

Canola Council Of Canada
2009 Crop Production Report of Extension Activities
For the British Columbia
Peace River Agriculture Development Fund

Production Update

Statistics Canada predicted 2009 canola acres at 14.8 million based on March seeding intentions, with farmers penciling out canola as a profitable choice. However, farmers across Western Canada experienced a less than ideal start to the growing season due to prevailing cool conditions. Very dry conditions in east-central Alberta and west-central Saskatchewan caused emergence delays and limited some canola planting. In Manitoba, wet conditions delayed planting. Spring frosts were frequent and in some cases severe, resulting in some re-seeding and delayed crop growth and development. The majority of canola acres were planted by mid-June but by this time, the crop was delayed two to three weeks in most areas.

The cool conditions and frosts made early in-crop herbicide application a challenge due to concerns about crop safety and product efficacy. Flea beetle pressure was also more of concern this spring due to cool conditions and delayed emergence and crop growth, leaving plants susceptible to damage longer than usual. Other insect issues flourished in patches across the prairies due to dry soils. Cutworm outbreaks occurred in patches across Saskatchewan, central Alberta and the Peace Region and lygus bug pressure was severe throughout parts of the Peace region prior to swathing. Areas of the Peace also experienced yield loss due to an early frost in mid August. Harvest, although complete in some areas, is still struggling to wrap up, due to wet and snowy October conditions. Undoubtedly, storage management will require added attention this winter with extreme fluctuations in fall temperatures, reported high dockage due to in-season weed issues and high moisture levels in late-harvest canola. One consistency throughout the prairies was the careful management that canola stands required for the duration of the challenging 2009 cropping season.

Supporting More Production (Acres and Yield)

a) Industry Training and Communications

i) Canola Colleges

The traditional annual Canola Colleges were held in Nisku, AB, Warman, SK and Brandon, MB. All were well attended, with a total of 163 participants at the three Colleges. Due to the success of past Canola Colleges, the addition of Satellite Canola Colleges in Grand Prairie, AB, Medicine Hat, AB, and Yorkton, SK were well received with a total of 85 participants. Additionally, a live webcast option was offered for the Brandon College, which was available to anyone with web access.

Total attendance of all the Canola Colleges was 270, up 40% from 2008. This includes the 19 people who logged into the live webcast. A total of 5.5 CCA credits were available to those who attended. Thirty five percent more CCA credits were awarded to participants in 2009 than 2008. The Brandon College was video taped and the live streaming video is available on the CCC website.

ii) Canola Watch

Canola Watch ran from the first week of May until the third week of September with a total of 20 issues published. Canola watch was released each Wednesday throughout the growing season and continued to be the vehicle for 'just-in-time' information delivery to agronomists and farmers. In a recent survey, 63% of producers indicated they prefer email notification for critical growing season alerts. With 3566 subscribers currently, and using last year's survey estimate that half of them are forwarding Canola Watch to 15 people, this publication is currently being sent directly and indirectly to over 30,000 people each week. We will be offering a Canola Watch exam for CCA credits at the end of the season and will continue to utilize the online format implemented last year.

iii) Training events

The Canola Council agronomists have presented at over 34 individual company training events (classroom setting and in-field) in 2009. These training events provided regional, hands-on, agronomic training for employees (seasonal and full time) of line companies, seed companies and independent retailers.

b) Grower Extension

2009 was a busy extension year with the Canola Council Crop Production team participating in 63 meetings with a total attendance of 2747 people.

Crop walk season was a success, with the agronomists partnering with grower groups and industry to deliver in-field learning opportunities for producers. Canola Council Agronomy Specialists presented at over 24 crop walks and 25 tours which reaching out to over 1700 participants across Western Canada, throughout the 2009 crop season.

c) Grower Communications

i) Air Drill Clinic

An air drill clinic was held in Yorkton, SK on February 10, 2009. Just over 100 participants, approximately 70% of which were canola producers, learned important information on setting, adjusting and measuring performance on their seeding equipment. This annual clinic has been instrumental in teaching participants the need to slow down, set their equipment properly and make sure they are getting the seed placement they need in order to establish good plant stands. This event also acted as a springboard to our spring Seed SMART Campaign.

ii) Seed SMART

Seed SMART, the Crop Production team's targeted agronomy campaign, kicked off with the Air Drill Clinic in February, 2009. Seed Smart was focused on five key messages considered critical for successful stand establishment: Slow down, Measure depth, Aim for a uniform stand, Remember to take a sample, Target 10 plants/ft². These messages were distributed through presentations by the agronomy team, print media of a national, provincial, and community scope, and through ten professionally recorded expert radio spots that featured four members of the Crop Production team. For ten weeks (mid-March to mid-May), these radio spots ran daily on five major stations with time purchased by the CCC and weekly on 18 stations with time purchased by the Provincial grower groups. Additionally, a Seed Smart Tips card was developed and approximately 17,000 copies have been distributed via industry partners, growers, and the agronomy team. A Seed Smart sitelet, seedsmart.org, featuring the Tips card, Expert Radio, Crop Production resources, and the Canola Growers manual was also developed. This sitelet was available either directly or through the CCC homepage and since its launch, close to 1000 visitors have trafficked the site with just over 2600 page views. The Crop Production team was evaluating awareness of the Seed Smart campaign by growers and agronomists, over the growing season, and results will be compiled this fall.

iii) clubroot.ca

Clubroot continues to be an important issue for the canola industry and Crop Production team has dedicated a great deal of time to clubroot meetings, clubroot management committees, sanitation protocol development and industry and media requests. Updates to CCC managed www.clubroot.ca remain a priority to ensure this site remains the comprehensive source for clubroot information in western Canada. Research results and presentations and summary notes from the Clubroot Summit can be found on this site.

iv) Field Videos

Crop Production staff continue to adopt new communication methods to reach a broader audience with agronomic messaging. Matthew Stanford, the southern Alberta agronomist, was featured in several canola stand establishment videos on www.RealAgriculture.com, a website started by a seed producer in southern Alberta. The goal of this site is to get timely agronomic information and industry updates out to people, while also providing a forum where industry stakeholders can voice their opinions and weigh in on issues relating to agriculture.

v) Grow Canola 2.015

Recently initiated, the Grow Canola 2.015 program will use social media platforms to establish a new relationship between the Canola Council's Crop Production team and canola farmers. Growers will be able to interact with Canola Council website content by sending pictures and text messages which can then be used to localize the information they are seeking. Grow Canola 2.015 is the new project under the federal Agri-Flexibility Program.

d) Media Outreach

Through the duration of the 2009 crop year, 27 production-related media releases spanning issues from early season stresses to fall storage considerations have been published. Each media release has resulted in several insertions/stories in mainstream agricultural media. As of the end of September, 2009, the Crop Production team has directly participated in 82 radio interviews and 45 print stories.

e) Agronomy Survey Results

The Crop Production team contracted a prairie-wide survey to gain understanding on current grower management practices, knowledge gaps and to create a benchmark for future measurement of the Canola Council extension program. There were 1051 growers who choose to participate in this survey that was a total of 63 questions in length. The questions focused on crop establishment, fertility, scouting and harvest management. The results can be split by farm size, soil zone and province and a summary report is available. This information will be very useful to us for planning future extension activities, publications, media releases as well as prioritizing research needs.

f) Staff Changes

Chris Anderson, Vice President of Crop Production, left the Canola Council mid-May to join Monsanto as their Canada Stewardship Lead. Matthew Stanford, Agronomy Specialist for southern Alberta also left our team in July to return to the family farm. Both Chris and Matthew and their significant contributions to Council will be missed. However, in July the Canola Council welcomed Denise Maurice as Vice President of Crop Production. Denise joins us most recently from Viterra, but her vast experience extends to roles in industry, government and extension. Tiffany Martinka joined the Canola Council in January as the Agronomy Specialist for eastern Saskatchewan. The newest addition to the Crop Production team is Troy Prosofsky who will be filling the position of Agronomy Specialist in southern Alberta, starting the beginning of November.

Special Projects and Issues

a) Canola Export Ready

i) Export Ready Survey

Market research results from a survey of 400 canola growers indicates that awareness of the Canola Export Ready program has increased from 21 to 30% since 2006, the last time market research was completed.

- The most common source of information has been magazines publications (43%), followed by newspapers (28%) and radio (16%).

- The Canola Council is considered to be the best source to provide information on these practices, with just over seven in ten growers mentioning the Council; results were similar by province.
- Communication efforts appear to be working and awareness has increased when it comes to not storing canola in malathion-treated bins and following correct pre-harvest intervals.
- The term 'de-registered canola varieties' is fairly well known, with seven in ten having heard of it previously.
- Those from the Peace River District are the most aware (78%), which is positive as we have targeted this area for Export Ready messaging.
- There is still very small segment of growers who are already aware that using de-registered varieties can cause trade problems, yet they still indicate some likelihood of using a de-registered variety in the future if it performed well on their farm.
- We must continue to educate growers on alternative, registered, high performing options for their farms.

ii) Export Ready Advertisements for 2009

A new media campaign for Export Ready was launched in March 2009. The tag line 'Keep canola in the game' was used to communicate the importance of not planting de-registered canola varieties. Both print and radio coverage were utilized. The summer print and radio campaign focused on the importance of not using malathion to treat canola seed or canola storage bins and may be expanded to include emphasis on the importance of following pre-harvest intervals. The 'Insects in Stored Canola' factsheet has recently been updated to support the proper storage messages of Export Ready.