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Wednesday, 01 March 2006

## **OILSEEDS NEWS**

### **BRING BACK THE ROTATION**

Crop rotations have been pushed to the limit in parts of southern New South Wales, with one wheat crop following another for as many as five successive years in some instances, according to NSW DPI Technical Specialist in Oilseeds and Pulses, Don McCaffery.

However, agronomists, scientist and grain growers agree that cereal yields do best when a break crop is present in the rotation to limit disease and manage grass weeds.

Mr McCaffery said that 2001 was the last “normal year” in southern NSW, and that many growers have increased the concentration of cereals in their rotations as a result.

However, findings presented at the grains research updates held in Wagga Wagga last week confirmed the importance of rotating broadleaf crops like canola with cereals.

Speaking at the Grains Research and Development Corporation’s (GRDC’s) updates, Dr John Kirkegaard of the CSIRO Division of Plant Industry informed advisors that wheat crops after canola yielded an average 20 per cent more than wheat following wheat in 35 field experiments between 1988 and 2003.

He went on to say that the experiments showed major financial benefits from putting canola into the rotation, with a 25 per cent higher gross margin for canola followed by

wheat, compared with wheat-on-wheat. Dr Kirkegaard said that the main reason for the improved gross margin was the better wheat crops after canola.

Temora region grain grower, Bruce Thompson, said that, “most growers have pushed their rotations hard in the lower rainfall areas, and dropped off canola and lost their rotations”.

“I’m now growing 20 per cent canola. I was growing 50 per cent. We wound our canola back last year, but I have to pick it up again to around 40 per cent”, Mr Thompson said.

Mr Thompson crops 4000 hectares, 20 kilometres south of Temora, and has grown canola seed crops in past years. He rotates his cereal crops with canola and lupins.

“At the end of the day, the cereal crops are better after a true rotation. There’s no question of that. That’s proven.”

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