is in these other parts of the world that you don't hear about every day, and then when I went to the conference, to have those people to introduce me to new people."

The timing of this meetings allowed visitors to also attend another major food conference while overseas.

"They made it so that the conference happened a few days before Gulf Foods, which is a food show that is in Dubai every year," Huebsch explained. "A majority of the people that attended the conference ended up going over to Dubai as soon as it was over."

The Gulf Food Show is the biggest show in the world.

"It basically encompasses anybody that is in the Middle East," he said. "I mean you think about all those countries, from Turkey to Armenia to all the European countries come,



**Beans Dexter Cronquist saw in the Caribbean on a trade mission. Contributed**



**Dexter Cronquist, left, on the Caribbean on a trade mission. Contributed**

all of India, Southeast Asia and then there was even a large Chinese contingent that was at this show."

It provides a place to market products easily to customers.

"It's kind of a situation, it seems, like where an exporter or an importer can go to one food show and see a hundred customers, where if they had to spread that out and travel all over the globe to meet all of these hundreds of people, it's just a more condensed way to do business," Huebsch said.

Attending both events left Huebsch with a better understanding of the industry and some valuable connections.

"For me as a grower, to just be able to see the contrast and then also to carry some of those relationships from GPC and then see them in their element as they are working the show selling beans is pretty awesome," he said.

### **Traveling to the Caribbean**

Edible bean producers traveled to the Caribbean on a trade mission March 11-15. It was attendee Dexter Cronquist's first time going on a trade mission trip, and it gave him an overall outlook on what other markets are looking for in edible beans.

"I have learned a lot from this trip," he said. "The buyers are very particular about the beans they buy. They want fresh, clean beans with good color. Brand names are a big deal. The buyers will not sell beans unless they are perfect because they are afraid of losing any customers by selling a less than perfect product with their brand on the bag."

Throughout the trip, they met with many companies that import beans from the United States. After gathering information, they write a report to the United States Dry Bean Council to try to figure out solutions to the issues.

"We talked with them about issues that they are having trying to import beans and solutions to make it easier for them to do so," Cronquist said. "There are tariffs on U.S. beans in order to help the Caribbean farmers get better prices for their beans domestically. However, when the local farmers run out of their own beans, the problem arises that U.S. beans get imported at a higher cost, creating higher inflation for a lower income end user."

This trip also gives producers a closer look at what their consumers are wanting out of their products.

"For instance, they may want more slow-darkening pinto beans instead of the traditional ones. They may want larger beans instead of smaller beans, which we can try to help control with the varieties we plant," Cronquist said. "If we are able to provide the buyers with exactly what they are looking for, we have a better chance of selling more beans."

Cronquist encourages other producers to get involved in trips like these.

"I would suggest listening carefully to what the buyers are asking for. The people I have met on this trip have been very friendly and wonderful people," he said. "There are lots of things you can learn about the entire bean industry. Knowing how the entire process works can help us back in the U.S. to continue producing a valuable product for the world." **NBGA**



# U.S. Dry Bean Council update

## BeanCon24 highlights the benefits of beans on the body

By Ann Bailey | Agweek

Dry bean industry members from around the world met at BeanCon 2024 in Cancun, Mexico, in February 2024 to learn a host of information about the commodity they grow, buy and sell.

The third annual conference was held Feb. 2-3, 2024, a day after the U.S. Dry Bean Council held its mid-winter meeting.

The U.S. Dry Bean Council and U.S. Foreign Ag Service hosted BeanCon 2024, which was sponsored by edible bean organizations and companies including Northarvest Bean Growers Association.



A panel at BeanCon 2024 addressed the nutritional importance of beans.

Contributed / BeanCon

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# U.S. Dry Bean Council update

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

The U.S. Dry Bean Council's focus is to promote dry beans international market development and provide information around the world to consumers, health professionals, buyers, suppliers and the media.

Dry bean farmers Eric Samuelson, Crookston, Minnesota, Kevin Regan, Webster, North Dakota, and Joe Mauch, Hankinson, North Dakota, attended the conference to represent their organizations at BeanCon24. Samuelson is a Northarvest Bean Growers Association board member, Regan is the North Dakota Dry Bean Council treasurer, and Mauch is the Northarvest Bean Growers Association vice president.

BeanCon 24 featured dozens of presentations and panels about the benefits of dry beans. Panel members and presenters included chefs, representatives of food companies and researchers.

Chelsea Didinger, a nutrition expert, moderated a panel called "Food As Medicine, How Beans Make Us Healthier," which highlighted some of the ways dry beans benefit people. Didinger, U.S. Dry Bean Council global nutrition specialist and frequent collaborator on Northarvest Bean Growers Association projects, earned her doctorate degree in nutrition from Colorado State University.

"Food as Medicine, How Beans Make Us Healthier" panel members were Nick Buentter, Blue Zones LLC vice president and co-founder; Henry Thompson, a Colorado State University professor and director of the university's cancer prevention laboratory; and Raymond Glahn, U.S. Department of Agriculture research physiologist and research leader at the Robert Holley Center for Agriculture and Health in New York.

Didinger highlighted some key points the panel members made during their presentations:

**Buentner:** He discussed how poor diet is the leading risk factor for deaths in most countries around the globe. The idea of food as medicine showcases how a healthy diet can help reverse the trend, allowing people to live healthier, happier lives.

Blue Zones are areas around the world Buentter's research identified as where people have the longest, healthiest lives and where there are a much larger percentage of people 100 years or older. Beans are one of the primary staple foods in "blue zones."

Blue Zones LLC recommends people should eat about 1 cup of cooked beans per day to enhance their health.

**Thompson:** He gave information about the power of dry beans to greatly improve health outcomes and how industry and consumers can work together to realize these benefits. He explained how beans can play an important role in the promotion of gut health, nutrient status, longevity and chronic disease prevention.

He also provided a sneak peek into a clinical trial that is underway. During the trial participants consume bean smoothies and monitor several outcomes, such as hydrogen and methane released in the breath and changes to the gut microbiota, as a way to investigate



**Northarvest Bean Growers Association members were in attendance at BeanCon 2024. Contributed / BeanCon**

flatulence and gut health. The clinical trial has been approved and is using reduced sodium cannellini beans from Bush's Beans.

Just one can — 1.5 cups of cooked beans — contains more than 30% of the daily protein requirement and about 27 grams of dietary fiber.

That means that eating the contents of just one can would help people essentially meet the daily recommendation for fiber.

Thompson ended with a call to action: Beans should be everywhere. They should be in a wide variety of food. For example, they should be incorporated a variety of food products, such as bean flours, and everyone should add them to a wide variety of dishes like smoothies and bread.

**Glahn:** He addressed the topic of iron nutrition and how current research by his team and network of colleagues demonstrates how beans can improve iron status. Iron nutrition is a significant challenge to health, and low iron levels can result in anemia. Even in the United States, iron deficiency anemia is a problem.

Beans are rich in iron, but the iron content found in beans is not always the same as the actual iron bioavailability. Compounds in beans can reduce iron bioavailability, or the amount of iron that our bodies can actually absorb, Glahn said.

His research shows that the bean seed coat is the primary factor in controlling iron nutrition in beans, with lighter colored beans often having higher iron bioavailability.

Varieties with high iron bioavailability include Manteca yellow beans and slow darkening pintos, which Juan Osorno, North Dakota State University plant breeder, developed.

Besides more bioavailable iron, they tend to cook more quickly. This can help save energy — which factors into sustainability claims and also is highly relevant in areas around the world where people have to gather fuel to cook beans over an open fire.

How dry beans are processed also affects iron bioavailability. For example, they found that white


kidney bean pasta had higher iron bioavailability than whole cooked white kidney beans.

This appeared to be the case for lighter colors of beans, but the same trend was not seen when comparing cooked whole black beans and black bean pasta.

Overall, the panels illustrated the many ways beans are a food that can improve people's health.

"If you are looking for a nutrient-dense food that is associated with many health benefits and is a cornerstone of the diets of the healthiest, longest-lived populations in the world, beans are the answer," Didinger said.


As a dry bean grower, attending BeanCon24 gave Mauch insight into the dry bean marketing life cycle.

"It was really interesting learning about what was done with the beans, what was made. As it leaves the field and as it gets transferred to whoever processes them, what do they do?" he said. 

### PRESIDENT LETTER FROM PAGE 3

Speaking of at home, since I wrote to this letter last issue, Bean Day 2024 took place, and there's a recap of that as well — and a QR Code that will take you to YouTube for the recorded sessions for any folks to watch who may have missed it or want a refresher of some of the sessions.

There's a whole lot of additional stories in these pages, too — Ag in the classroom info, Midwest Dry Bean Council updates, a look at David Franzen's impactful NDSU Extension career, NBGA election notes, and more.

On behalf of both the Minnesota and North Dakota Councils and Northarvest, I wish you all a safe, successful spring. Your work in the fields is the very foundation of our entire dry bean industry. NBGA thanks you for your continued support and I want to thank you for reading. 



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# Northarvest Bean Growers Association promotes beans to marketing club

By Ann Bailey | Agweek

More than three dozen farmers gathered in Hope, North Dakota, in late winter 2024, to learn about the Northarvest Bean Growers Association and the commodity its members grow.

The marketing club in Hope, attended by farmers in eastern North Dakota Counties, including Cass, Steele, Barnes, Traill and Grand Forks, promoted the meeting. The club, founded in the early 1990s, has remained active over the succeeding decades and has maintained its membership, meeting several times a year to talk about commodities and farm economics.

The meeting was organized by Josh Ihry, a Northarvest Bean Growers Association member from Hope and a representative of the North Dakota Dry Bean Council, and Tony Richards who serves as treasurer on the Northarvest Bean Growers Association board. Both farmers are members of the Hope marketing club and have farms in Steele County.

Ihry grows small red beans with his father-in-law, Clark Lemley, and Richards and his father, Randy Richards, raise pinto beans on their farm.

Mitch Coulter, Northarvest Bean Growers Association executive director, told the farmers who gathered for meeting in Hope about the structure of Northarvest Bean Growers Association, which is unique because it has two check-off councils — the North Dakota Dry Bean Council and Minnesota Dry Bean Research and Promotion Council — which work with the organization.

Though separate, the organizations work well together and share priorities, Coulter said.

He talked at the meeting about Northarvest Bean Growers Association committees in which farmers can be involved, including research, education and crop insurance. He also covered international and domestic trade and gave farmers information about the Midwest Dry Bean Coalition made up of dry bean dealers and growers in North Dakota and Minnesota.

*“There is a fine line we walk, year in and year out, to make sure we don’t over or under supply the marketplace.”*

**- Mitch Coulter, executive director of Northarvest Bean Growers Association**



Besides promoting the Northarvest Bean Growers Association to the farmers at the meeting in Hope, Coulter talked about the benefits of growing dry beans, a topic that resonated with farmers.

“There was definitely a strong interest in growing the crop acreage with conventional commodity prices down this fiscal year,” Coulter said. “North Dakota State University budget figures for 2024 show a lot of promise for growers to consider growing dry beans in particular this fiscal year.”

This year, the price of dry beans, which is strong compared with some other commodities such as corn and soybeans, makes it an attractive option for some farmers.

“It pencils out where there’s a cash flow,” Richards said.

Encouraging farmers to plant dry edible beans must be balanced with demand, Coulter said. Dry bean industry stakeholders work hard to make sure that they stay “right-sized” in the marketplace, he said.

“There is a fine line we walk, year in and year out, to make sure we don’t over or under supply the marketplace,” Coulter said. The Midwest Dry Bean Coalition was formed so the stakeholders of the region have an opportunity to grow the market together in a strategic way into the future.

The coalition believes there is an opportunity to have a larger domestic market supply through policy work to provide regional volumes to

domestic government feeding programs. The international market also has more room for its dry beans supply, and the coalition’s goal is to have the commodity originate in North Dakota and Minnesota, Coulter said.

Several farmers who had never before grown dry beans or who had raised them in the past but hadn’t grown them recently expressed interest in growing them in 2024 after the Hope meeting, Ihry said.

Informing young farmers about the benefits of raising the crop is one way that the dry bean industry can encourage them to plant it, which will help maintain a steady supply of the commodity for its customers, Ihry said.

On the demand side, Ihry believes that the popularity of dry edible beans with consumers will continue to increase because they can boast nutritional advantages that include being non-GMO, high fiber and a high protein meatless option.

David Ripplinger, NDSU Extension bioenergy economist, is researching the sustainability of dry beans, information that will be provided to European Union and United Kingdom markets, Coulter said.

North Dakota and Minnesota accounted for 58% of the total U.S. dry bean production.

“There is a lot of room for growth and we plan to work on those efforts together in the Midwest Dry Bean Coalition,” Coulter said. “The future is bright as we begin to visit about value-added opportunities.” 



Farmers are interested in growing dry edible beans because of more positive margins in recent years than conventional crops. But the industry wants to stay “right-sized” to maintain those price. *Ann Bailey / Agweek*

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