



IRRIGATED CROPPING FORUM

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OILSEEDS NEWS

CANOLA AREA SET TO EXPAND WITH NEW ‘JUNCEAS’



Daryl Males.

Growers in the drier parts of the grain belt will soon have access to a canola quality mustard species which will not only act as a break crop for cereals, but also be a profitable crop in its own right.

Canola varieties of the species “*Brassica juncea*”, known as “juncea canola” will be released for sowing in 2007, following a concerted breeding

effort by the National Brassica Improvement Program, in association with the Canadian Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.

Juncea canola has a number of characteristics which could bring about the expansion of the area sown to canola into the more arid regions of Victoria and New South Wales.

Canola breeder with the Victorian DPI, Wayne Burton, told advisors at the Grains Research Updates in Bendigo that juncea canola is more drought and heat-tolerant than the widely grown canola, *Brassica napus*, being more suited to hotter, drier climates like the Victorian Mallee and western areas of central and southern New South Wales. It may also be suited to later sowing in high rainfall areas, he said.

A great advantage of juncea canola is its shatter resistance, meaning that it doesn't need windrowing, saving around \$23 a hectare in harvest costs, compared with *Brassica napus*.

And it seems that the benefits don't stop there. In a visit to Sydney this month, Daryl Males, Canadian Research and Development Manager with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool told delegates of the Australian Oilseeds Federation that frost tolerance has now been identified as another feature of juncea canola, making it ideal for inland regions, where frosts in spring can cause major losses to crops.

Juncea canola is also resistant to blackleg, the most important disease of canola.

Mr Males said that in a drought year in Canada, juncea canola yielded 12 to 14 bushels (around 0.8 to 0.9 tonnes per hectare) in trials where the *Brassica napus* and some of the cereals eventually died.

“We targeted southern Canada (for juncea canola) because its hot, dry conditions blast the flowers off *Brassica napus*. But the juncea canola will come back after the heat if there are cool, mild conditions following”.

Mr Males said that the number one breeding objective for juncea canola is now the development of herbicide tolerant varieties, as almost the entire area sown to canola in Canada is herbicide tolerant. Several classes of herbicide tolerance are now under development, he said.

Mr Burton said that herbicide tolerant juncea canola varieties are expected to be available to growers in three to four years.

SOY FAR, SO GOOD

The soybean harvest in the New South Wales Riverina and northern Victoria is half-way there and growers are pleased with above-average yields, especially of the newer varieties, Djakal and Snowy.

Riverina Soybean Growers' Association President and harvest contractor, Jim Maskus said that yields of soybean crops he had harvested this month have ranged from three to 4.5 tonnes per hectare.



Soy happy: John Houghton, right, is pleased with his Snowy soybean seed crop. Pictured with NSW DPI researcher Luke Gaynor.

He said that he had mostly harvested the variety Djakal, and its yields were comparable to the new variety, Snowy, which will mostly be harvested in the next fortnight.

Yanco producer, John Houghton, was pleased with the yield and quality of his seed crop of Snowy, which will be sold under contract to the Association for next season's planting.

The benefits of newer varieties were clear to Mr Maskus. "I stripped a crop of (an older variety) Curringa, which yielded 3.5 to 3.7 tonnes per hectare," Mr Maskus said. "It was next to a crop of Djakal, which was four tonnes per hectare."
