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TO: Jeanette Thurston, Executive Director, agInnovation North Central
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FROM: Derek McLean, Dean and Director, Agricultural Research Division and NE Agricultural
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RE: Corn Disease Working Group ERA

Derek J. McLean

I strongly support the proposed *Corn Disease Working Group* Extension Research Activity (ERA) based in agInnovation NC. This initiative represents a timely and highly coordinated effort to address the increasing complexity and impact of corn diseases on U.S. agriculture. The scale and complexity of corn diseases now require coordinated, multistate action that integrates research, Extension, and diagnostics.

Corn remains a cornerstone of U.S. agricultural economy, and the challenges posed by emerging and persistent diseases require integrated, multistate solutions that are difficult to address through the work of individual projects. The proposed working group brings together leading expertise in research, Extension, and diagnostics to enhance collaboration, improve disease management strategies, and strengthen our collective ability to respond to emerging and evolving threats.

The emphasis on coordinated disease loss estimates, shared methodologies, and rapid information exchange is particularly useful and important to stakeholders. These efforts will directly benefit and provide measurable impact for producers through improved decision-making, increased profitability, and reduced risk associated with disease pressures and mycotoxins. Equally important is the group's commitment to delivering science-based information through Extension networks and platforms such as the Crop Protection Network, ensuring broad and timely impact.

The focus on coordinated disease loss estimates, shared methodologies, and rapid exchange of information is essential. Delivering science-based information through Extension networks and platforms such as the Crop Protection Network ensures timely adoption and measurable impact at the producer level. The structure and leadership are sound. Dr. Loren Giesler has agreed to serve as administrative advisor, and his experience will provide effective coordination and accountability across participating states.

This effort is well aligned with current USDA research and outreach priorities. It will improve profitability for farmers by advancing disease management strategies that reduce yield loss, limit input costs, and improve decision precision. The coordinated surveillance, rapid detection, and response to emerging and invasive disease threats will protect the integrity of American agriculture. The project will promote soil health and long-term productivity by advancing practices that reduce disease pressure while potentially improving water use efficiency and overall system resilience. Protecting grain quality and reducing mycotoxin risks contributes to expanding markets and strengthens both domestic utilization and export competitiveness.

This working group is positioned to deliver clear, practical outcomes that strengthen the corn production system and provide durable value to producers and the broader agricultural economy. I fully support the proposal.