

## Harvest options for low yielding canola

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### BCG-WFS

In dry years, many canola crops are short and thin. Windrowing is recommended where yield potential exceeds 1 tonne/ha and crops are tall and thick enough to sit on 25-30cm of stubble. With light crops, where windrows may be blown about by strong winds, other options are desiccation and harvest or direct heading, depending on seed moisture levels.

### Desiccation

Reglone<sup>®</sup> is registered for use as a pre-harvest desiccant in canola. Rates are 1.5 to 3.0 L/ha. Spray when 70% of the pods are yellow and the seeds are brownish/bluish and pliable. Harvest 4 to 7 days after spraying.

In 2000, the Muresk Institute of Agriculture compared the effects of windrowing, desiccation and direct harvesting on the yield and quality of canola grown at Dowerin (WA). The highest yield of **0.91 tonnes/ha** was achieved by applying Reglone<sup>®</sup> (1.5 L/ha) at 56% seed colour change. Windrowing achieved a yield of **0.68 tonnes/ha**, whilst the direct harvest yield was **0.79 tonnes/ha**.

Timing is important. Windrowing or desiccating too early can significantly reduce seed yield and oil content compared with direct harvesting at maturity.

Monsanto have not applied for a permit for the use of Roundup<sup>®</sup> as a desiccant because it does not dry canola crops down evenly and so shattering losses may be high. It is advisable not to use harvested grain from crops treated with Roundup<sup>®</sup> for seed.

### Direct Heading

Canola crops with yields up to 3 tonnes/ha can be direct harvested. Best results are from evenly ripened crops that are expected to yield less than 1 tonne/ha. During hot weather it is best to harvest during the night or early morning, when humidity is higher, to minimise pod shattering losses. Very windy days can cause problems. Closely monitor seed moisture.

### Header operation

Maintain ground speed once the crop begins to feed evenly into the front of the header. Keeping the crop bunched up will reduce pod shattering. 4 in 1 fingers can help. First-time operators often travel too slowly.

Harvest direction is important. Often it is best to travel cross-ways and cut paddocks out in several sections. Try different directions to see which is best for crop feeding. Multi-fingered reels are best, particularly for heavier crops. When direct heading, set the reel speed and height so that the crop flows gently into the front. A good crop divider is important.

### Timing of harvest operations

	Windrowing	Desiccation	Harvest
<b>Windrow &amp; harvest</b>	14 to 28 days after the end of flowering (40 – 70% seed colour change)		5 to 14 days after windrowing
<b>Desiccation &amp; harvest</b>		70 – 80% seed colour change (Reglone®)	2 to 7 days after desiccation
<b>Direct harvest</b>			4 to 6 weeks after the end of flowering (< 8% moisture)