

Canola strong candidate for rotation

By J.T. SMITH

CANOLA may be more common in the Southwest as interest in oilseed crops grows, along with the need for alternative crops.

"Canola is an excellent rotation with wheat," says Chad Godsey, oilseeds agronomist, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater.



GODSEY

Canola production is well suited for Great Plains agriculture, he adds. The U.S. imports the equivalent of 3 million acres of canola production from foreign sources each year. So a domestic market for both the oil and meal definitely exists.

"Theoretically, producers can use the same equipment they use with wheat," Godsey notes.

He acknowledges canola likely represents a little more work and attention than wheat. "You can't just plant it and not worry about it all winter," the agronomist cautions. "It is a little more management-intensive than wheat."

Godsey sees good days ahead for canola, which is getting more respect. "Monsanto has gotten into winter canola on the Great Plains," he notes. "That has helped improve the commercial availability of canola [for planting]."

Godsey likes to see winter canola achieve five to eight true leaves before winter. Nevertheless, he has seen canola go into wintertime with just three true leaves in the Altus region of Oklahoma and survive.

Canola has done well in both the Altus and Tipton, Okla., areas. The crop doesn't like compacted soils, which make it difficult for canola to emerge up through crusted earth. Canola also has difficulty emerging if the soil has excessive amounts of residue.

Godsey says producers should plant canola from one-half to 1 inch deep, and the soil pH should be between 6 and 7.

He notes 5 pounds of seed per acre is a good seeding rate. Godsey says canola will reach about 60% of its total height before flowering. Stem elongation and flower parts will be visible at the center of the rosette.

Generally, winter canola is planted during September. Godsey is cautious about planting canola too far into October in Oklahoma and Texas in case of an early freeze.

Aphids are the main insect pest of canola, he notes. Canola does not tolerate waterlogged conditions, so avoid fields prone to standing water or flooding.

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Key Points

- Canola is a good rotational crop in Oklahoma and Texas with winter wheat.
- A domestic market for both canola oil and meal exists in the United States.
- Demand for both cooking oil and biodiesel production should help canola.



YATES

food — like french fries — it's going to increase the consumption of oilseed crops.

Mark Welch, Extension economist, College Station, Texas, points out that world per capita use of vegetable oil actually has gone

up steadily since 1971. To satisfy the growth in demand, oilseed crop acreage from South America, such as in Brazil, increased.

He notes U.S. biofuel mandates call for steady increases of renewable fuels in coming years, and that also will increase the consumption of canola and other oilseed crops.



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