

**FELICITY PRITCHARD**  
Oilseed Industry Development Officer –  
Victoria and southern New South Wales;  
Better Oilseeds joint project coordinator  
Grains Innovation Park  
110 Natimuk Road, Horsham, Vic 3401  
Ph: (03) 5382 4396 or 0427 600 228

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## OILSEEDS NEWS - MEDIA RELEASES

### CANOLA WORKSHOPS IN WAGGA A MAJOR SUCCESS

More than 75 agronomic advisors descended upon Wagga Wagga last month to attend a workshop on canola agronomy – covering water use, crop preparation, dual purpose canola, GM canola, hybrids, marketing and disease management.

The day was hailed as a huge success by organisers of the day, which was funded by the Better Oilseeds project of the Grains Research and Development Corporation and the Australian Oilseeds Federation.

A highlight of the day was

CSIRO's John Kirkegaard, who spoke about maximising water use efficiency and the outcomes of three years research into dual purpose canola. NSW DPI researcher Mark Conyers also presented trial results for the effects of subsoil constraint on canola yields, and three growers gave their stories of sowing equipment and Roundup Ready® canola.

The day also included information on crop architecture, hybrids and disease management.



WORKSHOP: Peter Watt said grazing canola is a big breakthrough after the Better Oilseeds workshop in Wagga Wagga.

Picture courtesy Elders Cowra.

The day was organised by the New South Wales Advisory Committee for the Better Oilseeds project Don McCaffery, NSW DPI, Chris Duff, Delta Agribusiness and Mark Harris, Rural Management Strategies.

Peter Watt, senior agronomist with Elders in Cowra, with 25 year experience as a farm advisor, said he got a lot out of the day.

“It’s nice to go away to a workshop and just concentrate on canola, rather than wheat and pasture and 20 other things. It’s also good therapy to network away from my own patch,” he said.

“I think grazing canola is a big new breakthrough that people are going to discover over the next few years.”

“And the whole soil-water story was interesting. John Kirkegaard is always entertaining to listen to. I also really enjoyed listening to the growers. They give a down-to-earth perspective”.

Mr Watt said that he not only benefited from learning new information, but also felt it reinforced some of the recommendations he is already providing to his clients.

Agritech Crop Research agronomist Tony Single is a recent graduate and felt the day provided him with some practical strategies he can use in his workplace.

“I learnt about how (the disease) blackleg interacts between canola varieties from year to year, and the distances canola crops need to be away from canola stubble,” he said.

“It also gave me a very good perspective of what GM offers now and its potential in the next 10 to 15 years,” he said.

Every agronomist attending the day said they would participate in a similar workshop in three years time.

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## MASON BUILDS ON UWA SUPER BRASSICA RESEARCH IN FRANCE

This article was prepared by **Brendon Cant & Associates**, ph: (08) 9384 1122



Annaliese Mason, agricultural science PhD student at The University of Western Australia (UWA), has been awarded the prestigious 2008 Mike Carroll Travelling Fellowship.

She will spend six weeks in France researching how to combat potential problems of abnormal chromosome associations in ‘super *Brassica*’ plants.

Announcing the winner at a ceremony at UWA’s Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, Helen Carroll said the Fellowship honoured her deceased husband, former Director General of the WA Department of Agriculture, Dr Mike Carroll.

**SUPER WOMAN:** Annaliese Mason was awarded Mike Carroll Travelling Fellowship.  
Picture courtesy Brendon Cant and Associates.

“Recipients are chosen on their academic abilities, relevance of studies to an important area of Australian broadacre agriculture, their potential to benefit from the experience and their enthusiasm to impart the findings of their travels to the scientific, farming and wider community on their return to WA,” Mrs Carroll said.

Ms Mason said abnormal chromosome associations in super *Brassica* plants led to loss of fertility and instability in subsequent generations, hence limiting development of this new species as a promising oilseed crop, especially for marginal cropping land with potential drought stress and poor soils.

Canola (*Brassica napus*) as a crop species is extremely inbred, with little genetic diversity for breeders to use for future crop improvement.

Canola, Indian mustard (*Brassica juncea*) and Ethiopian mustard (*Brassica carinata*) are two-genome hybrid *Brassica* species.

In her PhD research at UWA, Ms Mason assessed the pollen of 84 plants from 12 cultivar/species crosses, establishing that most first generation hybrids produced abnormal gametes.

To create a super *Brassica* plant which could make a positive difference to Australian farming systems, she conducted a unique crossing plan involving two generations of hybridisation and all three species.

This resulted in canola with two genomes (sets of chromosomes from different origins) and Indian mustard with two genomes, giving a first generation hybrid which is crossed with Ethiopian mustard with two genomes to produce a super *Brassica* plant with three genomes.

“This super *Brassica*, with three different genomes rather than the naturally occurring one or two, has increased potential for heterosis and hybrid vigour, greater tolerance of marginal environments and increased growth and production,” Ms Mason explained.

After initially enrolling at UWA in 2003 in the BSc (Genetics) she changed in second year to a more flexible BSc with a double major in botany and genetics.

“I enjoyed plant breeding and genetics units and was offered an honours scholarship by the Value-Added Wheat CRC to characterise progeny from a canola interspecific crossing pre-breeding experiments, using molecular marker technologies,” she said.

Her Honours supervisors were Associate Professor Wallace Cowling, Dr Matt Nelson and Dr Guijun Yan.

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