



IRRIGATED CROPPING FORUM

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OILSEEDS NEWS

CANOLA WINDROWING CHALLENGES

Deciding on the best time to windrow canola crops will be more challenging this year, with many crops at variable stages of maturity due to staggered germinations of plants earlier in the season.



But growers need to be careful to not windrow too early, as this will lead to greater yield losses and low oil content, according to Oilseeds Industry Development Officer, Felicity Pritchard.

RIGHT ON TIME: Deciding the best time to windrow canola crops with staggered germination will be challenging.

PHOTO COURTESY VICTORIAN DPI.

windrow crops with very variable maturities was when the risk of yield losses from shattering the older pods was more than the risk of windrowing the greener pods too early.

Ms Pritchard said that the best time to

“Trials conducted by the Victorian Department of Primary Industries in the mid-1990s showed that yields and oil content are lower in canola windrowed too early.”

Telangatuk windrowing contractor and canola grower, Tom Dunstan, said that assessing the optimum time to windrow will be difficult this season.

“I’ll just have to check all parts of the paddocks and take an average,” he said.

“I’ll have to work out an acceptable loss both ways –in other words, how much will be lost from shattering and how much will be lost from being windrowed too early.”

Mr Dunstan said that he had observed many crops that had been windrowed far too early in recent years, when seeds from the uppermost pods were not firm.

“There’s a narrow window in which to windrow. Most windrowing is done by contractors who move through the district, and some people are persuaded to cut their crop before it’s really ready,” he said.

Mr Dunstan also said that in recent years some growers have assumed that the crop is ready for windrowing when individual plants have prematurely ripened as a result of disease, insect damage, soil compaction, and in years past, waterlogging.

He said that the problem was more evident in older varieties where a small number of growers have retained seed over a number years for sowing, as blackleg resistance was inadequate.

“I’ve seen some crops windrowed when they’ve been that green,” he said. “People think: ‘oh well, it won’t shatter’, but they end up with lower oil content.”

“But the majority of people did a good job of windrowing.”

The Canola Council of Canada's website illustrates seed colour changes and the best time to windrow. See <http://www.canola-council.org/properstage.aspx> .
