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Frying up demand

Monola fetches \$35/t premium

By GABRIELLE JOHNSTON

DEMAND for the high-oleic, low-linolenic canola variety, Monola, is on the rise says Bob Mac Smith, of MSM Milling, Manildra, who points to its popular ability to expand the life of deep frying oil in cooking by 50 per cent.

Mr Mac Smith says in the next 12 months "high demand" is expected for the oil seed because of the potential for big fast-food oil users to make the switch.

This meant a larger area would need to be planted to the crop in NSW.

At MSM Milling processed oil seed and protein meal is produced for 10 export markets and domestic use.

The Monola oil will be packed in the company's recently commissioned multi-million dollar packing facility.

Mr Mac Smith said he was preparing for the Monola side of the business to "increase significantly" and this year the mill would pay a \$35 a tonne premium to encourage production of the oil seed.

He said while Monola and regular canola were nutritionally "virtually identical", Monola had the upper hand because it had a fatty-acid profile that made it more stable for frying food.

Food producers were recognising it could potentially increase frying life by 50 per cent or more.

"The Canadians have invested mega bucks in plant breeding in Canada for

the North American market, so a lot of the major quick service restaurant chains have switched across to Monola-type oils, and that trend will happen here as well," Mr Mac Smith said.

This year MSM Milling expects about 50 farmers to supply the oil seed, which the company says isn't enough because the market is growing rapidly.

MSM Milling commercial manager, Charlie Aldersey, who heads up the Monola side of the business, said he hoped to "ramp up" the program with farmers next year.

"We see it as a real growth opportunity - not just for us, but for the Australian canola industry in regards to oil demand," he said.

Mr Aldersey said farmers initially had been hesitant about the crop, being unsure how yield would stack up compared with regular canola.

However, trial plots were running in the Central West, and he hoped data would be available soon for growers.

"Monola has been grown a lot more extensively in Victoria in the past two years," Mr Aldersey said.

"It's really only being introduced to the Central West now."

Mr Mac Smith said while Monola yields had tended previously to be lower than for other canola, and growers were cautious, varieties were "improving all the time".

"That I guess has been one of the issues, because up to this point yields have been lower than for other canola varieties, and therefore there needs to be a premium paid to the farmer for the seed," he said.

The great thing about the growing interest in Monola from Australian food manufacturers was that it represented an opportunity to replace imports.

"The fact that we can displace some of those imports with a locally grown product is fantastic."



Happy to 'give it a go' at Manildra

MANILDRA district grain grower, Will Mac Smith, "Corroboree", has a 32-hectare paddock of Nuseed's 77TT Monola, as a trial for the canola with improved oil properties for frying.

It's the first time he has planted the crop, which was sown a week after Anzac Day.

Mr Mac Smith (pictured, cousin of Bob Mac Smith, MSM Milling) is keen to see how Monola performs against the rest of his 268ha of canola.

"It's performing pretty well at the moment - we've got a good establishment," he said.

Mr Mac Smith said a \$35 a tonne premium being paid by the Manildra mill was an incentive to try the variety.

"It will be interesting to see how it yields," he said.

"If it yields comparatively with the other varieties then I guess you are \$35 a tonne better off."

Mr Mac Smith said the cost of production for Monola was similar to that for other TT varieties, and the chemical program was the same.

He said the TT varieties allowed for a wide chemical range to control any difficult weeds.

While it was a bit too soon to tell, depending on how the Monola yielded it could become a fixture in his cropping program. (He also has 400ha of wheat and some barley planted this year.)

"Apparently some newer varieties are coming out," Mr Mac Smith said.

This prospect was particularly interesting, because if the current seed yielded reasonably well, and even better varieties were on the way, Monola could potentially fill a bit more of the TT part of his overall canola cropping program, he said.

Fast Facts

- Demand for the high-oleic canola variety, Monola, is growing.
- However, processors say so far that demand is not being met fully by NSW growers.
- So the push is on in the Central West to lift production, including a \$35/t premium from MSM Milling.

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