Crop Rotation Small-Group Discussion

The Situation
Crop acreage in Northwest North Dakota has historically been dominated by spring wheat and durum. With low small grain prices and vomitoxin problems in 2016, farmers are eager to learn more about alternative crops that can increase profitability and reduce pest problems.

Extension Response
A small-group meeting was held with six farmer participants, three extension staff, and one industry representative in Crosby in December 2016 to discuss alternative crop selection and sequencing, i.e., crop rotation. Farmers lead the discussion by sharing their experiences growing different crops and highlighted some of the benefits and challenges they have faced with fababean, soybean, corn, and flax. Extension staff discussed root rot disease-risk in short pulse crop rotations and emphasized thinking about white mold risk in rotations that include sunflower.

Impacts
Farmer-participants reported that the meeting format facilitated peer-to-peer learning and featured a good balance of farmer and facilitator voices. Two farmers reported that they were unaware of the scab (vomitoxin) risk posed by corn to wheat and durum and would take this into consideration when planting corn in the future. Additionally, two farmers reported that they learned about the risk short crop rotations pose for root rot diseases in pulse crops and that they would lengthen crop rotations to reduce this risk.

Feedback
- All participants stated they appreciated the focus on farmer experience and the opportunity to learn from others who have grown a variety of alternative crops
- 6 of 6 farmers indicated they would be willing to participate in similar meetings in the future

Public Value Statement
Diversifying crops spreads financial risk across multiple markets and is major pillar of integrated pest management.

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