Harvesting your Lentil Crop

Harvesting

Harvest your lentils when the lower third of the pods on the plant turn yellow to brown and make a rattling sound when shaken. Picking them too early will result in undersized seeds, while harvesting too late may lead to dry, brittle pods that could shatter, affecting both yield and seed quality. Cut the plants and bundle them in the field, allowing them to dry in the sun for at least two to three days.

Threshing and Winnowing

To separate the lentils from the plants and dried pods, thresh them on a mat by flailing with sticks. Threshing not only helps release the lentils but also separates them from the dried pods.

After threshing, use two baskets to winnow the lentils. Pour the lentils from one basket to the other, letting the wind blow away the plant debris, leaving only the lentils in the basket. You may need to repeat this process several times to ensure all debris is removed. Alternatively, you can use a sieve net with a wind source, such as a fan, to efficiently remove debris and undersized lentils.

Drying and storage

Allow the cleaned lentils to dry on a tarp in direct sunlight for three to four days. Ideally, you can use an oven for drying. Lentils are considered dry and safe for storage when they reach a seed moisture content of nine to ten percent. If you lack a moisture meter, perform a bite and bin test: bite or press a fingernail into a seed, and if it leaves no mark on the seed coat, the seed is likely dry enough for storage.

Once your lentils are adequately dried, carefully sort them

once more to eliminate any pests, dirt, or pebbles. Handle the dried lentil seeds gently, as they can be brittle and prone to chipping and splitting. To minimize post-harvest losses, store your dried and sorted lentils in specialized hermetically sealed bags or airtight jerry cans. Ensure that your lentils are clean and free from any debris, sticks, stones, or dirt. Clean and properly stored lentils are more appealing to lentil traders and can command a higher price in the market.