



Farm Weekly(WA)
Thursday 1/10/2009

Page: 5
Section: Supplements
Region: WA, AU
Circulation: 13745
Type: Rural
Size: 474.78 sq.cms.



press clip

GM canola seed to be in high demand

By COLIN BETTLES

SUPPLIES of Genetically Modified (GM) canola seed are expected to be tight in WA next season, due to the anticipated high demand and a shortage of seed.

Many growers have indicated they will embrace GM technology, should the State Government lift the moratorium on its commercial production in 2010.

The immediate future of GMs in WA will be shaped by the outcomes of a current Government review, with a decision on the moratorium likely to be made some time in January when Parliament reconvenes following the Christmas break.

Monsanto Australia public affairs manager Honi McNaughton said her company anticipated there would be a high demand for GM seed in WA in 2010 if the moratorium was lifted.

She said growers provided strong, positive feedback provided at the GM canola field days held throughout the Wheatbelt during the growing season.

Ms McNaughton said growers were very interested in planting GMs next season, but they could not measure exactly how high the level of demand was, until the moratorium was lifted.

She said commercial GM canola production experienced a four fold increase this season, in Victoria and NSW, the second since those states lifted their moratoriums on the controversial biotechnology.

About 300 graingrowers dedicated 600 paddocks to the crop for a total of 42,000 hectares, that are expected to produce an estimated 50,000t on GM canola.

Ms McNaughton said the figures constituted about 10pc of NSW and Victoria's total canola market for the season, which was only 1pc the season before.

In reference to a decision on the GM moratorium in WA, Pacific Seeds WA manager Nick Joyce said it was hard to predict which way the State Government would go at this stage.

Pacific Seeds is one of four seed companies which supplied GM seed for the large scale trials being held in WA this season.

Mr Joyce said he had no doubt some WA growers would miss out on GM seed next year.

He said it was also hard to predict the volume of seed required for 2010, because the area to be sown to Roundup Ready (RR) canola was not yet known.

"From a Pacific Seeds point of view we encourage growers to register their interest with the local reseller in order to get our production estimates as close to spot on as we can for our RR canola hybrids," he said.

In contrast, Nuseed said it already had stock of GT61 in storage on the east coast.

Nuseed WA sales and production agronomist, Glenn Lendon, said the next generation of RR canola varieties from his company were already in seed production on the east coast.

Mr Lendon said the production received from those crops would be determined by spring growing conditions.

At this stage however, he said Nuseed believed it would be able to

supply demand for RR canola seed, should the moratorium be lifted in 2010.

Pioneer Hi-Bred Australia is another participant in the approved commercial RR canola trials.

The RR seed was transported into WA from the east coast after meeting its quarantine requirements.

Pioneer Hi-Bred Australia national marketing and communications manager, James Holden, said estimating the availability of GM seed needed to supply WA growers next season, was a "difficult question to answer", because of the uncertainty over RR canola's future.

Mr Holden said the certainty in NSW and Victoria meant they would get first choice on available stocks.

"It's not just whether the Government will decide to remove the moratorium or not but if so, will there are any restrictions around their decision; for instance, area and volume?" he said.

"We hope that the WA Government will decide to offer growers the choice and benefits of growing Roundup Ready canola but we do not want to pre-empt that decision.

"So while we are happy to take orders from WA distributors for our Roundup Ready canola hybrid, 46Y20, the ability to supply the seed will depend entirely on the announcement by the WA Government.

"We have a reasonable supply of 46Y20 for next year but we will be servicing Victoria and NSW first, simply because we have certainty in these states."