

Barley variety honours historic brewery

□ By Andrew Spence

A NEW barley variety named after the site of the original Coopers brewery is being bulked up this season with a view to becoming the South Australian brewers' malt of choice. Bred by the University of Adelaide at its Waite Institute, WI4896 has been named 'Leabrook' having passed stage 1 malt accreditation in March. It will become an accredited malting variety in March 2020 if it passes Stage 2 this year.

The variety is being bulked up this season through Seednet Partners growers at eight sites:

- Three in South Australia;
- Two in Queensland;
- Two in New South Wales; and,
- One in Western Australia.

About five tonnes of seed has gone out with more than 400 hectares planted and about 1000 tonnes of seed likely to be kept for the commercial launch in 2020.

Seednet Partners General Manager Simon Crane said Leabrook would be grown alongside other barley varieties such as Compass, Spartacus and La Trobe for comparison purposes.

He said it was a tall and vigorous plant type with a two to five per cent yield advantage on other Seednet Partners malting varieties, which include Commander, Compass and Scope. Leabrook has also shown to have a slightly higher malt extract than other varieties, Simon said.

"Yield is the main reason but we're hoping that on the malt side it's got something to offer as well so end users are asking about it as well as growers who are keen to grow it," he said.

"Planet is the hardest barley to beat these days in the long season regions so it won't beat that for yield but more in the low-



Coopers Brewery Maltings Manager, Doug Stewart in the new malting facility. (PHOTO: John Kruger)

to-medium rainfall regions and in the tougher seasons this variety has proven to have a yield advantage.

"I wouldn't say it's been bred specifically for craft brewing but there's definitely interest. It's also in the national variety trial system so there is a lot of trial results but this year will be the first larger scale evaluation and demonstration of the variety."

More than 130 years of brewing history

Based in Adelaide, South Australia, Coopers is Australia's largest independently owned brewery, selling about 80 million litres a year.



Barley grain kilning at the Coopers malting plant in Adelaide. (PHOTO: John Krüger)