



CLIMA Media Release

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FUTURE FEED REPLACES POISONOUS PAST

A high protein, low cost grain legume, known as grasspea, will push into drought prone and waterlogged areas of WA for the first time after the release of Australia's first commercial variety, Ceora.

A resilient, drought tolerant feed and forage crop, it can be planted late in autumn, meaning growers can let weeds emerge at the break of season and spray them off, before seeding Ceora.

Its release marks the end of a 10-year breeding program to make Ceora a safe animal feed by reducing levels of the neurotoxin ODAP, which naturally occurs in the *Lathyrus* genus, which includes grasspea.

With ODAP levels in Ceora well within animal safety limits, researcher on the Centre for Legumes in Mediterranean Agriculture (CLIMA) project, Colin Hanbury explained that WA animal and grain producers could now access some of the crop's many agronomic advantages.

"Grasspea is a common food source in drought-stricken environments of Ethiopia, North Africa and the Indian sub-continent, so it's well adapted to marginal conditions.

"It's also much more tolerant to waterlogging than existing grain legumes and so growers can introduce valuable rotations to enrich soils in such areas for the first time," Dr Hanbury said.

When used as a green manure in WA Department of Agriculture and Food (DAFWA) trials, grasspea lifted subsequent cereal yields by up to 20 per cent.

Dr Hanbury reassured growers that Ceora's poisonous past was well behind it, with Grains Research and Development Corporation, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation and CLIMA supported research reducing ODAP levels to a quarter of the recognised 0.2 per cent safe level.

"CSIRO trials showed sheep liveweight gain per kilogram was greater than on lupins, while non-ruminants, such as pigs and poultry, could be safely fed Ceora," he said.

Dongara graingrower, Chris Gillam, bulked up Ceora last season on alkaline (pH 7.0) soils that received 400mm of growing season rainfall.

“It established quite easily in our zone at a seeding rate of about 35-40kg/ha and displayed good early vigour which, because of the plant’s prostrate growth, meant it competed well with weeds and could block them out.

“We had a very good growing season, but were hampered by sclerotinia disease and so growers should avoid following canola too closely in the rotation. We harvested 1.5 t/ha, despite the disease,” Mr Gillam said.

Seed, which was also bulked-up under irrigation at Manjimup, is now available from *The Seed Group* and *Coorow Seeds*. A farmnote on growing Ceora in WA (No 58, 2005) is now available through CLIMA and DAFWA.

Caption: Researcher, Dr Colin Hanbury ignores the Easter bunny and tucks into Ceora grasspea to confirm that CLIMA has reduced the presence of the neurotoxin, ODAP.

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