



Harvest kicks off

The crops

We started windrowing some barley a few weeks ago. Due to the dry season, the barley crops are much shorter than usual, so we have been windrowing the taller barley crops and will reap the shorter crops standing. The windrowing accelerates the ripening process and enables us to harvest for longer hours with less downtime, combating the effects of high moisture in the grain from our coastal environment.

The lentil crop is only just ripe, but we will shift to lentils asap as they very fragile. The lentil crops are also very thin this year and therefore are prone to shaking the pods off in the wind, so we aim to get them off as soon as possible.

At Point Pearce, we have reaped all of the windrowed barley, with a couple of paddocks of barley left still standing as they were too short to windrow. We went on to reap all the lentils at Point Pearce and now we are harvesting lentils at Price. So far, the crops have yielded pretty well considering the rainfall we have



Windrowing barley helps us get an early start into harvest



Harvesting barley

received and the grain quality has been good.

Staffing

We advertised for a new staff member during the year to help out Marco in operating the sprayer. We have employed a local lad: Tom Polgreen. Tom grew up working on the family farm near Arthurton. He has been employed in Kadina working as a mechanic and later served as the service manager at Rosewarne's in Kadina. Tom has completed training for his semi licence and chemical certificate. He has been operating the Hardi sprayer and has been driving a semi during harvest. His mechanical skills will be a huge asset for us.

Charlotte and Charles are also home working for the harvest. Charlotte will drive a semi once university is done and Charles is helping out shifting machinery and driving a chaser bin.

The harvest crew

We are very fortunate to have retained our regular crew for harvest. Our truck drivers Geoff and Warrick (Potsy and Wazza) are semi-retired and commute from Port Vincent. One of our chaser bin drivers, Keith (Woody), is also semi-retired and lives on a farm near Ardrossan. They are all 'set and forget' operators who enjoy the seasonal work. Marco and Danny Luciani have been with us for years – Marco operates a header and Danny drives chaser bins and oversees all of the maintenance on the grain handling gear. Tim Rowe has been working casually with us for 30 years and does all of the windrowing. Simon May is our operations manager and he oversees our daily operations and staffing.

The season

Locally, our season has been very dry with annual rainfall around 40% below average. Areas on the east coast of the peninsula have received around 6 inches (150mm) of rain through to 12 inches (300mm) at Maitland. In some areas, this is less rainfall than the drought years of 1982, 1977 & 1959. Unfortunately, this year some of the cropping areas in the state have



Into the lentils



Our new team member, Tom



Wazza loading the road train
– the 60 tonne payload is great



We fit plastic duck feet to the tyne reels on the header fronts to get the shorter lentil crops to feed in

only had 4 inches of rain. Remarkably, some of these paddocks will go through to produce a grain crop, whilst some will already have chosen to cut the crop for hay production or to feed livestock. Australian farmers have been pioneers in the development of highly efficient farming systems, which have dramatically improved our ability to produce grain in our low rainfall environment.

The grain markets have been turned upside down with virtually no crop in NSW to service the domestic demand on the east coast, so the prices for wheat and barley have risen dramatically. Traditionally, we aim to cart to a port. Although we had forward-sold some grain for export, now we will aim to sell the balance of our crop into the domestic market. This requires us to cart our grain to Bowman's (near Balaklava) so it can go on rail to NSW. Thankfully, we now have road train access, which has made this task more achievable. Maitland Freight is helping out with this. The domestic demand may not last long, so we have been forced to try and forecast our crop yields to try and capture some of this drought premium.

All in all, it's been a very challenging season, but we are certainly better off than many areas in Australia. As always, we thank you for your support.

Regards,
Ben Wundersitz



Once barley is windrowed, the moisture content in the grain is not affected by high humidity conditions & dew, so we can generally harvest for more hours



Maitland Freight trailer helping move grain to the rail link



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