

Australian Canola

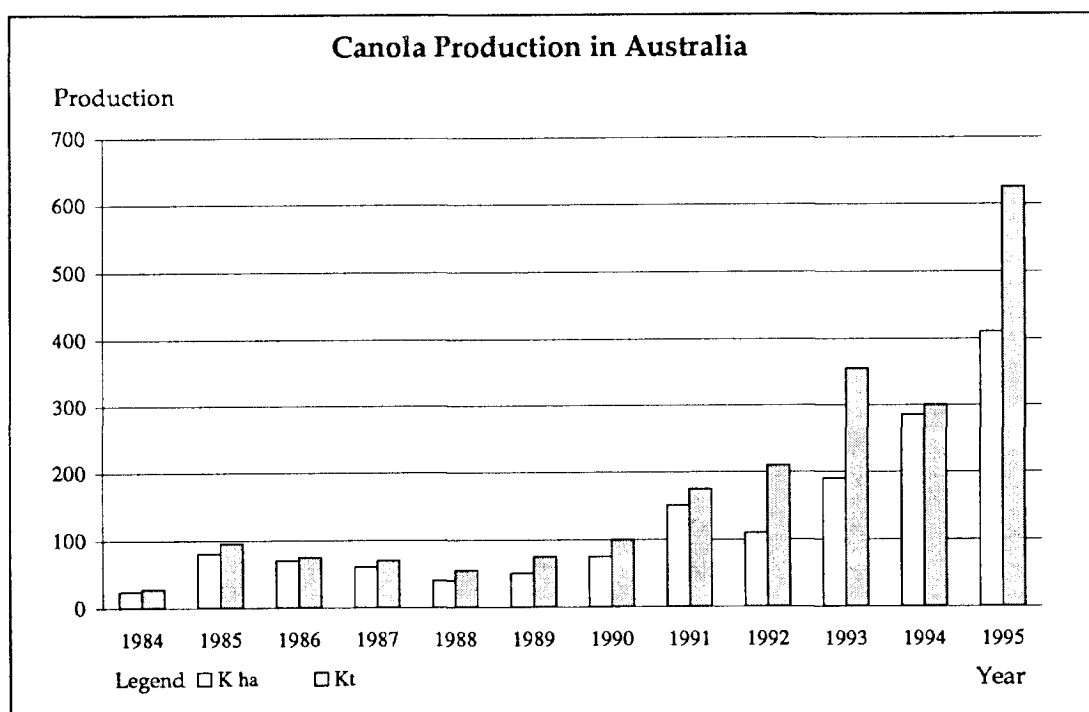
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Canola Production

Australia has seen canola production increase rapidly in recent years and particularly since 1993. It was expected that 1994 would have produced a much greater harvest but it was considerably restricted due to a devastating drought in the eastern states of Australia.

However, production in Western Australia helped maintain the crop size to a level only slightly lower than that of 1993. Good conditions in 1995 have seen the crop continue to expand to a record level estimated at 625,200 tonnes.



1995 Australian Canola Crop

New South Wales continues to be the State with the largest area sown to canola and also the greatest yield in tonnes for any of the five states in which canola is grown. New cultivars are seeing canola spread to marginal areas which in the past have been considered

unsuitable for canola production. In recent years Western Australia has expanded in new areas and the total area sown was second only to New South Wales. Victoria produced the second highest tonnage after New South Wales and oil content from Victorian canola averaged approximately 45%, the highest in

Australia for 1995 and possibly the highest average oil content for any State since the establishment of canola in Australia. Some crops in Victoria produced oil contents of 50 %.

As farmers in Australia are paid a bonus for oil content above 40 %, these crops were very profitable for those farmers.

Canola Crop Estimate 1995/1996		
STATE	Area Planted (hectares)	Production (tonnes)
Victoria.....	100,000	190,000
New South Wales.....	155,000	260,000
Queensland	300	200
Western Australia ...	120,000	120,000
South Australia.....	35,000	55,000
TOTAL	410,300	625,200

Source: Australian Oilseeds Federation Commodity News

Recent Varieties

Most of the canola production in Australia is from open-pollinated spring varieties. In 1995, the main varieties in the eastern states were Dunkeld, Oscar and Rainbow, while in Western Australia, Narendra and Hyola 42 (a hybrid) were the most popular. The latter two are earlier maturing and better suit the expanding area of production in Western Australia. The triazine herbicide resistant variety, Siren, occupied a relatively small area.

In 1996, the variety situation will change little from 1995, although a swing back to Oscar from Dunkeld is expected in the eastern states. Limited seed of a new triazine herbicide resistant line, currently known as TI 7, will be available. This line differs from Siren in maturity, being much earlier, and has shown significant yield advances over Siren in drier areas.

In 1997, quite a number of new varieties are expected to be available, giving farmers a much better range and improved options for different situations.

Oilseed Bonification Scheme

In Australia, farmers are rewarded for producing canola crops with a high oil content. This is referred to as the «bonification scheme» and the base oil content is 40 %. For every 1 % above, or below 40 %, the farmer receives a bonus, or penalty, of 1.5 % on the base price. This has worked well in encouraging farmers to

produce the best quality oilseed. It has also benefited the crushing industry where the gross margins for crushing canola oil are improved when the oil content is increased. Australian canola breeders have worked to support this scheme such that new cultivars are now producing oil contents of several percentage points higher than traditional varieties. It is the aim of these breeders to continue to provide cultivars which will give higher oil content although in some cases this is at the expense of protein content in the meal. In 1995, the results of these breeding programs have been obvious with exports of canola at 45 % oil and local crushers have received seed as high as 50 % oil content.

Disease Problems

Early leaf infection from blackleg in 1995 was very heavy. However, for reasons unknown, the incidence of basal stem canker was much lower than might have been expected, even though most Australian varieties have good resistance to this phase of the disease. There is a tendency, mainly for financial reasons, for farmers to shorten their rotations and grow canola more frequently than recommended. In such situations, some use of flutriafol, incorporated with the fertilizer, has been made to try to minimise yield losses.

The major disease problem in 1995 was sclerotinia, although its incidence was largely confined to southern New South Wales. Severe yield losses, up to 30 % or more, were reported.

As expected, all varieties were affected, but a heavier canopy density with Dunkeld may have increased losses in this variety.

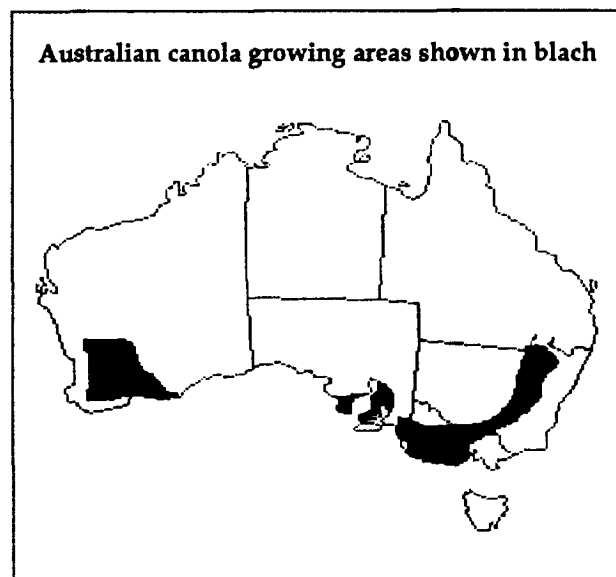
Some crops suffered from downy mildew but, in general, effect on yield was minimal, with crops growing away from the disease, once active growth began.

Birds

At the recent Australian Research Assembly on Brassicas Workshop in South Australia, some problems were reported on the damage to seedling crops by small birds, including the Eurasian Skylark and a native bird, Richards Pipit. Although damage has been reported as early as 1980, there has been a significant increase since 1994 in the number of damaged crops and the geographical area of Victoria where crops were affected. The damage done by the birds was reported to slow crop growth and cause significant yield reduction. This may be related to studies in the UK where low glucosinolate varieties have been shown to be subject to bird damage whereas high glucosinolate lines seem to be less susceptible.

Rapeseed Areas

Canola growing areas are confined to the southern areas of Australia generally south of Queensland and in a thin belt along New South Wales and into South Australia. There is an expanding area in Western Australia in the south west corner of the state.



References

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