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FarmLink Research Report 2016

Pakistani farmer exchange program: "Farmers without fences"

Project Partners



Funding Partners



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Introduction

Australian farmers are among the most efficient in the world. In recent years there has been significant investment in research that improves the yield of pulses due to their important role in crop rotations. However, there has been less emphasis on understanding market requirements of our pulses and comparing our products with international markets.

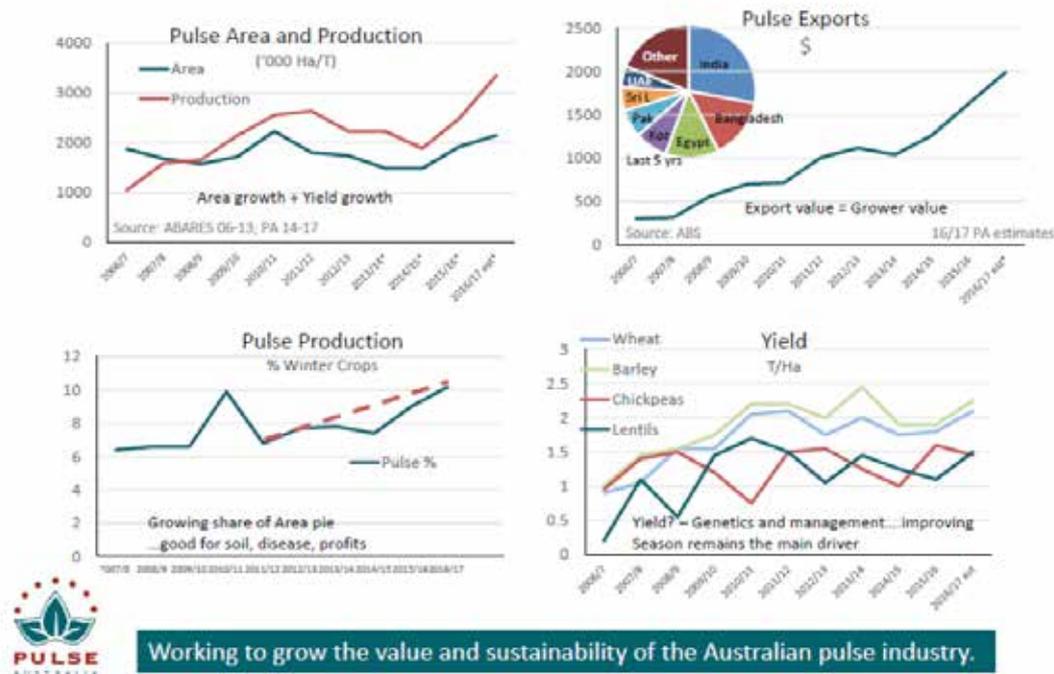
Background

Nationally, pulses average just under 10 per cent of the total area planted to crop however in favourable production areas they can occupy as much as 25% of the total crop area. When grown in rotation with cereals and oilseeds, pulses provide good returns, improve the soil condition, provide a break for important cereal diseases and reduce costs through their ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen for their own use and contributing additional nutrients to the following crop.

In 1990 total pulse production amounted to only 1.3 million tonnes of pulses. The highest level of production to date occurred in 2005–06 when Australian growers produced over 2.5 million tonnes of pulse grain. In 2015, 1.8 million ha of pulse crops produced 2.2 million tonnes of grain, worth A\$1.2 billion in exports. The potential for the pulse crop in Australia, assuming all constraints are overcome, is to increase its current size to 4.2 million tonnes, with a commodity value of A\$1.504 billion and a farm system benefit of A\$538 million – a total of over A\$2 billion.

Whilst Australia is the seventh largest producer of pulses internationally it is the third largest exporter, supplying countries in the Middle East, the sub-continent, Africa and Europe (ABARES).

Pulse Industry Dashboard



Pakistan is the third largest importer of Australian of Australian chickpeas, following India and Bangladesh. It is also an important market for Australian lentils (based on ABS data).

There is a significant deficit in the domestic supply of pulses in Pakistan. Pulses are cultivated on only 5% of total cultivated area. The main pulses produced are chickpea, black gram, mung bean and pigeon pea. Domestic production ranged from 0.45 million tonnes in 2014 to 0.75 million tonnes in 2013. Total imports are around 0.6million tonnes. On average every Pakistani consumes 6-7 kg of pulses annually and demand is increasing. Serious domestic production constrains mean that there is a gap in supply that is being met by imports mainly from Canada, Australia, Burma, Tanzania, Ethiopia. The level of imports is tempered by price.

The Australian government has a keen interest in providing assistance to developing countries such as Pakistan. This interest to help developing countries also often extends to individuals. One way the government assists is by funding agricultural research projects through Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR). An opportunity exists for Australian farmers to participate in this assistance by linking with international farmers in peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

The Project

The Functional Grain Centre is currently undertaking a project with ACIAR to improve the productivity and profitability of pulse production in Pakistan. The project will focus on farmer driven improvements in agronomic practices and value adding opportunities.

The Opportunity

The opportunity exists for Australian farmers to participate in "Farmers without fences" to assist Pakistani farmers in the production and value adding of pulses. Pakistani farmers will benefit from the experience of Australian farmers and Australian farmers will benefit in the following ways:

- Satisfaction of assisting a developing country
- A rich cultural experience
- An opportunity to learn about international pulse markets
- An opportunity network with like-minded Australian farmers and researchers

The Partnership

FarmLink will lead a pilot project that evaluates the value of using international farmer exchange to build the capacity of farmers in developing countries. This will see FarmLink coordinate the 2017 program which will include 5-10 pulse farmers who will travel to Pakistan to meet with farmers there. Discussion will focus on production methods, constraints and the market. This will be a great opportunity to really understand the drivers of the pulse market. Later FarmLink will host Pakistani farmers here in Australia.

References

<http://www.pulseaus.com.au/about/australian-pulse-industry>

<http://www.agricorner.com/status-of-pulses-crops-in-pakistan/>