



Canolarific: Keynote speaker Tom Breen of Monsanto discusses the GM trial in Esperance with SEPWA members Faye Sanderson and Ron Longbottom

Farmers check GM canola trial

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MORE than 100 farmers in the Esperance district have checked out the progress of the genetically modified (GM) canola trial being grown in the region.

The trial, located on the Department of Agriculture and Food's Esperance Downs research station, is one of 20 GM canola trials sown across the State in 2009.

Esperance DAFWA district manager Brendan Nicholas said the successful event was the premier field day for the Southern Agricultural region.

"The weather was kind to us and, as always, the day offered the latest research and information."

"And there were also some great lighter presentations, such as a pasta demonstration by one of our local Italian ladies and a talk about Men's Health by Julian Krieg."

Mr Nicholas said the field day

was an opportunity for farmers to see a practical demonstration of GM Roundup Ready canola and hear from Monsanto and NuFarm about the use of the technology.

The program also included field walks and presentations on sandplain subsoil constraints, barley disease and management, wheat time of sowing and wheat variety trials.

Mr Nicholas said a number of traditional cropping research trials were discussed as part as the day, which is jointly hosted by the department and the South East Premium Wheat Growers Association (SEPWA).

Mr Nicholas said a number of smaller field days would be held in coming weeks – one at Neridup today and at the Annual Salmon Gums Field Day hosted by the North Mallee Farm Improvement Group tomorrow.

The GM canola research trial at Esperance is being undertaken by Nufarm to examine the differences

in weed management using herbicide technologies available to farmers.

The department is also conducting a small scale commercial evaluation trial.

Following years of lobbying, Esperance was finally able to undertake GM canola trials this year after Minister for Agriculture Terry Redman announced the Esperance Downs Research Station would be a trial site in March.

The Department of Agriculture and Food-administered site joins DAFWA's Geraldton site in being the only non-farm based trials this year.

The location for the on-farm trials is an area roughly bordered by Northam, Cunderdin, Borden and Cranbrook.

Across the State, the trial GM canola plantings will cover a site no larger than 1000 hectares, with no individual trial site larger than 70ha.