

# Introduction

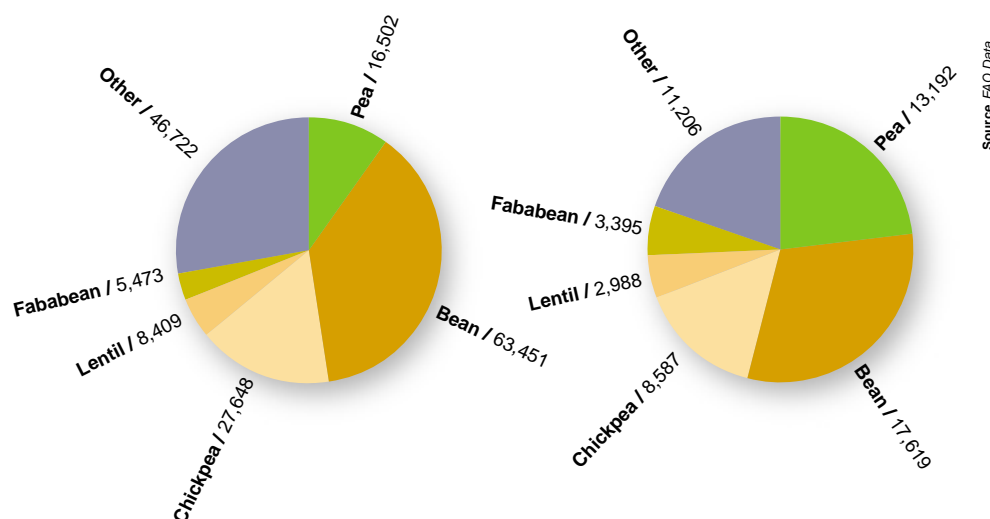
## Historic Production of Pulse Crops

Pulses are the seeds of legumes that are used as food, and they include pea, bean, lentil, chickpea and fababean. These comprise a small, but very important, part of the 1800 species in the legume family.

The word "pulse" is derived from the Latin "puls, pultis", a thick soup. It is the broad term used to describe the dried, edible seeds of legumes.

The use of pulses dates back more than 10,000 years and spans the globe. Records of their use were found in the Egyptian pyramids. Dry pea seeds were discovered in a village in Switzerland dating back to the Stone Age and some centuries-old pea seeds have been discovered in the ruins of Troy and buried in caves in Hungary. It is likely that Aryans from the East introduced pea to the pre-Christian Greeks and Romans. Archaeological evidence suggests that pea was grown in the eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamia at least 5,000 years ago, and in Britain as early as the 11th century.

Lentil originated from the wild lentils that still grow in Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries. Lentil was one of the favourite dishes of the ancient Greeks. Pea, fababean and chickpea also originated in western Asia. Dry beans originated in South and Central America. About 8,000 years ago, Indians in what is now the Ancash province of Peru cultivated the same kinds of bean that we know today as navy bean, black bean, and other types of bean.



Source: FAO Data

## Global Production of Pulse Crops

Pulses are an important source of protein, especially in developing countries. In total, they provide about 10% of the total dietary protein in the world. Pulses have about twice the protein content of most cereal grains. In 1998, about 57 million tonnes of pulses were produced on 168 million acres (68,099,493 hectares) worldwide (Figure 1.1). Bean is the most important pulse crop in terms of both area and production. Pea is the second most important pulse crop in terms of production and third in terms of area. Chickpea is the second most important pulse crop in terms of area and third in terms of production.

Pea is produced mainly in developed countries (France and Canada), whereas chickpea is produced and consumed mainly in India. Lentil is produced mainly in India, Turkey, and Canada. Beans of various types are produced in many countries around the world.

**Figure 1.1** World crop area in acres (left) and production in tonnes (right) of various pulses (000) (1998)

**Total Area** 168,206,000 ac  
(68,099,493 ha)

**Total Tonnes** 56,987,000