



Countryman(WA)

Thursday 19/02/2009

Page: 12
Section: General News
Region: WA, AU
Circulation: 9070
Type: Rural
Size: 322.09 sq.cms.



press clip

GM crop set to expand

As much as 100,000ha of genetically modified canola could be sown in Victoria and NSW this year, a huge increase on the 9500ha planted last year.

Gene technology company Monsanto and GM seed retailer NuSeed say favourable weather conditions would ensure a huge expansion of the crop.

Monsanto predicts about 150,000 tonnes could be harvested.

Last year was the first year Victorian and NSW farmers were allowed to grow GM crops.

The 10,000 tonnes of GM canola — 1 to 2 per cent of the canola crop — grown by 108 farmers were delivered to five authorised sites.

NuSeed product manager Tim Wilmhurst

Agronomically and economically, GM has not lived up to its promises. It would surprise me if farmers plant that much.

JULIE NEWMAN

said he expected 50,000ha would be grown in Victoria, while the area sown in NSW would depend on seasonal conditions.

“NSW might depend on the prices on offer and rainfall, so we might see it reach 50,000ha,” Mr Wilmhurst said.

“In NSW, there are more summer cropping options and some areas have copped a hiding during the drought.

“It’s not that unusual for canola to drop 50,000 tonnes a year in NSW.”

Monsanto canola business leader Tony May said a series of accreditation workshops in NSW and Victoria had been well attended.

“We’ve had 18 sessions with 50 to 60 people at each session,” Mr May said.

He said Round Up Ready GM canola had yielded on a par with Clearfield and slightly better than Triazine Tolerant canola this harvest.

“A sample of 34 farmers showed that it yielded about 1.2 tonnes a hectare,” he said.

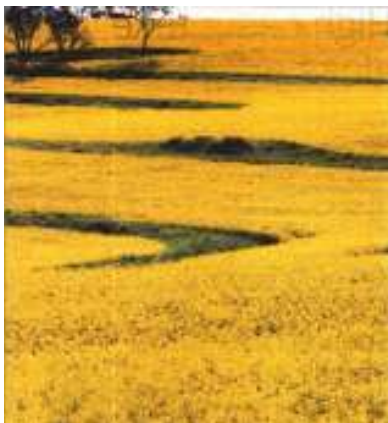
Mr May said a lot more delivery sites were needed to cope with the GM harvest of up to 150,000 tonne next season.

Network of Concerned Farmers national spokeswoman Julie Newman said she was surprised by the predictions.

“Agronomically and economically, GM canola has not lived up to its promises,” Ms Newman said.

“It would surprise me if farmers planted that much.”

Ms Newman said farmers would need a 12 per cent increase in yield to pay for the extra cost of growing the grain.



Farmers in Victoria and NSW are lining up to plant more GM canola this year.