

# The competitiveness of oilseed rape production in light of an agricultural policy for an 'old/new' Europe

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The addition of ten new member countries to the European Union and their integration into the Common Market and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the years to come will be a major challenge for all farming sectors. Although new markets for food products will open, new competitors will also be present on the common European agricultural markets. Competitiveness is the potential to increase or hold market shares. This potential is influenced by several factors. The ability to impact some of these factors lies within the reach of European farmers, politicians or other groups, while some factors simply cannot be influenced. In the case of a farmer, production costs are directly linked to his activities on the farm in the production process. The economic and agricultural policy environment for rapeseed production is to some extent controlled by politicians. Particularly factors concerning production costs are more controllable by politicians than other economic factors like market prices/returns, etc. Lobbying for a low-cost rapeseed production environment has not been as fully explored as has been lobbying for subsidies. Various rapeseed production cost analyses at the farm level show the competitiveness of European farmers. Now, area payments for rapeseed are in practice **not** linked to oilseed production. Therefore, decoupling plans of the European Commission will not affect rapeseed production significantly. Thus, lowering production costs will be the main effort by producers to remain competitive. Production costs can either be lowered by reduced per hectare costs or higher yields. This is the major challenge facing the rapeseed production sector in both "Old" and "New" Europe. Monitoring this process on the farm level will be one of the work areas of the IFCN-Crop Team in the future. The rest of the world is and has been moving for a long time in the direction of increased research and breeding efforts. For example: Research and plant breeding in Brazil are and were the foundation for the now booming soybean sector, especially in the new Cerrado Regions (Mato Grosso, etc.). Europe has to increase its efforts in this direction if the rapeseed production sector wants to remain internationally competitive.