

Tough new varieties set to revive profitable chickpea industry

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Chickpea has emerged as Australia's most important cool season grain legume, according to the 2012 season crop data - and new disease-resistant varieties are expected to revive and develop a profitable chickpea industry in Western Australia.

The industry was decimated in the mid to late 1990s when it was hit by ascochyta blight disease which thrived in WA's cool and humid conditions. The disease also affected [chickpea](#) crops in Victoria.

Three new ascochyta-resistant [varieties](#) have been developed in breeding programs run by an international alliance between The University of Western Australia (UWA), the Department of Agriculture and Food

(DAFWA), the Council of Grain Growers Organisation (COGGO), the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) and the International Crop Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT).

The new varieties also give high yield and good quality grain.

To enhance the chickpea industry and accelerate the uptake of the disease-resistant varieties, UWA's Institute of Agriculture in association with Pulse Australia has launched a project that is financially supported by the COGGO.

The three new chickpea varieties - Ambar, Neelam and Striker - along with older varieties were sown in partnership with grower groups in demonstration plots at Mullewa, Mingenew, Wubin, Merredin, Kellerberrin and Corrigin during the 2013 growing season.

The trials were sown and managed using broad-acre machinery in collaboration with grower groups and DAFWA.

Project personnel attended a series of field walks and field days to speak about the new opportunities for the chickpea growers. These demonstration trials enabled hundreds of growers to examine the new varieties first-hand. Information leaflets giving details of new varieties, seed availability and contacts for further information were distributed to growers and agri-business companies. The demonstration trials will be continued in the 2014 season with the support from COGGO, grower groups and the industry.

More than half a million hectares of chickpea were grown in 2012, mostly in the North Eastern parts of Australia, including Queensland and New South Wales. Chickpea is also a high-value grain with stable demand in the Indian subcontinent.

Provided by University of Western Australia

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