

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Grand Forks Identified as Site for a \$450 Million Potato Processing Plant**

*Agristo, a Belgium-based company, intends to build a \$450 million potato processing facility in Grand Forks that will create 250-350 new permanent jobs.*

**GRAND FORKS, N.D.** – Agristo, a potato processing company, announced its intent to build its first production plant in the United States, specifically Grand Forks. A final decision is conditional on the guaranteed infrastructure and tax incentives package and competitive rail rates from BNSF out of North Dakota. The production plant construction is anticipated to be a direct investment of \$450 million. Once the facility is operational, it is expected to add 250 to 350 direct jobs.

"This is an exciting announcement for the Grand Forks region," said Keith Lund, EDC President & CEO. "The Red River Valley boasts some of the most productive lands in the United States, which positions Grand Forks as an ideal location for value-added agriculture processing. I want to thank the local farmers and Mayor Brandon Bochenski for their leadership and support in expanding and diversifying the regional economy."

City of Grand Forks Mayor Brandon Bochenski, Governor Kelly Armstrong, Senator John Hoeven, and Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring shared in the excitement of the announcement. "It's a huge step forward for Grand Forks. As we look to grow, agriculture is really the key driver in our community," Mayor Bochenski stated. "As a Top 5 potato-producing state and a leader in ag innovation, North Dakota is the ideal location for Agristo's first processing facility in North America," Governor Armstrong contributed. "This project will expand value-added agriculture in North Dakota, improve profitability for our potato growers, and strengthen our state's economy."

Agristo was founded in 1983 by childhood friends Antoon Wallays and Luc Raes in Belgium. The company found success in potato processing and continued that by expanding into several different countries. Today six branches exist across Belgium, the Netherlands, France, and India. Their headquarters are in Weilsbeke, Belgium, and the company is led by the co-founders' children, including company CEO Filip Wallays.

"Throughout the decision-making process, we received exceptional support from local officials, farmers, and residents in Grand Forks," Agristo said in its announcement. "Their enthusiasm reinforced our belief in building not just a production site, but a hub for collaboration and growth."

As Agristo grew, they identified the United States as an expansion opportunity. Over the last several years, the company has worked with agronomists, farmers, and local leaders in Wisconsin and North Dakota to research each state's ability to produce the European potato variety and economic opportunities. The research included several site visits, meetings, presentations, and conversations in each location.

On Tuesday, January 21st, 2025, the Grand Forks City Council approved a memorandum of understanding with Agristo, paving the way for the next steps. If Agristo's conditions are met, they anticipate a 2025 groundbreaking, with the facility opening in 2028.

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**About Grand Forks Region Economic Development Corporation**

The Grand Forks Region EDC works collaboratively to foster an environment that attracts innovative people and business investment to Grand Forks County and the surrounding region, enhancing economic vitality for long-term prosperity and growth.