



IRRIGATED CROPPING FORUM

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## OILSEEDS NEWS

### CANOLA BENCHMARKING TO 'RAISE THE BAR' IN THE WIMMERA



**RAISING THE BAR:** Murra Warra canola grower Ian Schmidt is taking part in Canolacheck this year to make better-informed decisions.

Canola growers in the Wimmera are keeping a close eye on their canola crops to gather information that will help them make better management decisions in future years. Crops are being benchmarked to compare performance with the average of other crops in the region.

Oilseeds Industry Development Officer, Felicity Pritchard, said that a number of Wimmera growers were using the opportunity to re-assess how they manage canola crops as part of the Canolacheck program run through the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Each grower will receive a report after harvest, comparing yields and management strategies of their crop with the district average, the top 20 per cent, and the lowest 20

per cent yielding crops. Individual growers can only identify their own crops, and confidentiality of growers is assured.

Murra Warra grain grower Ian Schmidt said that he was keen to keep canola in his rotation, but would like to know how to grow canola more productively in drier years.

“Canola’s good. We need it as another break crop in the rotation”, he said.

“I hope that by being involved in the benchmarking, I’ll be able to lift the productivity of canola, to make it a sustainable crop in the rotation.”

Ms Pritchard said that benchmarking not only helps growers assess their crop performance, but also encourages growers to monitor their crops and helps agronomists give better advice.

She said that most agronomic recommendations for growing canola were based on data gathered from crop monitoring in the highly successful years of the Canolacheck program, the early to mid 1990s, but there hasn’t been much information gathered since then.

“In an ideal situation, we would have 20 years of benchmarking data, to use as a basis to fine-tune recommendations for different seasons,” she said.

“Most of the recommendations for growing canola in the Wimmera came from research and benchmarking done in seasons with above average or average rainfall, so we really need more information to help growers make more informed decisions in drier years, like we have been experiencing.”

Ms Pritchard said that another ten canola growers in the Wimmera were needed this year to have a good dataset.

To be involved in canola benchmarking, please contact Felicity Pritchard on 0427 600 228 or (03) 5382 4396.

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