



IRRIGATED CROPPING FORUM

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## OILSEEDS NEWS

### FINAL IRRIGATION TIMING CRITICAL TO SOY CROPS, SAYS EXPERT



**Costly exercise:** Luke Gaynor (left) has warned soy growers that early final irrigations could cost them more than \$200 a hectare .

irrigation is undertaken too early, growers could be losing in excess of \$200 per hectare in lost yields on top of reduced premium prices due to smaller seed size.

Soybean growers must ensure their crops have enough water to ‘finish’, or yields and quality could be sacrificed like they were last year, according to a leading soybean agronomist.

Luke Gaynor, of the NSW Department of Primary Industries in Wagga Wagga said this week that if the final

He said that the final irrigation of soybean crops in southern New South Wales and northern Victoria was too early in many instances last year, when combined last season's warmer temperatures.

“Last year we had smaller than average seed size in our area across all varieties,” said Mr Gaynor. “It came down to too early scheduling of the final irrigation and not taking into consideration the above average temperature”.

Mr Gaynor said that the timing of the final irrigation always involves some risk. Growers need to remember to put the crop first in order to maximise yields and profits, he said.

Mr Gaynor said that insufficient soil moisture for seed development can cause yield losses up to 30 per cent in some situations.

“The goal is to have adequate soil moisture in the root-zone to ensure that the seed will obtain its maximum weight and size.”

“The optimum time for the final irrigation is when 30 per cent of the pods are mature – what agronomists call ‘P30’. Pods are generally considered mature once they have turned brown,” he said.

“If there is good soil moisture in the root-zone at P30, then no further irrigation will be required. If the soil is becoming dry within the root-zone, an additional irrigation maybe required to maximize seed weight and yield if no rainfall event is forecasted.”

“If there was a reasonable amount of rain forecasted in two or three days time, you wouldn't irrigate. But if the next one to two weeks are forecast to be dry, you would definitely irrigate to get the crop through.”

A final irrigation at this stage should be as quick a flush as possible, he said.

“Farmers need to consider if rain is forecast in the next week or so. If they irrigate and we get a big rain, than the paddock will become too wet and harvest can be delayed until the ground dries out enough to carry the harvesters” Mr Gaynor stated.

Mr Gaynor said that the crop’s water use is lower at this time of the year because of less evaporation and because the crop extracts less water as it matures.

For more information, contact Luke Gaynor at DPI Wagga Wagga on (02) 6938 1657 or Dale Grey at DPI Cobram on (03) 5871 0600.

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