



West Australian
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Farmers set to harvest first GM crop

SARAH QUINTON

Genetically modified technology is already a reality for WA farmers as harvest of the first commercial-sized trial is a matter of weeks away.

Seventeen farmers planted around 850ha of genetically modified Round-up Ready canola this season, with both pro and anti-GM campaigners eager to review the results.

York farmer Charlie Boyle planted 60ha of GM canola and said compared with the traditional Triazin tolerant crops next door, the canola was a lot more vigorous and required less of the herbicide glyphosate throughout the season.

"It's difficult to tell until we harvest, but it looks more impressive, bulky, taller and seems to have a wider pod set, so I'm anticipating it's going to out-yield the traditional TT canola quite convincingly," Mr Boyle said.

"It's also a different herbicide regime. We sprayed it once with glyphosate at the recommended rate and time and it was very effective on the weed population compared to a TT crop."

Mr Boyle said the crop required one spraying operation instead of three required on a non-GM crop.

Department of Agriculture systems research manager David Bowran

said giving WA farmers access to GM technology was ensuring farmers have options that can increase yield, are disease resistant, higher quality and had better weed management.

"The more options you have the greater the flexibility in being able to manage the difficult seasons, or marketing environment, particularly if you're living in a globally competitive world where your competitors have access to that technology and you don't," he said.

"As prices fall rapidly the only way you can get an advantage is to keep abreast of the technology."

Mr Bowran said research into GM wheat technology conducted by the CSIRO was discovering traits within wheat to protect against bowel cancer.

Frost tolerance, acid soils and tolerating temperatures below zero are also being researched for GM wheat production.

Mr Boyle said the GM technology had more benefits to increase his bottom line, claiming farmers would not adopt the technology if it did not deliver a better return.

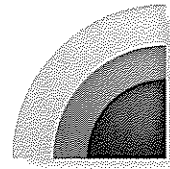
"I think from my experience it's got everything going for it, I don't see any downside to it... People want to know how it's going and excited to see if it's going to be useful to them," Mr Boyle said.





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Impressed: York famer Charlie Boyle says GM canola is a lot more vigorous and needs less herbicide.

Picture: Robert Duncan