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OILSEEDS NEWS

LAST CHANCE FOR CANOLA FOR MIA IRRIGATORS



With the impending closure of irrigation systems in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, those irrigators with water remaining will need to irrigate before the end of March to pre-water any crop area, according to a leading irrigation consultant.

END IS NEAR: Irrigators with remaining water have until the end of March to pre-water canola paddocks this year. **PHOTO COURTESY NSW DPI.**

The Executive Officer for the Irrigation Research and Extension Committee, Bryan

Clark, said that croppers with water still available could pre-irrigate in late March, allowing them to sow crops like canola in mid to late April into a good moisture bank, or on a small rain event.

“Irrigators need to make a choice. If you still have water you either irrigate or not – at this time there are no water deliveries available past the end of March in many areas.

Otherwise, you may be able to store water on farm, in which case you could water later but again probably don't want to be wasting water evaporating in storages for too long," he said.

"In both cases it may be that canola is a better cropping option than wheat in that you can sow into a reasonably full profile in April. Canola offers many benefits to producers in terms of rotational disease management, soil health improvements and broadening the enterprise diversity on irrigation farms.

Mr Clark said that some irrigators currently have water available, including bore irrigators with a capacity to water up crops on time and those farmers with water in storages. He also said that paddocks which are growing a summer crop could provide some residual soil moisture to a winter crop.

Oilseed and pulse specialist, Don McCaffery, with the NSW Department of Primary Industries said that canola has a lower irrigation requirement in spring, at least one megalitre per hectare lower than a spring wheat or faba beans.

"This is where canola has the advantage over these crops," Mr McCaffery said.

He said that dual-purpose wheat was a good option for growers with livestock, but for those irrigators who are purely grain growers, canola should be factored into the spring irrigation scenario, given irrigators who are also growing rice will be aiming to save as much water for that crop.
