**CHICKPEAS:** Continued from 114

bean. A loss in color causes a sharp decrease in value.

Had noted that producers go through a very sharp learning curve the first year of chickpea production. After one year, growers can generally put up a very high quality crop to obtain the best price possible.

Chickpeas are a full-season crop - seeding occurs from April 15-May 15. Most fields planted beyond mid-May do not make maturity and have poor quality. Average maturity ranges from 95-110 days.

"If planted beyond mid-May, achieving physiological maturity before the normal fall frost date is a concern," said Kent McKay, NDSU agronomy specialist, North Central Research Extension Center, Minot.

North Dakota farmers grow mostly Sanford or Dwelly, two varieties of the Kabuli, a large seeded creamy color chickpea.

The varieties were developed from the work of ARS research geneticist Fred Muchhalter, based out of Washington State University. Muchhalter's breeding work was a major influence in the rapid increase in chickpea acres in the United States and Canada. He bred early maturing parent lines with deep roots for drought tolerance. The chickpea varieties worked well for the northern tier of North America.

In addition to Kabuli, North Dakota growers will plant about 5-10 percent of their chickpea acres to Desi. A smaller seeded chickpea variety, Desi is used principally for flour and is lower in value than the Kabuli.

Timely harvest is essential for producing high quality chickpeas. Plants are mature when the leaves have dropped and pods turn a tan color. The seeds should also have turned from green to cream color.

Chickpeas can be swathed or straight combined, but most growers will straight combine to get the highest quality product. Chickpeas are generally harvested at 15-18 percent moisture to avoid cracking the seed coat, and if there are areas of the field that are uneven or green, growers combine around those areas.

"The chickpea plant has a low shatter potential and with the lowest pods at least 6 inches above the ground, makes the crop adapted to straight combining," said McKay. "Green seed will result in quality discounts!"

North Dakota peas, lentils and chickpea producers pay a checkoff of 1 percent of net sale value. Administered by the N.D. Dry Pea and Lentil Council, the checkoff is used for market promotion, grower education, and research funding.

With chickpea prices remaining good, growers are anxious to learn all they can about this new pulse crop - a rising star for North Dakota agriculture.

For more information on chickpeas, contact the N.D. Dry Pea and Lentil Council, P.O. Box 1532, Bismarck, N.D. 58502-1532. Telephone: 701-222-0128. Fax: 701-223-0018. Email: nddplc@btlgate.com.