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Bright outlook for canola harvest

By PETER HEMPHILL

AUSTRALIA is still on target to produce its largest canola crop in more than a decade.

In its latest monthly crop report, the Australian Oilseeds Federation has forecast this harvest's national canola crop at 2.215 million tonnes.

While the forecast is 50,000 tonnes lower than the previous month's estimate, the crop remains on track to become the second largest on record after the 2.4 million tonnes produced in 1999-2000.

According to AOF figures, no other canola crop has topped two million tonnes since the surge in canola plantings in the late 1990s.

This year's promising out-

look has been driven by good rain in Victoria, NSW and South Australia, an increase in the area sown to the oilseed in Victoria and NSW and a swing against wheat and barley.

The AOF has increased its canola production forecast in the three states by 100,000 tonnes.

But the good fortune in southeast Australia has been offset by a dry start to the season in Western Australia wiping 150,000 tonnes off that state's forecast production.

The AOF has tipped West Australian canola production to be 1.03 million tonnes in this month's crop report, well down from the 1.18 million tonnes forecast last month.

The federation has estimated

the Victorian crop at 415,000 tonnes, an increase of 20,000 tonnes from May's forecast of 395,000 tonnes.

NSW production has risen 55,000 tonnes to 480,000 tonnes and the South Australian estimate has increased from 265,000 tonnes last month to 290,000 tonnes.

The AOF's forecast for the national crop this season is more than 250,000 tonnes above the 1.96 million tonnes tipped by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics in its first estimate of the new season's grain harvest released last week.

The federation's increased production forecast for Victoria over the past month was driven by a refinement in the area

sown.

Although the yield had been revised downwards from 1.8 tonnes/ha last month to 1.6 tonnes/ha in June, the area planted had risen from 220,000ha to 260,000ha.

"Victoria had a very strong start to the season, following the summer rain and the continued lower wheat prices have driven a further increase in the area," the AOF said.

"The recent pest activity of mice and locusts has been severely curtailed now the colder winter weather has arrived.

"The rain over the past month has been welcomed and most crops are now at the four-leaf stage, though more rain is required to ensure effective establishment."

