

Canola Production in Australia 1991

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Canola production has expanded rapidly in Australia in 1991. The impetus has come mostly from the collapse of world grain markets that forced more growers into seeking profitable alternative crops.

Importantly, this interest has been matched with the release of much better varieties and a major extension program to lift crop management standards. The decision support system, Canola Check is now operational in most States of Australia and will continue through until the end of the 1993 season. As well, production continues to receive impetus as growers begin to realise the rotational benefits which canola offers in terms of disease and weed control and soil benefits.

Since 1989, Australian production has been dominated by the use of *B. napus* varieties (Bureka, Yickadee, Barossa) that fall well within canola standards. They also carry the best tolerance levels to blackleg (*L. maculans*) available in the world. Yield levels since 1989 have been raised by 30%. The manufacturing industries have responded by increasing their crushing capacity and development of canola based products. It is projected that 150,000 tonnes of seed will be required in 1992.

Typical of Australian grain production, the vagaries of weather reduced yield potential in

1991. Drought condition delayed sowing, increased insect damage and reduced yield and oil content. It also increased the domestic cereal grain market and profitability of those crops. Canola production will suffer some let down in 1992 but will still increase by an estimated 30%.

There is a positive outlook for canola production in Australia. Currently production is just meeting an increasing domestic demand. We are interested in developing an export market into Japan and take advantage of the seasonal and freight advantages over Canada, the traditional supplier. However, our reputation of a consistent exporter still has to be developed.

Breeding programs show no signs of reaching a yield plateau and quality improvements continue to be achieved. A blackleg resistant hybrid (Hyola 42) and an early maturing variety (Narendra) for Western Australia will allow further production in lower rainfall areas in 1992.

The need for more profitable, diversified and sustainable farming systems is gaining recognition and canola's place in rotations is being clearly established. In Australia, the crop seems likely to reach 150,000 to 200,000 ha and exceed 200,000 t production within a few years.

Table 1. Australian canola production - 1991

	Area (ha)	Production (t)	%Increase *
Queensland	5,000	3,000	50
New South Wales	78,000	95,000	31
Victoria	25,000	27,500	64
South Australia	8,000	9,600	50
Western Aust	15,000	18,000	1,000
Australia	131,000	153,100	46

* % of 1990 crop estimates.