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OILSEEDS NEWS

OILSEED INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER



The good oil: Felicity Pritchard is the new Oilseeds Industry Development Officer for Victoria and southern New South Wales.

and other industry groups about a range of issues.

“I’m really looking forward to the challenge of this new role,” said Ms Pritchard today. “I will be covering a range of issues, from marketing to agronomy to research”.

Ms Pritchard said that she will work with companies, agencies and grower groups to help overcome issues that the industry faces in order to expand the oilseed industry.

She has come to the role with seven years’ experience working with highly successful Topcrop (farming) groups in the Victorian Wimmera and has more recently worked as a Crop Industry Training Specialist at Longerenong College, near Horsham. She completed post-graduate research in the agronomy of canola and related specialty oilseeds in the mid 1990’s.

“In the longer term, I would like to see not only higher yields and an expansion in the area sown to canola and soybeans in the region, but also better water-use efficiency

Canola and soybean growers now have a new representative for Victoria and southern New South Wales.

Horsham-based Felicity Pritchard is the new Oilseed Industry Development Officer, and she has set her sights on expanding the area of oilseeds, particularly canola and soybeans, grown in the region.

Ms Pritchard will work with grower groups and the peak oilseeds group, the Australian Oilseeds Federation, to help get information out to growers and provide feedback to researchers

and more profit to growers for a more financially and environmentally sustainable farming system.”

Ms Pritchard is employed by the Irrigated Cropping Forum and the three year position is funded by the Grains Research and Development Corporation and the Australian Oilseeds Federation.

BRING BACK THE ROTATION

Crop rotations have been pushed to the limit in parts of southern New South Wales, with one wheat crop following another for as many as five successive years in some instances, according to NSW DPI Technical Specialist in Oilseeds and Pulses, Don McCaffery.

However, agronomists, scientist and grain growers agree that cereal yields do best when a break crop is present in the rotation to limit disease and manage grass weeds.

Mr McCaffery said that 2001 was the last “normal year” in southern NSW, and that many growers have increased the concentration of cereals in their rotations as a result.

However, findings presented at the grains research updates held in Wagga Wagga last week confirmed the importance of rotating broadleaf crops like canola with cereals.

Speaking at the Grains Research and Development Corporation’s (GRDC’s) updates, Dr John Kirkegaard of the CSIRO Division of Plant Industry informed advisors that wheat crops after canola yielded an average 20 per cent more than wheat following wheat in 35 field experiments between 1988 and 2003.

He went on to say that the experiments showed major financial benefits from putting canola into the rotation, with a 25 per cent higher gross margin for canola followed by wheat, compared with wheat-on-wheat. Dr Kirkegaard said that the main reason for the improved gross margin was the better wheat crops after canola.

Temora region grain grower, Bruce Thompson, said that, “most growers have pushed their rotations hard in the lower rainfall areas, and dropped off canola and lost their rotations”.



Pushed too far: Agronomist Don McCaffery says crop rotations have been pushed to the limit.

“I’m now growing 20 per cent canola. I was growing 50 per cent. We wound our canola back last year, but I have to pick it up again to around 40 per cent”, Mr Thompson said.

Mr Thompson crops 4000 hectares, 20 kilometres south of Temora, and has grown canola seed crops in past years. He rotates his cereal crops with canola and lupins.

“At the end of the day, the cereal crops are better after a true rotation. There’s no question of that. That’s proven.”

TAKING CONTROL OF CANOLA DISEASE

Canola growers and advisors now have access to up-to-date information on how to better manage the disease, blackleg, the most serious disease of canola in Australia, with the help of a free publication, “Australian Blackleg Management Guide”, compiled by Steve Marcroft of Marcroft Grains Pathology.

The guide cites methods to reduce the likelihood of serious yield losses while keeping down the production costs, through growing resistant varieties, avoiding the previous year’s canola stubble and using fungicides only in high-risk situations.

According to Felicity Pritchard, Oilseed Industry Development Officer for Victoria and southern New South Wales, good management of blackleg is important for the long-term viability of the canola industry.

“We have already seen the breakdown of resistance to the blackleg fungus in certain canola varieties carrying a single resistance gene, so we have to do all we can to ensure that the remaining resistance genes in our canola varieties continue to work effectively”.

For copies of the brochure, contact your Topcrop agronomist, or Steve Marcroft on (03) 5381 2294, Felicity Pritchard on 0427 600 228, or in New South Wales, contact your District Agronomist.
