Chile Visit Enlightening for RLND Participants

A diverse group of North Dakotans has a better understanding of the farming practices, culture and heritage of Chile following a 10-day stay in a country that’s more than 6,000 miles away.

During the trip to Chile, the RLND group learned about the research DowDuPont is conducting to help Chilean producers increase their yields and achieve food security, and met with the Foreign Ag Service and a representative of U.S. Wheat Associates.

“We were enthused to hear about the work that the U.S. Wheat Associates does to educate more South American partners on the benefits of U.S. wheat,” RLND participant Kasey Bitz of LaMoure said.

The North Dakotans also learned about the efforts of Chile’s Production Development Corp. to develop and invest in technology, agriculture, mining and entrepreneurship.

“It was a refreshing presentation that highlighted the potential of growth in not only Chile, but also the rest of the world,” RLND participant Chris Adams of Grand Forks said.

In addition, RLND participants toured a U.S. Department of Agriculture fruit inspection facility and visited pear and hazelnut orchards; farms that raise sheep, potatoes, tomatoes, flowers, wheat, canola, oats, chestnuts and trees for logging; a vineyard; and mills for processing canola, wheat and oat.
“From the beef with gravy and potatoes at lunch to the smell of cut wheat, multiple discussions about the weather and watching grain being sampled at the elevator, today was a good reminder farmers across the world share experiences every growing season,” Tammy Jo Taft, an RLND participant from Arthur, said at the end of Day 7 of the trip.

Other trip highlights included:
• Touring Chile’s capital, Santiago, including the Metropolitan Cathedral de Santiago, Palacio de La Moneda and other historic buildings
• Traveling to entrepreneurial farms with a representative of INDAP, a Chilean government agency that’s part of the Ministry of Agriculture and is focused on supporting the development of entrepreneurial farmers and businesses by identifying local leaders with minimal amounts of land and providing them with resources to develop their small business
• Meeting a Mapuche couple who developed a garden of fruits and vegetables on land previously used for sheep grazing and a Mapuche woman who built a traditional home as part of her efforts to educate others about Mapuche history, and touring a Mapuche strawberry and raspberry farm.
• Touring a sheep farm whose owner added a campground that allows about 2,000 Mapuche people to come each summer to spend time enjoying and reconnecting with their native lands
• Hiking on Cerro Nielol, a hill in Temuco with native forest and a system of trails to encourage people to have more contact with nature
• Visiting a farm that raises llamas and alpacas and brings in school and senior citizen groups to educate them about agriculture
• Touring Pabellon El Amor de Chile, a pavilion that showcases Chile’s agriculture
• Experiencing Chilean food

RLND participants Doug Naze of Surrey and Matt Dahlke of Lincoln noted that the North Dakota group had to get used to eating meals later in the evening. “With an evening meal that doesn’t begin until 8 p.m., it is an early night if the day ends before midnight,” Naze said.