



Monday, November 25, 2013

Growers urged to take care when harvesting lentils

GRAIN Producers SA is encouraging growers to take extra precautions when reaping lentils this harvest.

Some growers, particularly in the Mid North and Yorke Peninsula, have observed some lentil residues may be more readily igniting as they pass through the header this harvest than in previous years.

GPSA chief executive Darren Arney said farmers had been abiding by the State's Grain Harvesting Code of Practice but in addition to what was outlined in the code, there were some extra precautions growers could take when reaping lentils.

Growers need to:

- Maintain fire breaks around harvest operations where practical.
- Keep a farm fire fighting unit in the paddock being harvested, including water, extinguisher, shovel and access to UHF CB radio or mobile phone. Many growers have water stored on tractors and chaser bins.
- Keep crop residues on machines to a minimum, particularly engines, exhausts or brakes.
- Have an observer in the paddock when reaping to ensure any smouldering residues can be extinguished immediately.
- Harvest lentils driving into or across the wind to ensure residues do not lodge on headers.
- Reduce potential build-up of static electricity while reaping.
- In hot, dry and windy conditions, stop harvest when the local actual (not forecast) Grassland Fire Danger Index exceeds 35.
- Regularly maintain machinery before and during harvest, particularly wearing parts and bearings.

GPSA has engaged Queensland-based harvest fire expert Graeme Quick to research whether there are any differences in lentil residues this year, the ignition sources and circumstances of fires so far and the fuel loads of the crops.

"Dr Quick will prepare a report that compiles this data and assesses potential causes and will provide the report to GPSA next month," Mr Arney said.

"While there has been an increased observation of ignition of lentil residues this harvest, there has also been a large increase in the area sown to lentils. This year, 94,800 hectares have been sown compared with 88,800ha last year and 68,500ha a decade ago. The value of this year's lentil crop is \$120 million so for many growers, it is their most valuable crop.

"Part of Dr Quick's research will determine how much of the increased observance is due to the fact there are more lentils being harvested so once the data has been collected, the cause can be identified."

GPSA and Dr Quick met with representatives from Primary Industries & Regions SA and the Country Fire Service last week to gain more information on harvest fires and reconfirm the industry's commitment to the Grain Harvesting Code of Practice and extra precautions growers were taking in harvesting lentils.

More information on the Grain Harvesting Code of Practice or how to calculate the Grassland Fire Danger Index visit www.cfs.sa.gov.au or phone 08 8463 4200.

ENDS

For interviews, contact Darren Arney on 0448 186 707.

For more information on Grain Producers SA and its policies, visit www.grainproducerssa.com.au or get in touch on 08 8391 6621 or email info@grainproducerssa.com.au

About Grain Producers SA:

Grain Producers SA is a not-for-profit organisation that intends to represent all levy-paying grain producers in South Australia. GPSA's objective is to foster the development and implementation of policies that promote the economic and environmental sustainability of the South Australian grains industry for the benefit of its producers and the wider community. Growers are encouraged to have their say on policy and have input on the people who represent them.
