BALANCING THE HARVEST

Not all Yorke Peninsula farmers plant all types of crops every year. Those that do plant multiple crops need to keep in mind the ripening times and the crop vulnerability to weather.

For example:

- Canola is often windrowed early to protect against inclement weather.
- Barley is more vulnerable to wind than wheat so is usually harvested first.
- If the faba beans or lentils ripen, then other harvesting (such as barley) might be paused while the pulses are harvested; since pulses can lose half their value if left in the field when it rains.
- Chickpeas originated in the Middle East and need a lot of heat to mature; which means they usually ripen and are harvested last.

Farmers often work all day and then late into the night - only stopping when the night-time moisture level rises to the point it starts affecting the quality of the grain.

Balancing all the harvesting and ripening times is why harvest can be hectic for farmers; delays of hours or days can make an enormous difference to the quality of their harvest and to their annual income. If it rains during harvest, then the crop can take days to dry out enough—since a higher moisture content means a lower price at the silos. If moisture content is too high, farmers might even be turned away from the silos for safety

BARLEY

Barley was once the most common crop grown on Yorke Peninsula, so-much-so it was a major contributor to Australia's barley production. In current times farmers diversify more in their crops, with lentils, wheat and canola regularly rivalling barley planted per hectare.

Barley and wheat in the field are often hard to identify for the layperson. While ripening, barley is lighter green than wheat and when ripe it is a paler yellow. Barley also droops when ripe, while wheat stands upright. Gabrielle Gutsche | Yorketown

GRAINS, GROWING, SEEDS & SOWING CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN YORKE PENINSULA

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Correct as of October 2020 Managed and produced by Yorke Peninsula Council IS168 - Gains, Growing, Seeds & Sowing See the colour Compare the heights Examine the leaves Witness the harvest Taste the produce

WHEAT

Wheat is darker green than barley when unripe, and is a more golden colour when ripe. Wheat stands upright when ready for harvest.

Wheat is still a commonly grown crop on Yorke Peninsula sometimes it is the largest crop planted per hectare; a distinction that often alternates between barley, wheat or lentils.

The exact amount of each crop grown on the Yorke Peninsula, each year is available in the annual 'Crop and Pasture Report' on the PIRSA website. pirsa.sa.gov.au

FIELD PEAS

Field peas grow on trailing stems, similar to those grown in a domestic gardens. However, unlike garden peas, they are not trained up trellises and thus the result is a tangled field of pea plants rather than the relatively neat rows of chickpeas.

Like other pulses (chickpeas, beans, lentils) field peas fix nitrogen in the soil, making them an excellent crop to rotate with cereal crops like wheat and barley.



FABA BEANS

Faba beans grow upright—approximately 1-1.5m in height. The bean plants have branches stemming from the base, with oval compound leaves (2 or more leaflets joined to the one stem).

When beans start to ripen, they turn black from the base up making them easy for the layperson to recognise at the end of the growing season.

Faba beans were once grown as stock feed, but are now grown and exported for human consumption; which can triple the value of a faba bean crop. However, if it rains when the faba beans are already ripe, the quality might lessen and they might only be suitable for stock food. Thus, farmers try to harvest faba beans (and all pulses) as soon as they are ripe; sometimes working all day and late into the night.

CANOLA

In early spring, the land can look like a patchwork quilt of greens and yellows—with Canola providing the bright yellow patches. The canola plants grow tall and have very tough stalks. As the plant ripen, long pods form, which contain the small black seeds used to make Canola Oil.

If the pods are left on the stalks until ripe, the pods can shatter in a strong wind and the seeds will be lost. Many farmers choose to 'windrow' the canola early. Windrowing involves cutting and laying down the crop to finish ripening. These 'windrows' are then less susceptible to wind, and even rain tends to drain straight through. Later the farmer will return and process the rows with a harvester, to separate the oily seeds.

CHICKPEAS

Chickpeas are bushy plants that grow in relatively neat rows, looking similar to lentils except they can grow 2-3 times taller. The chickpea plants have a thick, strong stalk and oval-shaped leaves.

The oblong pods of chickpeas are relatively light compared to lentil pods, as they only contain 2-3 pea-like seeds, instead of being densely-packed with the smaller lentils.

LENTILS

Lentils grow on small bushy plants that range from 30cm to 50cm tall. They are planted in rows, which remain defined throughout the season, giving lentil fields a 'neat' look.

Lentils, being a pulse, are often used in rotation with cereal crops (barley/wheat) because they fix nitrogen in the soil and also break the lifecycle of cereal root diseases.

The lentil pods are large and the lentil 'seeds' are small and densely packed, which makes each pod feel relatively heavy.

OTHER CROPS

Not long ago, crops in Yorke Peninsula paddocks were almost always barley or wheat, with the occasional oat crop making an appearance.

Now farmers often choose to diversify, and thus you'll see a wider range of crops, including canola, faba beans, chickpeas, field peas and lentils—and less commonly you might also see oats, vetch, hay or lupins. Farmers continue to experiment and diversify, and thus new crops might be seen, but in the meantime this brochure will help you identify the more common crops on Yorke Peninsula. If moist grains are stored in large quantities, enourmous heat can be generated and lead to combustion.