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## MEDIA RELEASES

### HAPPY HARVEST FOR SUNFLOWER GROWERS

Early plant sunflower crops have produced excellent yields this season, and with above-average prices, growers are feeling upbeat about the crop.



REWARDING: Peter Keeley (left) with son William and employee Dennis Dwyer have harvested 3.0 t/ha from their sunflowers at Brookstead on the Darling Downs.

Photo: courtesy Dave Ridgeway, Philp Brodie Grains

Chairman of the Australian Oilseeds Federation's Sunflower Committee Rob MacDougall said harvest of early plant sunflowers commenced six weeks ago, with yields around 1.7 to 2.2 tonnes per hectare for dryland crops and 3.0 tonnes per hectare for irrigated sunflowers. Oil contents have been as high as 47% in some

Peter Keeley from Brookstead on the Darling Downs grew irrigated

sunflowers for the first time in 20 years, and was extremely happy with the result, with yield of 'mono' type sunflowers at 3.0

tonnes per hectare and an impressive oil content ranging from 46 to 47 per cent.

Growers receive a bonus payment for sunflower sold to the Cargill with more than 40 per cent oil. The bonus is calculated on the basis of 1.5 per cent of the purchase price for each one per cent oil above 40 per cent.



“We’ve grown cotton for 20 years. I ‘ummed and ahhed’ about growing sunflowers and everyone

HIGH YIELDS: Early plant sunflowers have yielded well this season.

Photo: courtesy Dave Ridgeway, Philp Brodie Grains

thought I was mad. But with the extra oil, they’ve paid pretty well for me,” Mr Keeley said.

“There’s no way I could’ve made that sort of money out of sorghum,” he said.

Mr Keeley said he will begin harvesting his late plant ‘poly’ sunflowers this week.

Agent for Philp Brodie Grains, Keith Weier at Clifton on the Eastern Downs, said early plant dryland ‘poly’ sunflowers yielded up to 1.9 tonnes per hectare in his area. Harvest of late plant dryland crops was just starting, with expected yields at least 1.2 tonnes per hectare.

He said sunflower paddocks had a full profile of subsoil moisture at planting and a good start to the season, but rainfall during the critical seed filling stage was variable. However, temperatures during this phase were kind to the sunflower crops, with no real hot spells.

Yields up to 3.0 tonnes per hectare have been achieved for early plant sunflowers on the

Liverpool Plains, with an average around 2.0 tonnes per hectare and average oil content around 40 to 41 per cent - with some crops as high as 45 per cent.

The Australian Oilseed Federation predicted sunflower production to be up by eight per cent this year to nearly 80,000 tonnes due to an increase in the area planted, with yields similar to last year in both Queensland and New South Wales. This is a massive increase since the 2006-07 crop, where only 18,000 tonnes of sunflowers were pulled off.

According to Mr MacDougall, sunflower prices are currently around one-third higher than the five-year average, making them an attractive option to growers.

“This year, the price of monos is around \$600 a tonne delivered Narrabri, whereas the five-year average is about \$450 a tonne. The price isn’t as good as last year, which saw prices hit a high of \$950 a tonne,” he said.

Mr MacDougall said oil from mono type sunflowers is used widely in the snack food industry as there is an increasing trend from consumers to seek ‘healthy’ foods.

Monounsaturated sunflowers produce oil low in saturated fats with the added advantage of being able to be used in high temperature cooking and deep frying, he said.

Mr MacDougall also believes that monounsaturated oil will eventually be used in fast food outlets replacing oils such as palm oil which is high in saturated fat.

The current price spread between poly and mono sunflowers has narrowed in recent months as demand for poly sunflowers has increased, Mr MacDougall said.

“The premium for mono sunflower over poly can vary from \$0 to \$100 depending on a number of factors which could be export demand, local demand and domestic production of both mono and poly sunflowers.”



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He said poly sunflower oil is predominately used for table margarine manufacture and Australia has an intrinsic demand of 60,000 tonnes of seed equivalent.

“Currently Australia’s production is under this requirement which has seen the price gap between mono and poly narrow to \$20,” he said.

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Written by:

