

WCCRRC okays transgenics but

Transgenic canola varieties that enter commercial production this year must adhere to a strict set of guidelines in order to protect the integrity of the Canadian canola crop. The guidelines were tied to the recommendation for registration of three transgenic herbicide-tolerant canola lines by the Western Canada Canola and Rapeseed Recommending Committee (WCCRRC).

The primary guidelines set out by the WCCRRC are:

- That the strain(s)/cultivar(s) be grown only under limited end-use contract that stipulates all harvested seed shall be processed in Canada and the products of processing be utilized only in Canada and the US; and,
- That registration by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada be made only following food and feed clearance in Canada and the US.


Additional conditions were set by the Canadian Oilseed Processors Association (COPA) in order for its members to agree to process the seed, including:

- Feed and food regulatory approval in Canada and the US must be achieved by April 10, 1995. (Ed. note: this did occur.)
- Maximum acreage to be planted in 1995 is 40,000 acres.
- All seed volume must be identity preserved and have:
 - a.) 100 per cent on farm pick-up direct to processor;
 - b.) bins sealed at harvest;
 - c.) seals broken only by contractor at time of on-farm pick-up; and
 - d.) all volumes crushed in Canada.
- Subject to individual arrangements with companies following regulatory approval in both Canada and the US, agreements for crushing must be in place prior to planting.

"The recommendation by WCCRRC that transgenic lines be registered is a positive indication that our industry regards these canolas as safe. The fact that the committee has put guidelines in place to govern the use of these varieties indicates that we respect that our export customers require time to put in place their own regulations regarding the use of products from biotechnology," said Max Polon, chairman of the WCCRRC.

In total, during its February meeting, the WCCRRC recommended 16 new canola lines and one high erucic acid rapeseed for registration in 1995. Of that, three were transgenic herbicide tolerant lines — two developed by AgrEvo and one by Monsanto. (One of the AgrEvo lines, named Innovator, was subsequently registered by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada on April 12).

Pioneer Hi-Bred appealed the WCCRRC's decision not to recommend its herbicide tolerant variety on the grounds that the same criteria had not been applied to the Pioneer line as had been applied to the other lines. The WCCRRC's appeal tribunal ruled that the WCCRRC members should vote again on the line. On revote, it was accepted for recommendation for registration. The Pioneer line differs from the other herbicide tolerant lines in that it was developed through mutagenesis. Mutagenesis involves altering genes which already exist in a plant species rather than transferring in new genes from other plant species.

Also at its February meeting, the WCCRRC approved the final version of the rules governing the use of private data in place of first-year data from the co-op trials. This will help reduce the cost of commercializing a variety because now a maximum of two years of co-op trial data will be required for recommendation for registration by the WCCRRC. In the past, up to three years of data had been required. 


Council co-ordinates co-ops

The Western Canada Canola and Rapeseed Recommending Committee (WCCRRC) has accepted the Canola Council's offer to co-ordinate the Western Canada Co-operative Trials. The trials had been managed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) from the Saskatoon Research Centre. Budgetary constraint and a re-allocation of resources by the government required that the industry look to the private sector to run the trials.

The trials will be funded by organizations entering canola lines in the trials. The transition to full cost recovery began last year. The Council has an agreement with the WCCRRC that costs for co-ordination would not exceed \$120,000 plus/minus \$20,000. (This is independent of chemical analyses and related costs.)

Keith Topinka has recently been hired as co-ordinator for the trials. Keith is currently employed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada at the Lethbridge Research Centre. He will join the Canola Council's staff on May 15, at which time he'll relocate to Saskatoon. Assistance in this first year of private sector management will be provided by Dr. Keith Downey of AAFC to ensure a smooth transition. The total number of lines entered in the trials in 1995 is expected to be in the range of 100.

Bill Riley, the Council's research and technical marketing co-ordinator, said that the decision to have the Council co-ordinate the trials has been well accepted. "The reaction has been very positive because of the Council's past track record and our independence."

The WCCRRC will remain responsible for setting the policy which governs the trials. Keith Topinka will also act as secretary to the committee. 

Funding plan in place

An arrangement has been reached among funders of the Canola Council of Canada which will provide funding stability to the organization. Both crushers and exporters will continue to provide core funding at 30¢ per tonne based on a 5.55 million tonne seed disposition for calendar year 1995. The costs in the budget areas of administration, administration salaries and corporate affairs will be covered on an equal basis by both groups. Each funding group will then determine how the remaining amount of its contributed funds will be allocated among the program areas of the Canola Council. For 1995 the core levy has been allocated as follows on a cents per tonne basis:

	Export Levy	Crush Levy
Administration, administration salaries, & corporate affairs	9.40	9.40
Research	6.86	9.00
Crop production	6.61	9.00
Market development	4.06	1.60
Public relations	3.07	1.00
	30.00¢	30.00¢

In addition, canola exporters will provide funds in the amount of \$760,000 based on 20¢ per tonne of canola exported in 1995. Growers organizations are projected to provide \$830,000 for projects, with government contributions budgetted at close to \$790,000.

Budgetted expenditures for the Council's program areas for 1995 are as follows:

Research	1,388,600
Crop production	1,310,645
Technical marketing and market promotions	911,990
Public relations	190,850

The Council's total budget for 1995 is \$5,084,355. 