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Canola seed size potentially the key to better grain yields, according to Hart Field Day speaker



Canola trials are showing that seed size can impact crop establishment rates, early vigour and potentially grain yields according to Hart Field Day presenter, agronomist Rohan Brill.

Mr Brill, a research and development agronomist with the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries based in Wagga Wagga, will be one of the session presenters at this year's Hart Field Day on Tuesday, September 15.

He says GRDC-supported trials in New South Wales showed larger seed size improves yield outcomes, both directly and indirectly.

"When using commercial seed, the trials have shown better establishment from hybrid varieties than OP (open-pollinated) varieties and that you can plant them a little deeper, and much of that benefit is because of the inherently larger seed of the hybrid," Mr Brill says.

"The debate for growers is often whether they are going to purchase hybrid seed or are they going to retain OP seed, which is the cheaper option.

"We're finding we can improve the performance of the OP seed by keeping larger seeds for sowing, and I'd recommend farmers 'scalp' off the top 10 per cent of seed and retain that for planting rather than just cleaning off the weeds and very small seeds.

"It's about taking the best seeds through to the next year to see improved establishment rates, early vigour, weed competition and potentially improved grain yield."

Current GRDC-funded trials from southern Queensland to the Eyre Peninsula – including trials locally at the Hart Field-Site - are also looking at how canola varieties perform with early sowing.

Mr Brill says so far, the trials are showing that as sowing is pushed earlier, the varieties behave much differently compared with normal sowing dates.

The research aims to provide growers with information on the best early-sowing varieties to enable a greater window of opportunity to get the crop in.

"With this information, if the rain does come early – say in early April – then farmers will have that option," Mr Brill says

"We're looking to develop canola packages for sowing and improve the outcomes to broaden the window of opportunity to sow canola."

For details about the Hart Field Day take a look at the website www.hartfieldsite.org.au

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