



Land (NSW)
Thursday 10/12/2009

Page: 71
Section: General News
Region: NSW, AU
Circulation: 50464
Type: Rural
Size: 107.43 sq.cms.



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New GM varieties yield well

MONSANTO is thrilled with the results of genetically modified (GM) Roundup Ready (RR) canola varieties at a trial at Wallendbeen on the State's South West Slopes.

One of the major grower issues with GM canola commercially available in Australia thus far has been that the varieties were older, and not as good agronomically, compared to new conventional lines.

However, the results of the trial showed the RR varieties outyielded both the major strains of conventional weed-management focused canola varieties, the traditionally lower yielding triazine-tolerant (TT) lines, along with Clearfield cultivars, designed to be tolerant to imidazolinone herbicide, On Duty.

The Wallendbeen trials featured the leading RR lines, TTs and Clearfield varieties, and consolidated results from last year that showed RR beat TT lines comfortably in terms of yields.

"Our trials with RR canola have shown an 11 per cent yield increase above the TT varieties, which is consistent with our previous findings and with growers' experience," said James Neilsen, Monsanto canola technical specialist.

However, anti-GM lobby group, Gene Ethics, has warned Australian growers to consider the costs involved when weighing up whether to plant GM varieties.

Gene Ethics director, Bob Phelps, pointed to research coming out of North America from the US Organic Center showing there were "sharply escalating" prices for GM seed.

He blamed biotech patents for the price hike and said farmers needed to be wary.

However, Dr Neilsen emphasised the strong agronomic benefits the RR varieties had.

"It proves you don't need to sacrifice yields for weed control," he said.