

CROPS | PEAS

# New forage pea stands tall, yields big

**Used in silage mix** | Grower thinks a higher blend is possible with the new pea variety

BY BARBARA DUCKWORTH  
CALGARY BUREAU

SUNDRE, Alta. — Bob Mastin scans the horizon west of his Sundre, Alta., pedigreed seed farm and prays the hailstorms bypass him this year.

With small plots of new feed and malting barleys, an early maturing Polish canola, as well as an unnamed forage pea scattered across his farm, he worries the great white combine will beat him to the harvest.

"My turn could be tomorrow or next because the weather is so volatile," he said. Last year, his farm narrowly missed a devastating storm that started in his area and wiped out crops from central Alberta to Montana.

Part of his strategy is to scatter the plots and plant these new varieties in sheltered spots so he can safely multiply the seeds.

One of his newest projects is a forage pea that grew at least five feet tall by the beginning of August. The peas are standing tall with scads of sweet tasting peas up and down the vines.

The seed came from the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers Association and he took up the challenge to see if the crop can survive and work in a silage mix with oats and barley.

"Getting peas to stand is a big problem," he said. "This is one time they did what the breeder said they would do."

He has grown some other varieties that stand reasonably well but he thinks this is a superior type.

"I hadn't grown peas for 15 years because they were so hard to handle, they were more trouble than they were worth out here where our weather isn't real conducive to growing peas because of the cool, wet falls," he said.

He estimates a 26 percent higher grain yield than the traditional 40-10

silage peas and hopes producers could mix them at a higher proportion than normal.

Most people do not add more than 15 percent peas to the silage mix but based on the strength of these plants, he thinks growers could try a higher blend.

"You could go to a 20 or 30 or even 40 percent blend, which you can't do with 40-10s because it will be on the ground," he said.

He would like to see a three way cross where the blend was a third each of barley, oats and peas.

"I am anticipating the price of seed on these will be less so farmers can grow them and it won't cost them an arm and a leg. If they want to stay with a 15 or 20 percent blend, it won't be that much cost per acre," he said.

In addition to the peas, he is working on an early maturing, unnamed Polish canola on 70 acres that he thinks could come in a month earlier.

He is also multiplying Busby, a two row feed barley that he has not grown on a field scale to this point. It is a possible replacement for Xena, the number one feed barley. It has longer than average heads but rougher awns.

He is also growing Sundre, a six row feed barley that came out of the Alberta Agriculture barley breeding program at Lacombe.

Sundre has smooth awns and works well for grain, silage or swath grazing. Smooth awns are better for green-feed or swath grazing because they do not damage animals' mouths. Last harvest, it weighed 60 pounds per bushel cleaned.

Sundre grows well in Alberta and Saskatchewan conditions but could be more susceptible to disease pressure in Manitoba

He also has a new malting variety he named Cerveza, the Spanish word for beer.

"Every time a farmer goes to Mexico and orders a beer, he'll be saying the



Bob Mastin demonstrates the height and strength of a new variety of forage peas he is growing on his Sundre, Alta., farm. Mastin stands just over six feet tall and by the beginning of August, this variety was up to his shoulders. | BARBARA DUCKWORTH PHOTO

name of my barley," said Mastin.

"There are seven acres of this in the world right now," he said as he walked through the plot checking the plants and assessing deer damage.

He has seeded small plots through-

out the farm near tree lines to protect his investment against hail or other weather damage.

He hopes this could compete against Metcalfe malt barley. It was developed at the Brandon Research

Centre and there should be some available for seed growers next year and for test malting runs the following year.

It will be another three years before farmers can grow it commercially.

GRAIN TRADE | CUBA

## U.S. wheat exporters frustrated as trade to Cuba shrinks

**Trade policy changes urged** | Cuba has formed trading relationships with other countries, sending trade with the U.S. down 65 percent

BY ADRIAN EWINS  
SASKATOON NEWSROOM

Wheat trade groups in the United States continue to lobby Congress to pass legislation that would lift restrictions on trade with Cuba.

Cuba has, at the same time, cut back sharply on wheat purchases from the U.S.

"U.S. agriculturists continue to see their exports to Cuba fall while they wait for Congress to make changes to U.S. Cuban trade policy," wrote Jiana Escobar in the latest newsletter from U.S. Wheat Associates, a wheat trade promotion group.

U.S. wheat exports to Cuba declined by 65 percent in 2009-10 from the previous year to 118,600 tonnes.

Also, Cuba has bought no U.S.

wheat so far in 2010-11 (since June 1) and has made no commitments for future purchases, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Total food and agriculture exports from the U.S. to Cuba, including products like chicken, corn, soybeans and soy products and powdered milk, decreased by 35 percent between January and May 2010, compared with the same period a year earlier.

The proposed legislation has passed the House of Representatives agriculture committee and is expected to pass the financial services committee.

There will be opposition in the foreign affairs committee but just a few more votes are needed for approval.

That bill must also be approved by

the Senate and its various committees, making it a tough row to hoe before the legislation is finally passed and implemented.

The bill, which was introduced in Feb. 2010 by Democratic congressman Collin Peterson from Minnesota, would:

- lift the ban on travel by U.S. citizens to Cuba;
- allow direct banking transfers between Cuban and U.S. institutions, removing the need for third country banks;
- remove the requirement for Cuba to pay for a commodity in full prior to loading;
- not allow Cuba access to U.S. credit programs.

The U.S. is normally the largest supplier of wheat to Cuba.

Sales have dropped so dramatically

because Cuba is facing a lack of foreign exchange to finance purchases of imports, including wheat, according to the U.S.-Cuba Trade and Economic Council.

Also, special financial assistance from Venezuela and China has lessened Cuba's need to buy products from the U.S.

Cuba has also developed new trading relationships with a variety of countries, including Brazil, Argentina, Vietnam, Mexico, Canada, Russia, Iran and France.

Finally, Cuba prefers to deal with government-controlled trading entities, which generally provide more favourable terms.

Canada has exported an average of 96,000 tonnes of wheat and durum to Cuba over the past 10 years, with a high of 203,700 tonnes in 2007-08.

### WHAT IT'S WORTH

Following is the value of U.S. wheat sales to Cuba over the past five calendar years.

- 2009 \$72.9 million
- 2008 \$134.9 million
- 2007 \$70 million
- 2006 \$51 million
- 2005 \$47 million

(Source: U.S.-Cuba Trade and Economic Council)

In the first 11 months of 2009-10 (to June 30), Canadian exports totalled 128,000 tonnes.

Cuba buys high quality, high protein wheat from Canada and mixes it with lower quality from other suppliers like the U.S., Europe and Argentina.