



Wednesday, September 6, 2017

Top tips for early sown canola at Hart Field Day

Farm productivity can benefit from early sowing of canola if clear management guidelines are followed, according to CSIRO chief research scientist Dr John Kirkegaard who will present at the Hart Field Day on September 19.

Dr Kirkegaard from CSIRO Agriculture and Food says advantages to whole farm productivity from canola sown around mid-April (in South Australia) are among the initial findings of the GRDC Optimised Canola Profitability Project, which includes a trial at the Hart Field-Site.

During his presentations at the Hart Field Day, Dr Kirkegaard will address 10 tips for success of early-sown canola that have emerged from the canola project being undertaken across nine regions of Australia.

Among them will be tips on the environment; paddock preparation – rotation and fallow management; variety choice; sowing depth and seeding rates; weed control; nutrient inputs; insects and pests; disease management; and harvest timing.

“There are a number of key issues, among them is factoring in your environment,” Dr Kirkegaard said.

“While early sowing of canola can be considered in most environments, some regions simply may not have the opportunity to establish canola earlier than current practice.

“For example at Cummins on Eyre Peninsula, the chance of receiving 20 millimetres of rainfall (over two days) between March 20 and April 25 is only 25 per cent, at Wagga Wagga this increases to 60pc.”

Dr Kirkegaard also said paddock preparation and management of moisture in the fallow period was crucial for successful canola establishment.

“Variety choice is a key factor, early sowing greatly amplifies phenological differences between spring canola varieties making varietal phenology selection crucial for the success of early sowing,” he said.

“Fast developing spring varieties should be avoided for early sowing. These varieties have little cold requirement to delay flowering from early sowing, they will flower too early and have lower grain yield potential as well as be exposed to greater frost and disease risk.”

Higher evaporation in early sown canola also requires careful sowing management of seeding depth and rates.

“Evaporation is higher when sowing canola early so when sowing into moisture, seed may need to be placed slightly deeper at 25-40mm than for later sowing dates,” Dr Kirkegaard said.

“For growers retaining OP canola, grade the seed to a diameter of at least 2mm to maximise the likelihood of achieving successful establishment.

“Also, research has shown that lower plant populations (15-20 plants/metres²) can be as successful as higher plant populations from early sowing.

“However, if planning on early sowing into marginal moisture and warmer conditions, field establishment rates are usually lower so maintaining a high seeding rate will be required for a given plant population target.

“There is less economic penalty from establishing too many plants than too few, so expected field establishment rates should be estimated conservatively.”

For canola generally, as opposed to just early-sown canola, Dr Kirkegaard said there were also a number of guidelines to optimise productivity.

“Know the optimum flowering window for your area, know how to achieve the flowering window with the right variety x sowing date combination – sow early where possible, manage the biomass to achieve target yield potential (variety types, sowing rates, nitrogen etc) in the most cost-effective way, and fine tune according to local varietal experience,” he said.

“But also growers need to not lose sight of the ‘systems’ benefits canola provides in addition to its own profitability in a specific year.”

Hear Dr Kirkegaard speak and have direct access to him for questions relating specifically to your farming situation at the Hart Field Day on Tuesday, September 19, 2017.

He will be one of 40 specialist speakers presenting during a rolling program of 21 sessions.

Tickets are now on sale – register online to fast-track your way through the gates. Admission is \$30 (students \$5), includes comprehensive Field Day Guide of articles and information from presenters.

Gates open at 9am, official opening at 10am, and the first session starts at 10.30am sharp.

The Hart Field Day will be held 10 kilometres north of Blyth, just off the Blyth to Brinkworth road.

To register or for more information take a look at the Hart Field-Site Group website www.hartfieldsite.org.au or contact Sandy Kimber on 0427 423 154 or email admin@hartfieldsite.org.au

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