

Testimony of Connie Ova, CEO
Jamestown/Stutsman County Development Corporation
HB 1475
March 31, 2021

Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. I'm Connie Ova, CEO of the Jamestown/Stutsman Development Corporation. I have served in this capacity since 2003. The Jamestown/Stutsman Development Corporation (JSDC) is dedicated to area economic development growth and diversification. JSDC was formally organized in 1991 to develop employment to improve business conditions and advance the interests of the City of Jamestown and Stutsman County, North Dakota by implementing and sustaining an organized effort to attract new businesses and industry, support existing businesses and industry, and encourage new business starts. Jamestown/Stutsman Development Corporation's focus is primary sector job creation.

I stand before you in support of HB 1475, which creates the agriculture innovation fund. This fund, in addition to providing loans to agriculture, also provides for the opportunity through the Bank of ND to provide grants to value added agriculture businesses based on recommendations from the agricultural products utilization commission (APUC). These dollars would come from earnings of the legacy fund. I have included with my testimony a copy of a statewide survey conducted last fall that reveals that the people of North Dakota overwhelmingly support investing the Legacy Fund within the state. There are numerous studies done by APUC highlighting the economic impact of value-added agriculture businesses. We, here in Stutsman County, are home to many value-added ag businesses such as Cavendish Farms, Legume Matrix, Dakota Spirit Ag Energy to name a few and are pursuing a soybean processing/crushing facility and an all under glass, 30 acre greenhouse that will have a significant impact on the local and state economy.

"Value added" means adding value to a raw product by taking it to, at least, the next stage of production. This can be as simple as retaining ownership of your calves and placing them in a feedlot. Value-added agriculture refers most generally to manufacturing processes that increase the value of primary agricultural commodities. Value-added agriculture may also refer to increasing the economic value of a commodity through particular production processes, e.g., organic produce, or through regionally branded products that increase consumer appeal and willingness to pay a premium over similar but undifferentiated products. It can also be described as the process that transforms the raw agricultural product into something new through packaging, processing, cooling, drying, extracting, and other processes that change a product from its original raw form. As a result of this transformation, the customer base of a product and revenue sources for the producer are expanded.

JSDC understands the difficult position you have to determine the state's future, and we appreciate all the thoughtfulness you have put into managing this responsibility. Please consider how programs and resources support the communities in the entire state as you make these decisions.

I urge the committee's support of HB 1475.