Peas and lentils may get check-off

- Bill would make 1 percent assessment on sales

By Jayson Menke
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MINOT — The rapid expansion in field pea acres in North Dakota has led growers to propose a check-off on the sale of dry beans and lentils sold in the state.

Lance Gaede, administrator of the North Dakota Dry Pea and Lentil Association, said the association today will propose Senate Bill 2134, which would establish a 1 percent net value assessment on the sale of dry peas and lentils.

Growers at the association’s fourth annual meeting Wednesday in Minot were encouraged about the check-off, which will be used for marketing and promotion, market development, research, variety improvement, disease research, pest control, and education.

"We've lost some of our international markets to other countries, Canada in particular, and to gain back the going to take some money," said Paul Berntzen, Ada, N.D., farmer. Berntzen said the money also could fund research, promotion and education.

Berntzen liked the 1 percent check-off, but was concerned a higher check-off would take too much of already slim margins. Gaede said the check-off would create about $10,000 a year, slightly more than the $900 the association bailed in for 1996.

The Senate bill would create the North Dakota Dry Pea and Lentil Council, which would manage the check-off fund. The council would be made up of five producers representing North Dakota's growing districts.

The proposed check-off would apply to pulse crops, including lentils, dry peas, chick peas and lupines. The bill does include a refund provision.