



IRRIGATED CROPPING FORUM

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IRRIGATORS ADVISED TO WATER CANOLA FIRST



CANOLA FIRST: Irrigated canola needs water earlier than cereals. **PHOTO: Felicity Pritchard**

growers wait until water allocations go up, it may be too late to get a full yield response,” he said.

Irrigators in southern New South Wales and northern Victoria have been advised to water their canola crops first to make the most of the season before the crop loses its potential, if they are intending to harvest the crop.

Coleambally District Agronomist, Kieran O’Keeffe, of the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, said that the general rule is to water canola before other crops, if limited water is available.

“The critical stage for watering canola is earlier than cereals,” he said.

“The current rainfall forecasts aren’t looking too promising, so if crops are not watered, they can lose their potential. If

Growers who are fortunate enough to have water are once again faced with the difficult choices of watering their canola crops, irrigating other winter crops or selling their water. It is too early to make the decision to cut dryland canola crops for hay.

Coleambally grower Keith Burge said that he had sown 300 hectares of winter crop this season, 74 of which is canola.

“I’ve only got enough water for one irrigation, and I have to decide whether to use it on the barley or the canola,” he said.

“The canola is starting to flower and badly needs a drink. I only have enough water to water half of it, and the rest will have to go by the wayside,” he said.

“There’s not enough bulk in it at this stage to cut for hay”.

The most critical growth stage for water stress in canola is during flowering.

DPI irrigation officer, Rob Hoogers, said that water should go on four to seven days before the critical stage of crops.

“The first watering on long fallow, sod-sown (direct drilled) and pre-irrigated paddocks should take 0.8 to 1.5 megalitres per hectare, but on last year’s wheat paddocks with no subsoil moisture, this can take 2.5 megalitres per hectare or more,” he said.

“These crops need to be carefully assessed for yield potential before applying that much water. It may be a good move to give a second water to a better paddock of 0.8 megalitres per hectare.

“If it stays dry and the first watering is too late, the yield response will not justify using the water on that crop,” he said.
