

Canola production to increase by 50% by 2015

The Protein Research Foundation (PRF), one of the leaders in canola research and development in South Africa, expects canola plantings to increase by 50% to 75 000ha by 2015.

This is a much more positive estimate than that proffered by the recently published Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy's agricultural baseline outlook for 2012 to 2021.

Baseline 2012 predicted plantings would increase from 50 000ha in 2012 to a mere 55 000ha in 2021.

Explaining the discrepancy, PRF chairperson Gerhard Scholtemeijer said many farmers initially converted to a canola/wheat rotation cycle as this enabled them to use broadleaf herbicide during the canola rotation to get weeds such as ryegrass under control.

But farmers are now beginning to recognise that if they invest in good canola cultivars suited to the region in which they farm, canola can generate a gross income that's very competitive when compared to crops such as barley and oats, said Scholtemeijer.

FASTER RATE

As it is, "during the past year canola plantings increased by about 5% to 50 000ha, but plantings are expected to increase by a faster rate next year due to good winter rainfall, which will most likely lead to good yields for farmers who planted canola this year," said Scholtemeijer.

Over the longer term, the Swartland is likely to see the largest increase in area under production,

and the PRF is sourcing better canola cultivars suited specifically to growing conditions there.

However, the Overberg region, already a well-established canola growing area, will continue to remain so, since the major processing facility for canola is in Swellendam, said Scholtemeijer.

POTENTIAL

A 12-year-old study (the most recent one available) by the Western Cape agriculture department shows the province has the potential to produce about 100 000ha of canola.

As noted, only about 50 000ha is being planted at the moment, but the PRF hopes this will increase by 50% by 2015 to 75 000ha.

"We're confident that the processing capabilities exist to



ABOVE: The Protein Research Foundation is expecting canola plantings to increase by 50% to 75 000ha by 2015.
DENENE ERASMUS

handle this level of production," said Scholtemeijer.

He said there was no risk of oversupply since the two products made from canola (vegetable or cooking oil, and canola oilcake for animal feed) are very much in demand in SA.

"South Africa annually imports between 700 000t and 800 000t of cooking oil and about 1 million

tons of oilcake," said Scholtemeijer.

"Even if canola production increases by 50% over the next two or three years, it will still only represent a small drop in the bucket of the total cooking oil and oilcake consumption in South Africa," he said. –

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RABIES

KZN rabies programme reaches 120 000 animals

KwaZulu-Natal's government animal health authorities vaccinated 84 869 animals against rabies during July.

It's been estimated that if rabies vaccinations carried out in the private sector are included, the total vaccinated animals is 120 000.

A rabies outbreak in KZN during 2012 resulted in a number of human fatalities.

Scores of rabid animals have reportedly been put down by government and private vets,

or been killed by community members so far this year.

Dr Ariena Shepherd, a vet and committee member of the KZN Red Meat Producers' Organisation and the KZN Wool Growers' Association, called for the reinstatement of the annual nationwide rabies vaccination campaigns that were held until recent years.

"A follow-up campaign should also be implemented within the next six months because thousands of puppies could be born during this

period and they'll need to be vaccinated in order to keep rabies under control," said Shepherd.

"I'm also concerned about how easily unvaccinated animals can be transported between provinces and across our national borders."

KZN department of agriculture spokesperson Jeffrey Zikhali said the department was currently training 125 extension services vaccinators, who will significantly bolster the province's

rabies vaccination capacity.

"Disease figures for the province remain stable at present, but in the wake of the five vaccination campaigns during July 2012 we're expecting significant decreases over the next two months," said Zikhali.

More good news from the department was that a 4-year-old Umlazi boy who contracted rabies after being bitten by two rabid dogs had miraculously survived the usually fatal disease. – Lloyd Phillips