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## OILSEEDS NEWS

### HIGH RAINFALL GROWERS EMBRACE CANOLA IN 2007



**ADVANTAGE CANOLA:** Hamilton DPI agronomist Steve Holden encourages growers to manage blackleg this year.

a safer area (than areas with lower rainfall),” he said.

Canola plantings around Hamilton in the high rainfall cropping area of the Western District of Victoria are expected to increase by around 20% in response to buoyant prices and subsoil moisture following good January rains, according to agronomists.

Elders Hamilton agronomist Bryce Hedlan said that all of his cropping clients agreed to sow more canola this year.

“Most are thinking that there will be more cereals sown this year (in other regions), so they’re steering towards canola, as this is

Australian canola prices are currently about \$90 above the 10-year average, largely due to the drought. But the medium and long-term outlook is also positive, due to the global demand for biofuels,

Grower Graham Rentsch from Byaduk, 23 kilometres south of Hamilton, said that canola is an important crop in his rotation.

“It’s a break crop in the rotation and when the price is over \$400 a tonne, canola becomes a viable option,” he said.

Mr Rentsch’s canola grain yields averaged 1.8 tonnes per hectare last year, with the best parts of the paddock yielding up to three tonnes per hectare.

Hamilton DPI agronomist Steve Holden warned that growers in the area need to select canola varieties with good resistance to the disease blackleg, and to isolate this year’s crop from last year’s stubble by at least 500 metres.

Where blackleg has caused yield loss in the past, a fungicide seed dressing or with a fertiliser application may be a worthwhile investment, he said.

Last year canola proved to be a handy dual-purpose crop in a drought. Despite crops suffering from devastating frosts in late October, Western District growers were pleased with the profitability of canola when cut for hay last year.

Mr Holden said that last year hay crops were more profitable than grain crops in the district.

“Many crops in the Hamilton area yielded around seven to eight tonnes per hectare of hay and sold for around \$200 a tonne last year, giving a gross return of \$1400 to \$1600 a hectare.”

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