

# Growing Oilseed Rape under the Reformed Common Agricultural Policy

Melvyn F. ASKEW

Head of Crops and Horticulture Development Centre, ADAS,  
Woodthorpe, Wolverhampton, WV6 8TQ, UK.

This topic was discussed at an ADAS/CETIOM Oilseed Rape Workshop held at Wolverhampton in UK on 14 and 15 October 1992.

Similar workshops are being organised by the author annually for a number of years.

Each workshop has dealt with a discreet and identifiable subject area, in this case that of Common Agricultural Policy Reform and its effects insofar as oilseed rape is concerned relative to nitrogenous fertiliser use, fungicide use, insecticide use and oilseed rape quality. The discussions within the workshop forum did not therefore cover every aspect of rapeseed production, rather, those highlighted.

The objective was to discuss in depth, in a structured way, what was known about the topics in the workshop programme, then to assess how they may develop or need to be developed.

Details of the proposed new Canola Council of Canada standards for canola were published in the American Oil Chemists' Society journal *INFORM*, that particular publication being received during the workshop. In view of the possible impact of new quality standards, these were discussed within the extant workshop framework.

The conclusions of the workshop were agreed by all delegates present, they are listed below precisely as agreed :

1. \* The CAP reforms will change the approach to inputs and markets. Market forces will have major effects.

2. \* The group was concerned that EC producers may not be able to match new glucosinolate standards for canola proposed by Canada. The position on pricing/demand is unclear, but a tiered price structure for meal seems probable.

3. \* It seems probable that the glucosinolate content of UK meal is increasing with the new CAP reform regulations. Prospects for a similar increase in France and Germany seem likely. The protein content of meal will decrease as nitrogen use declines in line with the new oilseed rape pricing.

4. \* In principle, set-aside land could act as a reservoir for diseases (especially *Phoma*), volunteer oilseed rape and some pests. Set-aside management will obviously have a bearing on this. The precise position is unclear and research is needed in this area.

5. CAP reform has occurred at the same time as the straw burning ban (England and Wales) and the progression of nitrate regulations. A net effect of all these changes will result. Oilseed rape production cannot be viewed in isolation because of this.

## Inputs to Production.

6. \* Insecticide costs tend to be lower than other inputs so changes in use are likely to be less than those of other chemical inputs. Such changes will however still occur as a consequence of CAP reform.

Some agrochemicals may cease to be available because of reduced sales/use, which coupled with the high cost of maintaining registration, will make their production uneconomic.

7. \* Beneficial organisms may assume greater importance as insecticide use declines. Some research is on-going in this area.

8. \* Autumn nitrogen is of potential benefit to winter oilseed rape in England and Wales, Scotland and Germany, but is uneconomic in France. This conflicts with nitrate leaching controls.

9. \* Nitrogen rate recommendations will decline according to the market-value of oilseed rape. It is hoped that growers will heed this advice in their own interests. Surveys of fertiliser practice will confirm progress. Recommendations have been reduced by approximately 50 kg/ha N for spring applications to winter oilseed rape (based on £ 120/t for oilseed rape).

10. \* In general, the detrimental effects of diseases are overestimated by farmers in England, Wales, France and Germany. Accurate thresholds for targeting fungicides are generally absent but are desirable. Work is in hand.

## Quality

11. \* There has been a reduction in atmospheric sulphur deposition and this is likely to continue. Increasing yields have led to greater crop demands for sulphur. The net effect has been an increase in the incidence of sulphur deficiency. This is likely to increase in the UK and in parts of Germany.

Sulphur affects both yield and seed quality. Under the reformed CAP farmers currently are not that concerned about the glucosinolate levels. A differential pricing structure according to glucosinolate level is, however, under discussion in Germany and possibly also in the UK.

12. \* Volunteers (especially single low varieties) pose a serious problem to cultivated double low crops in terms of their effects on glucosinolate levels. Whilst broad indicators of their effects are known, definitive consistent data is lacking but clearly needed.

13. \* The erucic acid content of seed from crops grown from home-saved seed is not checked prior to crushing. This could lead to an upward drift in erucic acid levels in edible oils. Checking erucic acid levels in home-saved seed would monitor this.

14. \* There is no reliable method of predicting changes in glucosinolate content of seed between sowing and harvesting. It is unlikely that extra research will help here.