Pomeroy speaks at convention

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Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D., told a crowd of about 300 Tuesday it’s time for that diversifying North Dakota’s agriculture economy is a refreshing change from farm policy in Washington.

Pomeroy, who was guest speaker at the 35th annual North Dakota Dry Pea and Lentil Association convention, talked freely about the challenges in Washington related to the new farm bill, but he took time early to praise pulse producers who have continued building a strong economy in North Dakota.

"The nation needs what we produce," Pomeroy said. "Pulse crops have literally put the 'pulse' back in financial planning."

Pomeroy was quick to remind everyone that pulse acreage has steadily climbed since 1996 to a new record: 315,000 acres of peas and 140,000 acres of lentils in 2005. Fifteen years ago, there were barely 20,000 acres of both crops combined.

And for the second consecutive year, North Dakota has been the nation's No. 1 producer of peas, providing 61 percent of the supply while lentils grown in North Dakota account for 31 percent of the nation's supply, also a No. 1 ranking ahead of Washington. "We've been under tremendous pressure to diversify, so what you've been able to achieve with pea and lentil production is remarkable," Pomeroy said. "And now..."