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**A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY
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Land Rental Survey Results Available

The North Dakota Field Office of USDA's National Agriculture Statistics Service conducts an annual survey of farmers and ranchers to obtain average rental rates and the value of rental land in their localities. Approximately 4,600 North Dakota agricultural producers were sampled for this survey conducted January 17 through February 2, 2012. More than 2,950 reports were collected with almost 2,150 containing positive data.

We recently received a copy of the survey report and will share it upon request. It also can be accessed at www.nass.usda.gov/nd. Tables in the report contain county-level data for cropland, pastureland, alfalfa hayland, other tame hayland and wild or prairie grass hayland. All of the data in the report refers to non-irrigated land and for cash rental arrangements only.

For Williams County there were 45 reports on cropland cash rents and values. The rates reported ranged from a low of \$20 to a high of \$50 per acre. The most frequent rate reported was \$30 per acre while the average is \$32.30 per acre.

In Divide County, there were 37 reports giving an annual cash rental of between \$25 and \$60 per acre with the most frequent and average being similar to Williams County at \$30 and \$33.40 per acre respectively.

Thirty four reports from McKenzie County produced a range of \$18 - \$50 per acre while the most frequent and average were quite close at \$30 and \$30.30 respectively.

I am often asked for rental rate data on the township level. The sampling simply does not allow for this. Through my visits with landowners and tenants I often hear as much variation within a township as there is at the county level. There are so many factors which go into determining rental rates. For many landowners and tenants, productivity is the key. Another is trust. Landowners want to have confidence their property is being managed well and rental

payments made on a timely basis. Access to the property is becoming an issue of greater importance. Tenants are becoming more concerned with safety issues of moving large equipment on roads which are experiencing much more traffic compared to that of just three years ago. Some landowners are more sympathetic to young farmers trying to get started in agriculture food production. The list of factors used by people in determining cash rental values can be long. Whichever ones are used, the end should give a landowner a fair monetary return for his property and to offer a reasonable opportunity for the tenant to experience a favorable return for labor, management and to pay expenses.

With this in mind, I often suggest using the data found in the crop budget worksheets published each year by the agricultural economics department of the NDSU Extension Service. This too is available at no cost by calling our office at 701-577-4595. It contains some reasonable numbers for possible income and the expense components for raising each of the popular crops grown in northwest North Dakota. The worksheet allows producers to use their own revenue and expense numbers. I believe the worksheet has value to the landowner as it contains realistic figures as calculated by the agricultural economists at NDSU.

Tree of the Week

A reader recently called suggesting I write more information about trees which are known to grow in North Dakota and this area. Now I am not a forester by training but over the years I have acquired much knowledge of trees as a result of many, many inquiries received each summer and the countless contacts made with people well known for their expertise with trees and shrubs.

So, each week I will try to include a little "snip-it" about at least one tree successfully growing in this area.

I will start with Bur Oak because I believe it to be the granddaddy of all trees growing in the state. It is a long-lived tree that is native to all of North Dakota except our northwestern corner. Some people don't consider Bur Oak because they believe it to be a slow growing tree. To some extent I can agree but have seen Bur Oak grow as much as two feet per year. To do

this, the young tree must be given the same love and care with water we are willing to give to other trees. However, because it's very drought resistant we tend to forget about it after planting with expectations it will survive even though grass might be growing under the canopy.

There are a few Bur Oak growing in residential areas of the community. Some look good while others are green but struggling as if they were growing in the hardwood draws of western North Dakota.

Bur Oak is one of a few trees with a taproot. Thus, it is difficult to transplant. I am sure almost all Bur Oak in yard plantings have been started as seedlings.

Last summer several of the Bur Oak trees in Williston were hit with anthracnose. This is a fungal disease associated with wet weather and cool temperatures.