



CLIMA Media Release

WA GROWER HAS CRUSH ON CAMELINA 16.6.06

Salads in Scandinavia or lipsticks in London could soon contain oil processed from WA grown camelina seed.

Camelina oil was recently cold crushed from seed, making it a first for WA. The oil will be exported to Europe for use in the food and cosmetics industries and the meal will be used domestically as race-horse feed.

However, camelina's roots stem back to biblical times, when it was grown for industrial use and burnt in lamps.

After thousands of years growing abroad, seed originating from the Vavilov Institute in St. Petersburg, Russia, was grown for the first time last year on 25 hectares at John Thomas' Dowerin farm and produced 19 tonnes of seed that was cold crushed at Riverland Oilseed Processors in Pinjarra.

Mr Thomas grew camelina as part of a Centre for Legumes in Mediterranean Agriculture (CLIMA) project and plans to grow it again this year.

He advises future camelina growers to "find a good patch of land" with very low broadleaf weed pressure.

"It grows on sandy soils and the fertiliser regime is similar to canola, however it's still in the trial stages and the growing and harvesting processes need to be refined," Mr Thomas said.

His camelina crop produced a 42 per cent oil content and he was paid a similar price to canola.

Witnessing Australia's first camelina crushing, CLIMA researcher, Margaret Campbell said the oil was healthier than canola because of its high alpha linolenic acid (an Omega-3 fatty acid) content, plus natural antioxidants.

"The health benefits, combined with its mild nutty flavour, make it an excellent food oil," she said.

At present it isn't registered with Food Standards Australia New Zealand, but is a registered food oil in Europe, the United States and Scandinavia, where the seed and meal are also sold for human consumption.

“Besides its uses as a food oil, it could become a much needed alternative crop for the oilseeds industry that currently relies heavily on canola, which lacks the blackleg resistance that camelina possesses.

“The current monoculture situation isn’t advisable because a new pest or disease could quickly devastate the canola industry. We need to find alternative oilseeds.

“It’s anticipated that commercial quantities of camelina seed would be available for growers next year,” Ms Campbell said.

This Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation funded project was supported by Elders, Plantech, CBH and Riverland Oilseed Processors.

Image: CLIMA researcher, Margaret Campbell and Riverland Oilseed Processors WA Operations Manager, Tom Tremlett, preparing camelina oil for inspection in the lab at Riverland Oilseed Processors in Pinjarra.

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