

## Production in the UK

Denis KIMBER

NIAB, Cambridge, UK

The UK area of oilseed rape harvested this year was nearly 350.000 hectares. 40.000 were grown in Scotland and about 14.000 were spring-crop. This total showed a 10%-reduction on the previous year : growers were discouraged by severe price cuts announced just before drilling and there was general uncertainty about the future of rape-seed with the switch to double-low varieties of unknown performance.

Establishment of the crop was unsatisfactory in many areas: wet weather had resulted in late drilling and seed beds were often less than ideal but a mild winter enabled crops to recover. Disease levels were higher than usual as a consequence, particularly light leaf spot, *Cylindrosporium concentricum*, and treatment with fungicides was common. Harvesting was completed in good time, in spite of inclement weather conditions, although

later than had been predicted after flowering. It is estimated that production will be about 1 million tonnes, which suggests a national average of 2,87 t/ha -the lowest since 1983.

Only 15% of the 1988 harvested crop was of double low varieties but, given EC-requirements and the introduction of acceptable varieties, the area drilled this autumn is now estimated by the Seed Trade to comprise about 95% double lows. Estimates of the national area are still somewhat tentative, but it seems likely that there has been another reduction of the order of 10%.

The current double low varieties are acceptable because they are likely to meet the present EC-standard of 35 micromoles. They could not be guaranteed to meet a lower standard and this is still giving rise to uncertainty about the future of the crop.