

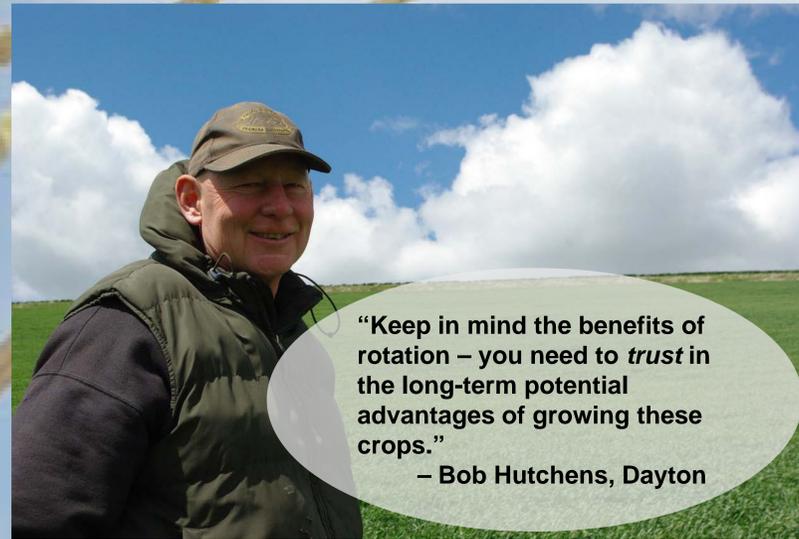
Case Studies of Oilseed Crop Producers in Washington State

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Abstract

Producing oilseed crops in Washington state is not a new practice, but it is gaining new momentum as more growers are learning how to use the crops to their advantage in traditional rotations. Nineteen growers from across the state were interviewed to acquire more information about their experience with oilseed crop production, including agronomic practices, marketing strategies, challenges and successes, and advice they would share with a fellow producer who may be interested in trying oilseeds for the first time. Crop establishment in the dryland regions, and plantback restrictions due to herbicide carryover in previous crops in all regions were constraints identified most often by the growers. Benefits cited include significantly higher wheat yield following oilseed crops, improved soil tilth, increased profit of a multi-year rotation, and improved weed control, particularly with the use of glyphosate-resistant canola. The majority of growers interviewed were confident that oilseed crops would continue to be part of their rotation in the future.



“Keep in mind the benefits of rotation – you need to *trust* in the long-term potential advantages of growing these crops.”
– Bob Hutchens, Dayton

“The cost of putting in canola and mustard crops sure is a lot less than some of the crops we’ve had in the past.”
– Dan Bartelheimer, Snohomish



“There is no doubt from the perspective of soil health that an oilseed crop does something to the ground that’s good.”
– Lee Druffel, Colton

“The reason I raise canola is so I can raise above average wheat.”
– Wade Troutman, Bridgeport

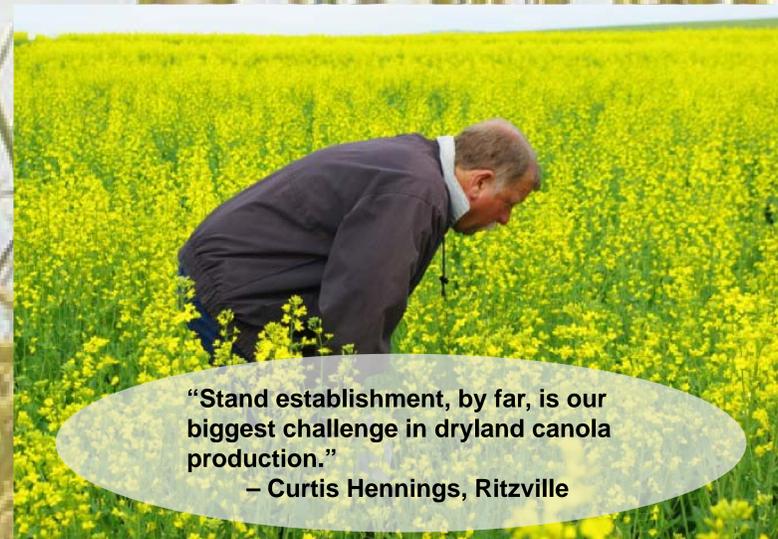
“We really like the fact that no additional equipment is needed for rape production, and it is has worked well as a water rotation crop.”
– J.R. Swinger, Lind

“Canola has improved my crop diversity compared to what I used to have in place, and it also has helped break disease cycles, especially Rhizoctonia.”
– Jeff Schibel, Odessa

Challenges

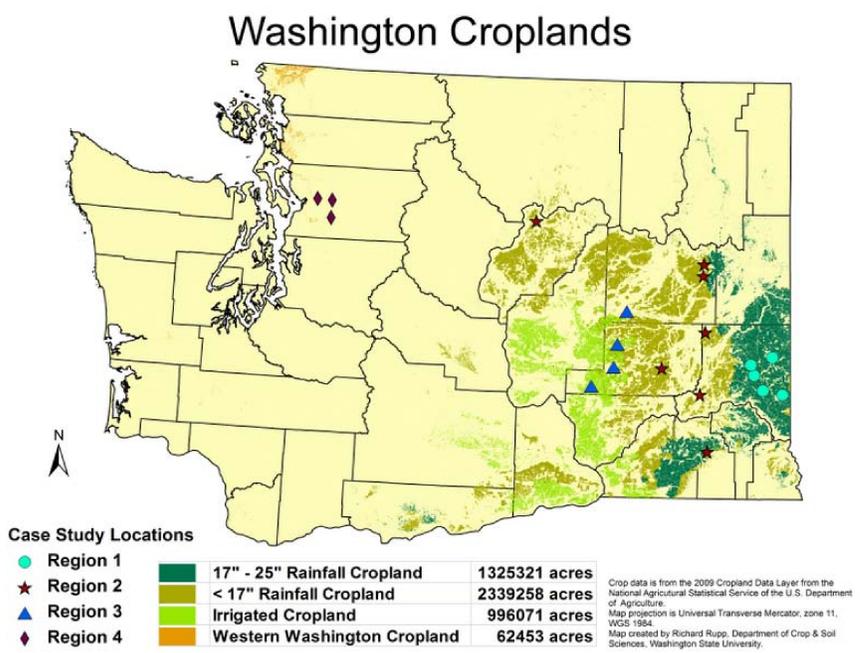
- Consistent stand establishment
- Herbicide carryover/plantback restrictions
- Winterkill
- Distant markets (Canada) translate to additional transportation costs
- Very few local processors in the PNW
- Brassica seed district restrictions in western WA
- Historically reliable oilseed production information for WA state

“Winter oilseeds may not be the answer here, but I believe spring oilseed crops can be once we learn enough about growing and processing them.”
– Rich Olson, Garfield



“Stand establishment, by far, is our biggest challenge in dryland canola production.”
– Curtis Hennings, Ritzville

Farm locations



“With our climate, I envision canola planted once and utilized for three years - forage or pasture the first year, harvest the seed the second year, and seeding corn into the volunteer canola plants for silage the third year.”
– Dale Reiner, Monroe

“I consider canola and other oilseeds ‘opportunity crops’ to use when conditions are just right.”
– Steve Swannack, Lamont

Benefits

- Significantly higher wheat yield following oilseed crop vs. after wheat
- Better weed control in subsequent crops
- Increased soil quality and texture from root penetration
- Alternative crop to rotate when opportunity arises
- Based on 2010 markets and yields, the value of winter canola per acre exceeded the value of winter wheat per acre in north central WA
- Deficit irrigation crop for farms with deep well sources
- Break disease and pest cycles
- Utilize existing equipment
- Canola meal is marketable
- Reduce our dependence on foreign oil

Future plans

The case studies will be published online in 2010-11, by region. They will provide a forum for first-time oilseed crop growers to interact with those more experienced with the crop(s), and also a means for growers and researchers to continue an open dialogue with each other to address and prioritize research to support on-farm observations in all agroclimatic zones of Washington state.

Acknowledgments

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