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**Crops**

# Slow, steady strategy wins race

BY SONJA FLAAGAN

**‘S**LOW and steady wins the race” appears to be the mantra of farmers in the north-central region of North Dakota.

After looking at the previous volatility of the net return per acre that occurred in the Red River Valley of North Dakota (“Hunting for perfect high-profit crop mix,” February 2016, Page 54), the relative steadiness of the north-central region stands out in sharp contrast.

Out of eight main crops grown in the north-central region, six have for the past eight years consistently yielded a profit. Of these crops, corn has worst track record on average over the 10-year period. (See tables.)

Is this due, however, to the drastic price drops in corn in 2014? With 2014 re-

**Key Points**

- Corn doesn't make list of top crops in north-central North Dakota.
- Pinto beans have the highest average profit from 2005 to 2014.
- Sunflowers and barley consistently rank near the top of the list.

moved, the average moves corn into the fifth-place position. It also bumped sunflowers up from fifth to second. This shift moves from a group of crops that would not be an ideal rotation to one that could.

Even in this scenario, corn still has more years of losing money than other crops, and with increased volatility. For example, from 2009 to 2010 a swing of over \$250 per acre was noted. This makes you evaluate your ability or desire to take risk. Do you want to lose over \$50 per acre one year and then make almost \$200 the next

year? Either way, unless your crop rotation calls for inclusion of corn, it might be wisest to steer away from raising corn in north-central North Dakota.

One thing to realize when looking at averages of all farms in a region is that the numbers are for the “average” farmer. Unfortunately, the “average” farmer does not exist. Each farm is highly individualized with the soil, weather, equipment and management practices that go into making your farm what it is.

Meticulous recordkeeping over the long term will yield answers to the question of what crop brings a high profit on your farm. Maybe you have selected the right variety for your soil and weather, coupled with the right level of machinery and a solid marketing plan. Your personal data could reveal that corn is the crop for you! Or canola!

## For more information

FOR information concerning the North Dakota Farm Business Management Program and its various reports and materials, go to the website at [ndfarmmanagement.com](http://ndfarmmanagement.com). You may also contact Aaron Anderson, state supervisor for agricultural education, at the North Dakota State Capitol (701-328-3162). The Farm Business Management Program is sponsored by the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education.

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**Crops ranked by average returns per acre in north-central North Dakota, 2005-2014**

	Average	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Pinto beans	\$116.30	(\$20.66)	\$190.36	\$242.20	\$335.63	\$27.22	\$103.93	\$80.67	\$128.62	\$31.91	\$42.83
Barley	\$94.72	\$0.97	\$158.03	\$158.95	\$85.66	\$44.81	\$73.86	\$149.15	\$71.57	\$21.50	(\$21.91)
Soybeans	\$87.41	\$17.74	\$110.78	\$191.99	\$84.23	\$127.44	\$67.60	\$54.82	114..23	(\$12.02)	\$33.40
Canola	\$67.26	\$3.09	\$100.67	\$109.91	\$61.16	\$98.85	\$79.07	\$94.79	\$35.53	(\$7.49)	(\$11.03)
Sunflower	\$65.84	\$3.86	\$60.53	\$180.93	\$79.07	\$34.07	\$203.91	\$74.28	\$124.45	\$32.49	\$39.23
Spring wheat	\$63.70	\$16.89	\$67.99	\$122.02	\$65.50	\$112.30	\$32.01	\$91.03	\$92.40	\$7.06	(\$10.01)
Durum wheat	\$61.23	\$80.55	\$23.40	\$56.11	\$66.92	\$94.31	\$69.58	\$81.74	\$100.56	\$3.54	(\$12.89)
Corn	\$38.36	(\$116.77)	\$96.27	\$222.41	\$154.99	\$199.28	(\$52.81)	(\$40.99)	\$71.96	(\$3.53)	\$4.62

SOURCE: ND FARM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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