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press clip

Canola gets a run

Fast facts

WHO: Justin and Braden Bagley
WHERE: Mingenew
WHAT: 2000ha wheat, 330ha canola, 300ha chickpeas, 280ha lupins, 100ha oats

Claire Tyrrell

Mingenew farmers Justin and Braden Bagley are venturing into uncharted territory this season as they grow canola for the first time.

Genetically modified canola was the seed of choice for the two brothers, who sowed 330 hectares of GT Scorpion in the middle of May.

Justin said the decision to grow GM canola came down to a coincidence in timing.

“We intended to grow canola this year no matter what, but it just happened to be the same year the Government allowed GM canola,” he said.

Justin said he was relieved by the Government’s decision because he thought the GM crop was more suited to his area than triazine-tolerant varieties.

“I thought Roundup Ready was a better option than TT canola, but I would switch in a blink if the Roundup Ready doesn’t come up to scratch,” he said.

“I was reluctant to have both at once, so I put GM across the entire

canola program.”

Justin and Braden sowed the canola dry from May 11–13 at 3.6kg/ha. Though this was slightly below the recommended 4kg sowing rate, Justin felt confident the crop would do well with enough rain.

Close to 36mm of rain has fallen on the canola since it was sown, enough to bring the crop out of the ground.

The risk of Atrazine carry-over was one of the factors deterring the Bagleys from growing TT canola. Justin said the fact GM canola did not need Atrazine could be a big advantage for his area.

“If you grow TT canola on heavy (high pH) soils and have a dry year it can carry over,” he said.

“If the GM technology goes well, we’ll grow it on some of our heavier soils where Atrazine carry over could be a problem.”

Justin sowed the GM canola across varying terrain to test its performance on sandy and heavy soils.

He said the introduction of canola into his farm coincided with a change in his approach to cropping.

“We haven’t had a need to grow ca-

nola in the past,” he said. “We’ve had a more balanced rotation before, but with more cereals we need a bit more of a break crop.

“This year we are 65 per cent cereals, whereas last year we were about 90 per cent.”

The Bagleys upgraded their equipment before seeding this year, taking some stress out of the process.

“We bought a 60-foot Ausplow DBS and a new Morris (12 tonne) air seeder cart,” Justin said.

The brothers used to work with a 45ft seeding bar, which saw them put in longer hours at seeding time.

“We’re just doing long days and not going around the clock because we don’t have to with the big seeder,” Justin said.

They anticipate finishing seeding in about a fortnight, with recent rains providing the boost they needed.

“We had 16.5mm on the weekend, so we’re seeding wheat flat out,” Justin said.

“We are just over a third of our way through our program and aim to finish at the end of the first week of June.”

