

Lentil

Introduction

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Montana and North Dakota producers have dramatically increased their interest in pulse crops (lentils, peas, chickpeas) and the acreage allotted to these crops during recent years. Conversely, acreage in the primary producing states, Washington and Idaho, has dropped. The Canadian provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba continue to be major producers with increasing production levels. There are good reasons for the increased interest in pulse crops. The latest farm bill allowed for expanded acreage of alternative crops. This, when coupled with potentially favorable economics, is an environment that in many areas is conducive to pulse crop production, plus the benefit of crop rotation in our cereal intensive systems explain the rapidly expanded acreages.

For northern Great Plains small grain producers, the benefits of using a rotational crop for pest management are obvious. The majority of diseases that affect wheat or barley do not affect lentils or other pulse crops. Thus, the survival of cereal pathogens is dramatically reduced during years when pulse crops are grown. Conversely, the pathogens attacking cereals are seldom an issue during the production of a pulse crop. As with small grain, frequent pulse crop production will cause an increase in disease pressure. Canadian experts recommend that no single pulse crop be grown in the same field more often than once in four years. Producers planning a small grain-pulse rotation should rotate among chickpea, dry pea and lentil during the pulse crop year.

Whenever new crops are introduced into a region they should be relatively free of residue-borne diseases. Thus far, most pulse crop growing regions in Montana have not experienced any significant disease outbreaks on lentils. However, the potential for introduction via infected seed and subsequent spread does exist. Therefore producers need to take appropriate actions to avoid economic losses. This includes learning to recognize the common diseases, understanding how they are spread and learning about methods used to manage lentil diseases.

Categories: Lentil, Diseases, Introduction

Date: 06/06/2002