

Hart Field-Site Group Inc
PO Box 939
CLARE SA 5453

admin@hartfieldsite.org.au
www.hartfieldsite.org.au



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 29 SEPTEMBER, 2010

YP LENTIL GROWER WARNS TO EXPECT DELAYS AT SILOS THIS YEAR

By Gabrielle Hall

Yorke Peninsula farmer Kyle Holman has warned lentil growers to expect long delays at silos this year as testers will be vigilant in looking for green kernel in samples.

Mr Holman was a speaker at the Hart Field Day on September 21 and told growers it was vital to keep on top of disease and insects, and spend time on paddock selection and preparation to produce a clean lentil crop.

“Lentils go almost from the header to the table, they are bought on appearance so exporters expect a very clean product from growers which means paddock selection and preparation and also weed control is absolutely vital,” he said.

“Last year there were problems with green kernel in lentils and so growers should be very prepared for delays at the silos this year – maybe up to 20 minutes at the testing station – because they’ll be absolutely vigilant looking for green kernels.”

Green kernel is thought to be caused by a disruption to the maturation process through events such as extreme heat or poor timing of ‘crop topping’ and desiccation practices.

Up to 75,000 hectares of lentils are expected to be harvested this season in South Australia – a 40 per cent increase on last year – and Mr Holman said many farmers were hoping for a successful “cash crop”.

“Basically people are looking for a cash crop, they’ve struggled for so many years and I’d say many are taking a bet and trying lentils as a cash crop this year,” he said.

Mr Holman has been growing lentils on his Paskeville farm for nine years and said harvest timing was vital in maximising potential of lentil crops.

“I basically have the header sitting in the paddock ready to go the day before the lentils are ready to reap,” he said.

“Anywhere from 3 millimetres of rain on a ripe lentil crop can cause weather damage straight away because the seed coat can wrinkle and be downgraded. You can lose up to 20 per cent of your crop very quickly.

“We’re talking about a crop, which this year, has the potential of \$900-\$1000 an acre compared to wheat at \$600-\$700/ac.

“Harvest timing is critical. If your barley gets downgraded you could lose \$15-\$20 a tonne but if your lentils are downgraded we’re talking losing up to \$500/t.

“There’s no second grade for lentils, this is a food product we’re talking about and consumers are not going to buy damaged product.”



South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) research scientist Larn McMurray, SARDI pulse pathologist Jenny Davidson and Paskeville lentil grower Kyle Holman in a lentil agronomy trial at the Hart Field Day.

South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) research scientist Larn McMurray was also a key trials speaker at the Hart Field Day and says with four new varieties of lentils on the Australian market in the past two years, there is unprecedented choice for growers.

“Lentils are a new crop for Australia, the industry only started here in 1996 and it was based on varieties bought in from overseas,” he said.

“Some improved lines were released about four years ago, but we’ve had four new varieties – PBA Bounty, PBA Flash, PBA Jumbo and PBA Blitz – in the last 12 months and we haven’t seen that choice before.”

Mr McMurray said there were some issues for lentil growers to be particularly vigilant about for the remainder of the growing season including disease management of botrytis grey mould and ascochyta blight.

“Ideally spraying at canopy closure to control botrytis would have already occurred by now, but growers should be closely monitoring the disease,” he said.

“With ascochyta blight once the crop has started podding they should spray in front of the next rain.

“This year there’s been a higher level of ascochyta blight than we’ve seen before, mainly because the area of lentils has increased dramatically and the last four to six weeks of rain and cool weather is what this disease loves.”

Other issues to be aware of are monitoring and control of aphids, native bud worm and etiella to avoid grain damage.

Varietal purity was also vital given the consumer focus on aesthetics of lentils.

“Variety purity is very important and is of particular concern when growing varieties with different seed colour,” Mr McMurray said.

“Growers should be aware of the potential for contamination from volunteer or escaped lentil plants in paddocks when changing to new varieties with different seed coat colours.

“Be particularly careful if growing green lentils such as Boomer along with red lentils as contamination from either will significantly reduce the value of the split lentil product.”

To see how the lentil trials at the Hart Field Site are progressing, head along to the free Spring Twilight Walk on Thursday, October 21, 2010, at 5pm.

For more information take a look at the Hart Field-Site Group website www.hartfieldsite.org.au

Media contact: Hart Field-Site Group trials manager Peter Hooper 0427 225 590 or for variety-specific questions contact SARDI research scientist Larn McMurray 8842 6265.