

Puerto Rican connection

Video series shows winter bean breeding work

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Juan Osorno, plant breeder at North Dakota State University, focuses on dry bean varieties in the winter nursery in Isabela, Puerto Rico in March 2024.
Contributed / Northarvest Bean Growers Association



Northarvest Directory

FROM THE PRESIDENT Summer meetings on tap for NBGA



Eric Jorgenson
President,
Northarvest
Bean Growers
Association

Hello, fellow members of the Northarvest Bean Growers Association:

I hope this letter finds you well and that everyone has a safe, productive start to our summer growing season. Likely by the time you read this issue, we will be knee-deep in Northarvest's summer meeting. This is where the board as well as staff meet to dial in the annual budget and priorities across NBGA

programs. It's time consuming, and there is a lot to cover in the two-day time we have sitting down with each other as a board.

One of the bonuses of being able to convene as a group, though, is we can all share our thoughts on where we think Northarvest's efforts are best utilized for our fellow growers. It might be the hardest part of our duties as directors, but also the one we may be most proud of. As bean growers ourselves, we understand the challenges our members face, and we try every budget cycle to make sure we're doing right by every one of you.

In this Summer '24 issue of Northarvest BeanGrower, you'll read about one of the men who has long been serving his fellow growers — Mark Dombeck. Mark is a farmer out of Perham, Minnesota, and has spent 30 years advocating for his fellow growers while serving on the Minnesota Dry Bean Research and Promotion Council. You'll learn a bit about Mark's significant time on the council in this issue and we'd like to thank him for his long history of service.

Another guy Northarvest would like to thank is Greg Endres, also profiled in this issue. His "Getting It Right in Dry Bean" series is something we as growers very much appreciate. His work in the industry has been vital for dry bean production since it began. As has Juan Osorno, whose efforts are featured in the magazine. Juan shares his experience with the overwinter dry bean breeding facility in Puerto Rico and its importance to not only our growers but the industry as well.

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Bean breeding



Dr. Juan Osorno, right, with his son, Juan, in Puerto Rico. Contributed / Northarvest Bean Growers Association

Upcoming video series shines light on the benefits of overwinter bean breeding in Puerto Rico

By Michael Johnson | Agweek

It can take seven to 10 years to bring a new dry bean variety from its optimistic beginnings to the planter box of hopeful farmers. That process is sped up thanks to an overwinter bean breeding program that shuttles beans back and forth between states like North Dakota, Nebraska and Michigan, on down to Isabela, Puerto Rico.

North Dakota State University bean breeder Juan Osorno has been making the winter trek to Puerto Rico since he joined the program in 2007. He grows and selects plants in North Dakota during the summer, then shuttles select seeds to Puerto Rico

during North Dakota's winter, which is actually summertime in that part of the world. In this way, they are able to get two growing seasons out of one year.

"It's very simple. By doing that, we're going twice the speed," Osorno said.

The use of this bean nursery in Puerto Rico is something that's been going on since the 1980s and since the



Jed Brazier
Marketing and Communications Director, Northarvest Bean Growers Association

1990s in New Zealand. It's a fantastic tool to speed up the process of advancing stronger varieties and is supported by industry members such as Northarvest Bean Growers Association. The thing is, not many people know about it.

Northarvest Bean Growers Association marketing and communications director Jed Brazier and a videographer flew to Puerto Rico in March 2024 to see the process.

They interviewed some of those involved and caught the harvest of some of the beans on video. They brought back that footage, which they plan to release in late summer and early fall, once editing is complete.

Brazier said this project was important because it had become clear that few people knew about the important work going on in Puerto Rico, which Northharvest Bean Growers had been financially supporting for many years through checkoff dollars.

"So we're kind of trying to get the word out and explain A, what it is, and B, why it's so vital to our growers to be able to speed up production of bean breeding," Brazier said. "It was something

"So we're kind of trying to get the word out and explain A, what it is, and B, why it's so vital to our growers to be able to speed up production of bean breeding"

- Jed Brazier



that was not well known, even amongst our board."

The experience was eye-opening for Brazier to take in over about four days.

"I didn't realize the site was as robust as it is, and how many different folks are there working at it," Brazier said. He was impressed how the researchers

coming from many different locations were freely sharing their knowledge to help each other be better at bean breeding. "So having those partnerships that folks can leverage really seems to be an important part of the site, as well as to the actual breeding that's going on."

Osorno said the gathering of experts in one place is a chance

to exchange knowledge and make each other better.

"In many cases, we are there at the same time," Osorno said. "So a lot of ideas exchanged, scientific discussion and things like that."

Osorno is excited to share this work with a broader audience because he believes there are two ways industry can look at work like this. Industry can simply trust him to "do his thing," or they can see with their own eyes the work that goes into raising a new variety. They can see the amount of staff, equipment and expertise needed to grow and select the plants of the future. Financially supporting such work may make more sense with some of the insider knowledge.

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Bean breeding

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Brazier said they were able to talk with Tim Porch with the USDA's Agricultural Research Service, Evan Wright, a research technician with Michigan State University, and Dr. James Beaver, a retired researcher with the University of Puerto Rico, who has been involved with the program from the early stages. Those conversations and more will be shared through this video project. Brazier added that all involved were pleased to share because they also understand the importance of this overwinter nursery site.

Some have said that winter nurseries are the best invention of the plant breeders as a means of escaping the cold winters of the North. However, Osorno has found that the two-location breeding is helpful for learning about diseases that are either in both locations or in only one. For example, over the years, as they continue to select varieties that perform better against such diseases as common bacterial blight, all the breeds are getting stronger and stronger. That's a disease common in both locations, so the selection of stronger resistant plants is moving faster with this breeding process.

Osorno said that at the end of the day, plant breeding is more about removing those that do poorly than it is about picking those that perform the best.


Brazier is hopeful their message gets out to a wide audience so that producers and non-producers alike can appreciate the efforts that go into making a high performing and nutritional variety that moves the needle in the right direction for breeds around the world.



Dr. Jim Beaver, Dr. Juan Osorno and Evan Wright in Puerto Rico.
Contributed / Northarvest Bean Growers Association

Osorno agrees that the work that happens during these early years affects the entire industry.

"Whatever we do, whatever we produce is going to trickle down to the entire value chain," Osorno said. "You talk about farmers, that's probably my first line of customers, but then think about all the packers, all the exporters, all the canning industry, all the way to the final consumer, right? You're affecting all those members from that value chain by the things that we're doing. That's why I think it's so critical and so important to always support the breeding efforts. I think it impacts everybody on that value chain."

Brazier said once complete, the video series will be shared through all forms of social media utilized by Northarvest Bean Growers Association including their YouTube channel and through their newsletter. 

An advertisement for AGT Foods. The background is red. At the top right is the AGT Foods logo, which consists of three yellow vertical bars of varying heights followed by the text "AGT FOODS" in white. Below the logo is the tagline "From Producer to the World™". In the center, there is a white bowl filled with white beans, with a wooden spoon resting in it. To the left of the bowl, the text "A TRUSTED BUYER, PROCESSOR AND EXPORTER OF BEANS, LENTILS, CHICKPEAS, PEAS AND SPECIALTY CROPS" is written in yellow. At the bottom, there is a row of four small images showing different types of beans: white, dark green, light green, and red. Below this row, the text "From Producer to the World" is repeated in yellow. Underneath that, it says "To market your beans, lentils, chickpeas, durum and hard red wheat or to discuss growing pulses, contact AGT Foods in Canada at 1-844-248-4AGT or in the U.S. at 1-877-751-1623." At the very bottom, the phone number "1-844-41-BEANS" and the website "agtfoods.com" are displayed in white.



Endres has been ‘vital’ to spread of dry bean knowledge

By Ann Bailey | Agweek

CARRINGTON, N.D. — Greg Endres worked for 41 years to improve production of row crops, including dry beans, and small grains in North Dakota.

Endres retired in April 2024, concluding his career in North Dakota State University Extension after working for eight years as an Extension agent for agriculture in Ramsey and Rolette counties and the past 33 years at the Carrington Research Extension Center as a cropping systems specialist.

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Endres developed an interest in agriculture when he was growing up on a hobby farm in Ottertail County, Minnesota, where his family raised chickens, dairy and beef.

"It was a wonderful place to grow up," Endres said.

He gained additional expertise in agriculture from his involvement in the local 4-H club and FFA chapter, and after graduation from high school, Endres earned a bachelor's degree in agronomy and a master's in crop and weed science from North Dakota State University in Fargo.

When Endres began his job as a cropping systems specialist at the Carrington Research Extension Center, production research on edible beans was scant, he said.

One of his first research projects was on whether the strip-till method of planting

dry beans resulted in less soil erosion than conventional tilling.

The results of the study, published in 2007, showed that there was less erosion using



Greg Endres did extensive research on strip till in his role at North Dakota State University Extension. Agweek file photo

the strip-till method. Meanwhile, although the pinto bean plants reached physiological maturity two or three days later in the strip-till trial than in the conventional-till trial, seed yield was greater with fall strip-till compared

to conventional tillage. Test weight and seed size were similar between the two methods.

In recent years, Endres and Mike Ostlie, research agronomist and Carrington

Research Extension Center director, studied planting pinto beans into winter rye cover crop to determine the effect on soil erosion, moisture and weed control.

The study, published in 2021, showed that it took longer for pinto bean plants to develop if rye was terminated until or after the beans were planted because the topsoil was dried by the rye. However, edible bean yields typically were

similar unless the rye was not terminated. On the flip side, delaying the termination of the rye until or after planting most often resulted in weed suppression that was similar to herbicide use.



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"Greg was an educator, a researcher, an agronomist and a friend to farmers. Specifically to dry beans. Greg was so committed to presenting new data to farmers he became a mainstay at Bean Day."

- Mitch Coulter



Another one of Endre's contributions to dry bean production improvement was to organize a program called "Getting it right dry bean production," which is modeled after similar programs for soybeans, wheat, sunflowers, canola, flax and corn.

The dry bean program, held each spring, for the first few years was held as an in-person event and since has been held virtually. The program includes information on markets, plant nutrition, fertilizer and plant protection.

"We went from A to Z as much as we could on dry beans," Endres said.

"Greg would put on a traveling show for dry bean farmers, and that extended to an online version that allowed us to capture on video as evergreen material for

farmers everywhere," said Mitch Coulter, Northarvest Bean Growers Association executive director.

Coulter called Endres a "vital individual for the agriculture community."

"Greg was an educator, a researcher, an agronomist and a friend to farmers. Specifically to dry beans," Coulter said. "Greg was so committed to presenting new data to farmers he became a mainstay at Bean Day."

"We will certainly miss Greg's leadership, knowledge, and commitment to dry bean farmers. We wish Greg the very best in retirement."

During the summer of 2024, he has worked part time at the Carrington Research


Extension Center to wrap up some research projects and plans to continue to have a part-time job of some kind in the future.

In the meantime, Endres plans to spend time with his family and babysit his grandchildren.

He also keeps busy with gardening, going to the lake in the summer, middle distance running and archery.

"I enjoy sports. I compete in the senior games. I train for those."

Endres is proud of what he and his NDSU Extension colleagues have accomplished to help farmers improve their crops production.

"It's great to have been along for the ride," he said. 



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Dry bean industry

After 30 years, Mark Dombeck steps down from serving the dry bean industry

By Ann Bailey | Agweek

Mark Dombeck has been raising kidney beans at his Perham, Minnesota, farm for as long as they have been a crop in his county, and for nearly as long, he has served on the Minnesota Dry Bean Research and Promotion Council.

Dombeck, a crops and dairy farmer, led the council for 30 years, serving as chair for many of them. He stepped down as chair and ended his membership on the board in spring 2024.

He began raising dark red and light red kidney beans in the early 1980s when a group of farmers who were raising the crop built a processing plant in Perham.

"Having a local market was a big factor, otherwise we had to ship them all the way to Wisconsin," Dombeck said.

He became a member of the Minnesota Dry Bean Research and Promotion Council to replace a member who had resigned. The council does not have term limits and there were not farmers who were interested in being a member, so Dombeck remained on it for three decades.



Mark Dombeck of Perham, Minnesota, was at Otter Berry Farm near Perham in September 2022, helping answer questions about edible beans for representatives of foreign governments who were touring Minnesota. After 30 years, Dombeck is retiring from his roles in the dry bean industry. Jeff Beach / Agweek file photo



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Membership on the board offered him an opportunity to promote dry beans and to talk to university researchers about production concerns, such as genetics, weed control and the best way to handle the crop, Dombeck said.

Over the years, the work the Minnesota Dry Bean Research and Promotion Council has promoted with dry bean researchers at universities including Nebraska, Michigan, North Dakota and Minnesota, resulted in improved production methods for dry bean farmers.

Another benefit to dry bean farmers that the council promoted is that their product can be shipped in 2,000 pound totes instead of 100-pound bags, and the seed can be purchased in 2,000 pound totes instead of 50-pound bags, Dombeck said.

As a member of the Minnesota Dry Bean Research and Promotion Council, Dombeck also attended international

trade shows to talk to buyers about how dry edible bean farmers raise their crops.

During Dombeck's years on the Minnesota Dry Bean Research and Promotion Council, the organization worked with the Culinary Institute of America to encourage professional chefs who work on cruise ships and for hotel chains to include dry bean dishes on their menus.

For several years NDSU researchers also had dry bean varietal trials on his farm.

Dombeck planted his 50th crop this year, in the midst of transitioning the ownership of his farm to his sons Robert and Steven and son-in-law Jeremy Lactowitz. The farm grows alfalfa and soybeans, which are used for cattle feed and corn for a cash crop, besides the dark red and light red kidney beans.

The family also runs a 350-cow dairy called Sandhill Dairy Inc.

Dombeck encourages farmers that raise crops that have a commodity organization like the Minnesota Dry Bean Research and Promotion Council to become members. Commodity organization memberships and board service allow farmers to give greater input into issues that are affecting them and insight into future challenges, he said.

"If you're interested, attend a meeting or talk to a neighbor" who is a member or on the board, Dombeck said.

All commodity boards and councils have similar rules, so talking to someone who is on one, even if they raise another type of livestock or crop, will give insight into them. He also encourages farmers who are thinking about serving on boards or as council members to read grower magazines, such as Northarvest's BeanGrower Magazine, which is available online or in print. 

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Midwest Dry Bean Coalition advocates for the industry on Capitol Hill

By Kennedy Tesch | Agweek

With the recent formation of the Midwest Dry Bean Coalition to advocate and help establish better markets for the dry bean industry, members hit the ground running by traveling to Washington D.C. in mid-April to meet with federal agencies and advocate on Capitol Hill for farm bill policies that will support dry beans.

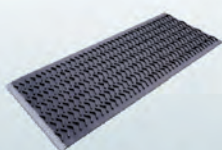
Mitch Coulter, executive director of Northarvest Bean Growers Association, Pat King of P.W. Montgomery and David Scholand of Central Valley Bean Co-op, had meetings with several federal representatives and senators during their time on Capitol Hill.

"It's important to talk to those folks and help them understand what our issues are," Coulter said.

Coulter said that one of the groups main goals is to build support from agencies like the U.S. Department of Agriculture, USAID, and World Food Programme. He emphasized the need to work closely with legislative representatives on the Senate and House ag committees and the appropriations committees to advocate positive policy changes.

Above photo: Mitch Coulter, executive director of the Northarvest Bean Growers Association, Pat King of P.W. Montgomery, and David Scholand of Central Valley Bean Co-op speak to Rep. Pete Stauber, R-Minn. Courtesy / Northarvest Bean Growers Association

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From left, Mitch Coulter, David Scholand and Pat King pose with Rep. Brad Finstad, R-Minn. Courtesy / Northarvest Bean Growers Association

"We met with USDA, federal legislators, and House and Senate agriculture appropriations staff about including report language for a bean purchase program in the farm bill," Coulter said. "This would take the volatile peaks and valleys out of the bean market, and it would support long range budgeting for government bean purchases into the future."

Coulter said the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service showed interest in the bean purchase program.

"They're looking at trying to set out a budget cycle over five-year periods now versus us doing it every year," Coulter said. "The bean purchase program would bring efficiencies to their budget process and it would bring more consistency to the bean market for the farmers and processors."

During their meetings with the United States Agency for International Development and the World Food Program, they worked on forecasting what might be coming down the road for the industry.


Coulter said USDA-AMS and USAID formed a partnership utilizing the Commodity Credit Corporation to propose a purchase of \$1 billion of U.S. commodities. The Midwest Dry Bean Coalition submitted a proposal that is under

consideration. Representatives from the coalition met with both USDA-AMS and USAID to voice how important movement of U.S. dry beans are for our farmers and processors.

Another purpose of the trip was to discuss the dry bean revenue crop insurance program.

"Currently, we believe dry bean premiums need an adjustment to be competitive with other crops in the region. We are requesting from the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation proposed research that would make dry beans more competitive," Coulter said. "We are also requesting that the National Crop Insurance Services research dry bean crop adjustment chart guidelines to bring them more in line with the changes in plant genetic advancements in the structure of a bean plant over the past decade."

Scholand felt it was important to meet with representatives to help advance the industry, especially ahead of the upcoming farm bill.

"We've really been trying to stay in front of D.C. and basically, the food aid side of things as far as dry beans and trying to make sure that we're out there and that they know we're still there," he said. "It's a superfood, right? It's dry, it's shelf stable, we can ship it all over the world." 



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Ag Policy and Trade

Agricultural Policy and Trade Research Institute will give Midwest ag a bigger voice on policy

By Ann Bailey | Agweek

The Agricultural Policy and Trade Research Institute will give Midwest farmers, including dry bean growers, a unified voice to craft policy that affects their commodities, said Collin Peterson, founder of the Midwest Council on Agriculture.

The Midwest Council on Agriculture announced in the spring of 2024 that the Agriculture Appropriations bill directed \$2 million to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish the Agricultural Policy and Trade Research Institute, which will be based at North Dakota State University in Fargo.

Peterson, a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Minnesota who chaired the House Agriculture Committee, founded the Midwest Council on Agriculture after he left office. Peterson, who represented Minnesota's seventh district, observed after he left office that even though the Midwest has the most agricultural density in the United States, agriculture groups were not working together to leverage and focus their power on policy issues.



The Agricultural Policy and Trade Research Institute will research policy and trade issues with a focus on impacts in the upper Midwest and its agriculture, including the dry bean sector. Erin Ehnle Brown / Real Ag Stock

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The Midwest Council on Agriculture is made up of about 85 organizations representing farmers, ranchers, agribusiness professionals, agricultural lenders and commodity groups, including Northharvest Bean Growers Association, from Midwestern states. The states with groups involved in the effort are Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

"The world has changed from the way it was 20 years ago, 30 years ago. ... People would lobby and individual states would lobby and it worked," he said. "In my opinion, it does not work very good anymore. You don't have people on the committee who understand agriculture,"

That is in contrast to when Peterson was on the committee and "good care of the Midwest," he said.

The aim of the Agricultural Policy and Trade Research Institute will be to address farm

and agribusiness issues, such as federal crop insurance and dairy and livestock indemnity programs, through in-depth policy and economic analysis.

Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., and his staff supported the creation of the Agricultural Policy and Trade Research Institute and worked to secure the \$2 million in funding from USDA.


"No one does agriculture better than North Dakota's farmers and ranchers, and agriculture research plays a key role in our state's competitive edge," Hoeven said in a news release.

"The ag policy research center that we're working to bring to NDSU builds upon this strong foundation and would help ensure the policies being advanced in Washington, D.C., meet the needs of our farmers and ranchers in the upper Midwest, complementing the work being done at institutions in Missouri, Texas and Nebraska," Hoeven said.

The policy work done at the Agricultural Policy and Trade Research Institute will be geared toward looking at issues that affect Midwest farmers' crops production, which is different than production in other regions, such as Southwest and Southeast, said Greg Lardy, NDSU vice president for agricultural affairs.

The issues the institute based at NDSU will address will be national in scope, but focused on the Midwest region, in an effort to benefit its farmers, he said.

The expertise provided by the Agricultural Policy and Trade Research Institute will be appreciated by members of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee, Peterson predicted, noting that the committee has no members from North Dakota.

"We don't have the horsepower and the guys that are in Congress understand this. They're looking forward to this," Peterson said. 

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Prioritize Quality



U.S. Dry Bean Council promotes beans for food aid programs

By Ann Bailey | Agweek

An international food aid event in Washington, D.C., gave representatives of U.S. dry bean organizations a chance to showcase their product to U.S. government agencies and non-government agencies across the globe that buy their commodity.

Five members of the U.S. Dry Bean Council set up a display table and attended meetings at the International Food Aid Showcase, held at the U.S. Agriculture Department on May 2, 2024, in Washington D.C.: Dave Weber, U.S. Dry Bean Council food aid committee chair and division manager at New Alliance in Alliance, Nebraska; Thoric Cederstrom, U.S.

Dry Bean Council food aid committee staff lead; Pat King, owner of PW Montgomery LLC in Fargo, North Dakota; Joe Cramer, Michigan Bean Commission executive director; and Mitch Coulter, Northarvest Bean Growers Association executive director.

The International Food Aid Showcase was modeled after an event that had been held in Kansas City that was discontinued several years ago. The May showcase, like that event, was designed to bring together representatives of commodities that are used for food around the world with the buyers of them.

Besides dry beans, representatives of a wide variety of organizations that included commodities from wheat to Alaskan seafood attended the International Food Aid Showcase.

Moving dry beans out of the United States through international food aid programs is the quickest way to increase consumption, which results in "disappearance" or reduction of supplies, Cramer said.

"Food aid can move a lot of beans in a short period of time."

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Putting the commodity in front of USDA and non-governmental food aid buyers via the display tables and through networking at the International Food Showcase was one of the aims of the U.S. Dry Bean Council.

During the event the council members visited with officials who stopped by their display table, which had informational posters about dry beans and samples of the commodities.

"Everyone walked around and met each other ... having the conversations and the networking. Remind them we're here and ready to help them again," Weber said. "It was a very good event."

Besides the informal discussions between food aid buyers and commodity organization representatives, the U.S. International Food Showcase also had several scheduled meetings about food aid issues, including one in which the U.S. Dry Bean Council members at the showcase

talked with international Food Policy Research Institute senior technical advisor Lynn Brown and Jenny Walton, of HarvestPlus.

During the meeting, the council members discussed with Brown and Walton about

co-hosting a webinar on the benefits of using nutrient-dense commodities such as dry beans to maximize the nutritional benefits to recipients who are nutrient deficient.

In 2025 the U.S. Dry Bean Council plans to build on the International Food Showcase by hosting a two-day event for USDA and non-governmental food aid buyers from across the globe in a U.S. bean producing state. That will give the food aid buyers an opportunity to meet dry bean farmers and learn from them how their crop is produced and that it is an ideal source of protein, Cramer said.

Buying dry beans, a nutrient dense product, is beneficial to the recipients of them and, at the same time, is fiscally responsible, he believes.

"They're all trying to buy the most protein for the least amount of tax U.S. dollars, and as taxpayers, so are we," Cramer said. **NBGA**



Thorid Cederstrom, Dave Weber and Mitch Coulter at the International Food Aid Showcase. Contributed / Northarvest Bean Growers Association

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Bean education

Northarvest Bean Growers Association educates about beans at Living Ag Classroom

By Kennedy Tesch | Agweek

As agricultural education is crucial for promoting the industry and its importance, members from the Northarvest Bean Growers Association volunteered to host a booth to help educate area youth on the dry bean industry at North Dakota's Living Ag Classroom event which was held at the Red River Valley Fairgrounds in March.

The Living Ag Classroom educates elementary school-aged children on the diversity of agriculture in the state of North Dakota and the state's role in feeding the nation and the rest of the world.

The event had an attendance of 1,681 students who were able to spend time playing a bean trivia game, learning about dry beans and asking questions. Dexter Cronquist and Karl Jodock were two grower members who stepped up to help with this outreach event.

"We've got a great staff that does this at various events throughout the winter, but it's always helpful to get some growers there, too," Jodock said. "Kids always have questions and the teachers do, too. Usually, there's several questions for the farmer at the end of each session."

Jodock, of Northwood, North Dakota, serves on the North Dakota Dry Bean Council, representing District 3, in addition



Dexter Cronquist, in green, answers student questions at Living Ag Classroom in March 2024.
Contributed / Northarvest Bean Growers Association

to being vice chair of the Research Committee.


Jodock feels this event serves as a great opportunity for youth to learn about production agriculture.

"They're learning more about production agriculture, which, you know, there's a lot of work to do in terms of education, because our culture is a pretty small part of our population," he

said. "On the other side, we're also promoting beans as a food product and getting them on their tables. A lot of the material is about beans in your diet."

Cronquist, of Gilby, North Dakota, is a Northarvest Bean Growers Association director for District 2. He also serves as the vice chair of the Education & Sponsorship Committee and feels it's important to start educating people on the

importance of dry beans from a young age.

"I feel like we need to keep educating, especially younger kids, on different foods that are available," Cronquist said. "Beans are always really healthy and good for you and I think we need to continue informing kids of that. It'd be nice to inform adults as well, but I feel like if you start at a younger age, then it sticks with the kids better." 



From left, Austin Chandonnet of Bayside Best Beans in Michigan, Chase Voelker of the Michigan Dry Bean Commission and Kevin Regan of the North Dakota Dry Bean Council attended a trade mission to Italy.
Contributed / Kevin Regan

Fly-ins and trade missions help strengthen the dry bean industry

By **Jenny Schlecht** | Agweek

Kevin Regan, a Webster, North Dakota, farmer who serves as a director on the United States Dry Bean Council and as well as on the North Dakota Dry Bean Council, has gone on four fly-ins to Washington, D.C., with the Dry Bean Council. And each one is important, he says.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



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“We try to keep an open line of communication with all the decision makers”

- Kevin Regan



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

“We try to keep an open line of communication with all the decision makers,” he said.

The U.S. Dry Bean Council describes itself as “a private trade association comprised of leaders in the bean industry with the common goal of promoting the U.S. edible bean trade, both in the United States and abroad, and educating U.S. consumers about the benefits of beans.”

The fly-ins always have an emphasis on dry bean promotion, and Regan felt there was an extra emphasis in the recent fly-in, March 4-7, 2024, on market development programs, including the Foreign Market Development Program, the Market Access Program and the Regional Agricultural Promotion Program.

Priorities for other policy issues, including the farm bill that remains in the works, also were discussed with lawmakers.

The fly-in included a strategic planning meeting, where the delegates discussed what they would be talking about with the Congressional delegations and staffers they met. Going forward, Regan said Robert Loggins of Bush Brothers & Co. will be taking a leading roll on strategic planning.

Attending along with Regan for Northharvest Bean Growers were Joe Mauch and Mitch Coulter. The group, which also included bean industry representatives from the rest of the country, visited Elaine Trevino at USDA-FAS and Julie Callahan at the office of the U.S. Trade Representative, along with the staffs of Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., Rep. Kelly Armstrong, R-N.D., Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., Rep. Michelle Fischbach, R-Minn., and Sen. Tina Smith, D-Minn.

A TRIP TO ITALY

Regan's bean promotions haven't stopped at the U.S. border. He also was involved in a trade mission later in March that took him to Italy. The mission also included a visit to Spain, which Regan was not able to attend. But he found special value in visiting Italy.

First, he said the trip included a visit to the World Food Program worldwide headquarters in Rome. There, he and others spent several hours with representatives of the program, promoting the inclusion of more beans in food programs.

The worldwide need for food aid continues to increase, with conflicts in Ukraine and Israel and Gaza on top of the normal, already pressing needs of hunger worldwide amid famines in sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world, Regan said. For starving children, beans are “close to the most perfect food,” he said,



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Contributed / Kevin Regan

with the protein, iron and micronutrients available in one source. The story he and others tell of beans is that, though they might cost more than their competitors, they offer more bang for their buck nutritionally.

The next part of the journey took Regan south of Naples, where there are a large number of canners. Italy has the most mature canning industry in the world, and many U.S. beans are shipped to Italy, where they are canned and exported, largely to the European Union and back to the U.S.

"That was really interesting," he said. "They're very happy with the U.S. quality."

Quality, he said, is "paramount to the industry," and the U.S. beans are known for their quality.

The buyers there were particularly interested in meeting with farmers like Regan and learning more about how the beans are grown and how the industry works in the U.S. So, while Regan got to learn about where the beans end up, the buyers got to learn about where they started.

"It's a win-win situation," he said.

Regan said fly-ins and trade missions are vital for promoting the bean industry of the Northarvest Bean Growers region in North Dakota and Minnesota. The industry here has been very strong, he said.

"We want to keep it that way," he said. **NBGA**

PRESIDENT LETTER FROM PAGE 3

There are more stories of work being done on behalf of our industry in these pages, too. Like the Midwest Dry Bean Coalition's Capitol Hill visit. Representatives recently made the trip to Washington, D.C., to educate and advocate for additional considerations for dry bean producers. NBGA did some education here at home as well, which you'll learn about when reading about Karl Jodock (North Dakota Dry Bean Council District 3 Representative) and Dexter Cronquist (Northarvest Bean Growers Association District 2 Director) volunteering their time with Living Ag program events sharing Dry Bean Facts with many youngsters earlier this year. There's more, too, but I've already bent your ear enough.

We hope you enjoy this summer issue and the work of our partners at Agweek. It may not be in a farmer's nature, but while we are at it, try to remember to enjoy some of that summer on your "off" time — no matter how small the window may be.

Speaking for my colleagues on the NBGA Board and both the Minnesota and North Dakota councils, I want to extend a thank you for your efforts in the field and for your continued support of Northarvest and its work. **NBGA**

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