



Countryman(WA)

Thursday 13/08/2009

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# Field days attract experts and curious

Canola, the crop that has divided towns since WA's new Agriculture Minister Terry Redman opened the gate for commercial scale 'trials' is expected to attract more than 500 visitors during a series of four field days.

Wyalkatchem farmers Stephen Crute, Marcus Reilly and Ian Pearse were among the 225 growers, agricultural industry representatives and shire officers who headed to the Monsanto/Nufarm-hosted day at Cunderdin last week to see the controversial crop for themselves.

The trio was there to learn about the Roundup Ready crop.

And all three said they would grow it next year if the ban was lifted on commercial production of genetically modified canola, sold on its weed control potential and promised yield improvements.

The Cunderdin day took in a site visit to John Snooke's property south-west of the town, where he is growing a 34-hectare bulk crop of the genetically modified Roundup Ready hybrid CHYB-166 RR out of the Canola Breeders of WA stable.

Mr Snooke and other Cunderdin growers of WA's first bulk crops of GM canola, David Fulwood and Norm Jenzen, shared their season-one experiences while Nufarm agronomists demonstrated chemical options for control of Roundup Ready volunteers in subsequent cereal crops.

The GM canola in WA this year will be delivered to two sites — Mt Kokeby, between Beverley and Brookton, and the Metro Grain Centre (MGC).

Department of Agriculture and Food agricultural systems research manager David Bowran addressed a number of frequently raised questions about GM crops, among them fears of cross contamination, de-

velopment of super weeds, legal liability, market access and loss of organic certification.

He said canola out-crossing was usually less than 1 per cent and with buffers it was "very difficult to end up with more than the 0.9 (tolerance) per cent level" for non-GM canola.

Research also showed it was almost impossible for cross pollination to occur between canola and wild radish.

Dr Bowran said it was explained to people with concerns about eating canola oil made from GM canola that the way the oil was processed removed all the DNA and proteins so there was no GM protein in the oil.

Likewise, he said risk to organic certification was low, adding that the department did not know of any organic canola producers in WA.

For growers concerned about legal liability, Dr Bowran said he did not believe there would be much of it given the likely cost. And anyone wanting to take action also had to prove a loss.

Other speakers included Monsanto canola technical specialist James Neilsen, State Agricultural Biotechnology Centre director Mike Jones, Matthew Mews, of CBH, and Rob Dickie, of the Grain Pool.

Similar topics were highlighted at Mt Barker last Friday where 80 people also took in a site visit to Mark Adams' property. A further 90 people were expected at Esperance on Tuesday.

The last site on the GM canola field day round is scheduled for Geraldton tomorrow at the Department of Agriculture and Food, Northern Sandplain Research Annex, Valentine Road, Eradu, starting at 8.45am.

Mr Redman will be at the site.



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Wyalkatchem farmers Stephen Crute, Marcus Reilly and Ian Pearse are keen to grow GM canola next year if it is given the nod by the State Government.