



FELICITY PRITCHARD
Oilseed Industry Development Officer –
Victoria and southern New South Wales
Irrigated Cropping Forum
Grains Innovation Park
110 Natimuk Road, Horsham, Vic 3401
Ph: (03) 5382 4396 or 0427 600 228

Thursday, 8 November 2007
No. 37

OILSEEDS NEWS

AUSTRALIAN GROWERS MISSING OUT ON \$157 MILLION ANNUALLY



The grains industry could produce an additional \$157 million worth of canola and wheat each year if genetically modified (GM) canola is commercialised in Australia.

GM HAS BENEFITS: A newly released report shows the economic and environmental benefits of GM canola to Australia. Photo: Felicity Pritchard.

A report released today by The University of Melbourne shows that if GM canola is adopted on over half the current

canola area, there will be substantial economic and environmental benefits.

In the report, Dr Robert Norton and Professor Rick Roush from the Faculty of Land and Food Resources provide a summary of more than 20 recent reports on the impact of GM canola in Australia.

“Those reports show that the great bulk of GM canola is sold at similar prices to conventional canola in most major canola markets throughout the world” said Dr Norton.

“Australia is not realising any price premium for producing non-GM canola and is missing out on significant agronomic and environmental benefits from growing non-GM canola varieties under Australian conditions”.

Professor Roush said that Australia has now watched Canada grow commercial GM herbicide tolerant (HT) canola for more than 10 years.

“The use of GM HT canola has provided substantial benefits to growers and the environment in Canada where canola production has increased by 40 per cent and average yields have increased by 27 per cent since 1996. Over the same period, Australian yields have declined by 10 per cent.”

The report also updates the potential benefits to Australia using an adoption scenario published in 2003. With the changes in the grains industry since 2003, the report proposes that there are significant economic and environmental advantages from the new technology.

The key findings were:

- an extra 225,000 hectares of canola could be grown using conservation farming practices;
- 640 tonnes less triazine herbicide would be used each year;
- average Australian canola yields would increase from 1.17 tonnes per hectare to 1.28 tonnes per hectare, with an increase in canola production estimated at 295,000 tonnes annually; and
- wheat production would increase by 64,000 tonnes on the additional canola area.

“Over 100 million hectares of GM crops are produced in 22 countries each year. In 2003, the Australian Federal Regulator approved the use of two types of GM canola but growers have been denied the environmental and economic benefits of the new varieties,” said Professor Roush.

Source; University of Melbourne.

Media enquiries of further information: Dr Rob Norton, 0427 861 084.


