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2020 Pulse Harvest Update

By Megan Madden

No matter what is happening around the world, crops in Saskatchewan will always get seeded and eventually harvested. Given the variance of climate and weather from north to south in our province, these happen at varying times, but this year, pulses have seen some similar conditions, no matter the growing region.

“The soybeans and dry beans (which are warm season pulses) struggled early in the season due to cooler weather, but have developed now that August has been warmer,” says Sherrilyn Phelps, Agronomy Manager with Saskatchewan Pulse Growers. “However, the lower rainfall and hot days in August dried things out quickly and brought in crops. The later season crops such as dry bean, faba beans, and soybeans that rely on those August rains are likely the most affected.”

Melanie Leppa, an independent consultant who owns Soils and Such Agronomy southwest of Swift Current, said heavy rain events also impacted some large acre pulse yields in her area. “More than once, we had rain that was more than two inches at a time,” said Leppa.

Unfortunately, Prairie moisture does not always come in the form of rain. On the northeastern side of the province, Kara Annand with AgGrow Consulting saw a lot of peas hurt significantly by hail in early July. “If the peas, green and yellow alike, survived the hail, they still look really good going into harvest,” she says. “The hail was early enough that almost everything regrew and the heat in late August gave them what they needed.”

Leppa added that moisture in the southwest was inconsistent throughout the season then changed significantly in late July. “We were dry into harvest kick off,” she said. “The chickpeas especially were really early. We were seeing them desiccated in late August when peas and a few lentils were already being combined.”

She also adds, “It is still early so I cannot speak to anything concrete, but the yields are extremely variable across the southwest. We have seen red lentils yielding anywhere from the mid-teens up to almost 40 bushels per acre and the large green lentil yields are anywhere from 20-30 bushels per acre.”

Those wet conditions led to *Aphanomyces* (root rot) being seen across the province. Leppa observed that not every grower had it, but “if growers did not know they had it, they do now after the past two seasons with some localized heavy rain events.”

Phelps pointed out that lengthening the rotations with peas is paying off in terms of higher yields and reduced root rot issues, and so far, yields have not been adversely affected by conditions and disease. “So far where crops were looking good (ex. no health or root rot issues) yields are looking good,” she notes. “Most harvest has been occurring in southern parts of the province, but we are seeing some peas and lentils also coming off throughout the rest of the province. With good, dry harvest weather, quality seems to be pretty good.”

Annand says growers in her region are hoping that dry, warm weather sticks around for the sake of the faba beans. “We need frost to hold off until at least September 15 for the faba beans to finish,” she commented. “Most of our peas are desiccated, but the faba beans have not started and the cool spring and wet season has them needing the time.”

The purpose of desiccating is to quickly dry down the crop and get rid of any weeds present. Most of the products are contact products that need good coverage to have the best effects, no matter the weather. Because of that, Phelps emphasizes that high water volumes are very important.

“Glyphosate is not a desiccant but is a harvest aid to help kill weeds, particularly perennial weeds,” she adds. “For any harvest-aid product, make sure the crop moisture content is at or below 30% and check the [Keep It Clean website](#) for current maximum residue levels (MRLs).”

One cautionary example is for lentil growers, who should avoid using glufosinate products as there are missing or very low MRLs in most major markets. Phelps always recommends confirming with your grain buyer prior to product application to ensure marketability of your crop.

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Figure 1. Pulse harvest has begun in many corners of Saskatchewan.