

SPECIALTY CROP | OUTLOOK

Sask. mustard crop escapes extreme events

Industry officials optimistic about crop conditions

BY DAN YATES
SASKATOON NEWSROOM

Saskatchewan producers are looking at another healthy mustard crop, say officials.

Acres dedicated to the crop are up this year, and producers have been spared the worst of the weather and water that has dampened production in some parts of the Prairies.

"I think we're probably looking at a good crop," Kevin Hursh, executive director of the Saskatchewan Mustard Development Commission, said at the organization's field day held in Saskatoon July 17.

He said producers are unlikely to see last year's record yields, which averaged 947 pounds per acre.

Walter Dyck, a mustard buyer with Olds Products Co., said it's still too early to assess yields.

"The plants are still blooming and a little bit of rain during this stretch would be incredible, given how good things have developed to this stage," said Dyck.

"One or two inches in the next one to two weeks would be really quite amazing."

Dyck said the areas of Saskatchewan that were affected by heavy rain and flooding in early July aren't prime mustard country, although some mustard crops in North Dakota have been drowned out.

Agriculture Canada has estimated seeded mustard acres at 465,000 this year, up 100,000 acres from last year.

Saskatchewan will account for 80 percent of national production.

"We're going to see an increase in total acres in Canada, but at the same time it only brings us back in line with what the average has been for the last 10 years," said Dyck.

Acres peaked in the early 2000s at more than 800,000 acres and bottomed out at 330,000 acres in 2003.

GRAINS | AGRONOMY

Researchers keep eye on rye

Intensive management | Officials are testing the crop's response to greater input applications

BY BARB GLEN
LETHBRIDGE BUREAU

CYPRESS COUNTY, Alta. — Prairie researchers are studying rye response to intensive crop management.

The study is taking place at several Alberta locations this year and will expand into Saskatchewan and Manitoba this fall.

Agriculture Canada fall rye breeder Jamie Larsen explained rye test plots July 17 during a field day organized by Cypress County and the Farming Smarter applied research group near Medicine Hat.

Co-trials here and in Lethbridge and Vauxhall, Alta., are testing the new hybrid ryes Brasetto and Guttino against several open-pollinated varieties, including Hazlet and Rifle. All varieties are subjected to conventional management and to more intensive management to gauge yield response.

All plots were seeded at 200 seeds per sq. metre and given a fall herbicide treatment of 2,4-D. Plots under intensive management were seed treated with Cruiser Maxx and received a second herbicide treatment in spring, along with a fungicide.

The intensively managed plots received 24 kilograms per acre of nitrogen in fall, while the conventional plots received none. In spring, the intensive plots received another 40 kg, while conventional plots received 24. Phosphate and potassium levels were determined through soil tests and applied to both types of plots as required.

"One thing you'll notice about the fall rye hybrids, they're not your typical rye. They're pretty uniform in general," said Larsen.

"That's the idea behind a hybrid. They're semi-dwarf so they're shorter. They're not quite as short as Rifle, but they're definitely quite a bit



Farmers examine rye plots during a Cypress County field day July 17 organized by the county and the Farming Smarter applied research group. | BARB GLEN PHOTO

shorter than Hazlet."

Larsen said funding from the Western Grains Research Foundation will allow additional plots to be seeded this fall and next fall at the three sites in Alberta as well as at Indian Head and Melfort in Saskatchewan and Brandon in Manitoba.

"Then we'll have a fairly decent data set in terms of looking at some of this stuff. It will be on small plots, but in the second year... we may try some large plots," Larsen said.

Ducks Unlimited is also conducting rye research at several farm locations, comparing the hybrid Brasetto with conventional types in 20-acre

fields and managing it like winter wheat.

Larsen's research involves open pollinated cereals, but he is familiar with early results from hybrid rye trials.

"Looking at the data across Western Canada, the yields of these hybrids are actually quite impressive," he said.

"In some cases we saw yields in small plots... of 10 tonnes or more."

That is 25 to 30 percent better than traditional varieties, with a higher grain to biomass ratio.

Regina-based FP Genetics, which has the registration for the hybrid

variety Brasetto, has partnered with Paterson Grain in a demonstration program to promote the variety to growers, millers and distillers.

The partnership involves several field trials that will start this fall.

The Cypress County site, seeded Sept. 27, saw winterkill this year, though it did recover. Similar plots in Lethbridge, seeded Oct. 5, fared better, Larsen said.

However, rye is known for its resiliency.

"It comes out of the ground like a rocket, so in comparison to winter wheat it gets established quite quickly."

CROPS | MANAGEMENT