CROPPING GROSS MARGINS

David Scholz, Merchandise Manager, Elders Dalwallinu

AIM

This trial aims to compare the returns of barley, canola, wheat and triticale.

BACKGROUND

Barley and canola have long been touted as medium-high rainfall crops. However, with excellent prices and better varieties available through breeding directed towards lower rainfall environments in recent years, more growers are making the switch toward barley and canola as part of their rotation and chasing higher gross margins.

TRIAL DETAILS

Property	Steve & Lee Anne Carter, Xantippe
Plot size & replication	20m x 1.8m x 4 replications
Soil type	Sandy loam
Sowing date	6/6/07
Seeding rate	100 kg/ha Wheat, Barley, Triticale; 5 kg/ha Canola
Varieties	Mundah & Vlamingh Barley ;Wyalkatchem & Binnu Wheat ; Speedee & Tahara Triticale; Tanami & Bravo Canola
Fertiliser (kg/ha)	6/6/07: 80 kg/ha Agstar Extra (Banded) + 20 kg/ha Urea (Banded) 6/6/07: 4 L/t Activist Zn (On seed, except Canola); 20 L/t Activist Zn (Canola only)
Paddock rotation	2003 = Pasture, 2004 = Wheat, 2005 = Wheat, 2006 = Pasture
Herbicides	6/6/07: 2 L/ha Sprayseed + 2 L/ha Trifluralin + 400 mL/ha Chlorpyrifos 14/7/07: 2 L/ha Atrazine + 250 mL/ha Select + 1% Hasten (Canola) 26/7/07: 600 mL/ha Tigrex (Cereals) 30/8/07: 20 mL/ha Scud (Canola)
Insecticides/Fungicides	6/6/07: 1 L/ha Baytan (Cereals), 400 mL/ha Intake (all)
Growing Season Rainfall	113mm

RESULTS & COMMENTS

On the 14th July, 39 days after sowing, canola plants were 2 leaf and small in relation to the expected season length at this site. Barley plots were also looking healthy, but again were small due to delayed germination from low rainfall after seeding. Moisture stress was evident at the site when visited on the 15th, 20th and 30th August. This trial was not harvested due to the very low yield potential in all plots. This trial was sown 4 days after a small rainfall event but the soil had already begun to dry out and the seed bed was dry at seeding. A cloddy seed bed and moisture loss from soil disturbance meant germination was slow. However, a neighbouring wheat trial ("Practice for Profit") sown just prior to this rainfall, and with a different knife point, did produce heads and fill grains sufficient to warrant harvest. This has again demonstrated the value of sowing time in relation to rainfall in low yielding/low rainfall seasons and also the importance of knife point design.

CONCLUSIONS

This trial was drought stressed, however barley and canola do look attractive with the right choice of variety in a more typical season.

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CONTACT

Dave Scholz
Ph. 96612000
Email. david.scholz@elders.com.au