



April, 2009

Opposition to Rapeseed (Canola) Production for Oil in the Willamette Valley

The Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association (WVSSA) was recently compelled to issue a position statement declaring their opposition to rapeseed production for oil in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. In 2005, rapeseed production districts were established by Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS 603.052) to protect Oregon's specialty vegetable seed production areas (in the Willamette Valley, Central Oregon, Northeast Oregon, and Malheur County). According to the statute, production of rapeseed for oil is incompatible with production of crops of related species (*Brassica*) grown for seed or vegetables. The law prohibits rapeseed production for oil, except by special permit, in three of the protected districts (allowed in the Northeast). The law also mandates that production of rapeseed for seed, forage, or cover crop in the protected districts is subject to measures that minimize undesirable cross-pollination, disease and pest buildup, and volunteers. The issue of concern, as stated by the WVSSA, is that the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) recently issued permits for about 300 acres of rapeseed (a.k.a. canola) production for oil in the Willamette Valley for harvest in 2009. The permits were requested by farmers who are growing the crop for on-farm biodiesel and to sell to crushers for commercial-grade biodiesel. Canola has been promoted by some as a potential rotation crop for the area's grass seed growers. In their position statement, the WVSSA is asking the ODA to enforce the existing law defining rapeseed production in Oregon, and they ask that the ODA limit the special permits for exemption to small-scale research plots (prior to September 2008, special permits had only been granted to researchers). The WVSSA is concerned that allowing larger acreages of rapeseed for oil would result in outcrossing with *Brassica* seed crops, and a proliferation of diseases and pests for which rapeseed acts as a vector. They point to the situation in France, Germany, and Denmark, where radish and *Brassica* seed production has been eliminated or greatly curtailed by an increased risk of pests after rapeseed production for oil was allowed in traditional seed production areas. The WVSSA does not want to see the same thing happen in the Willamette Valley. The farm-gate value of specialty seed crops in the valley is estimated to be over \$27,000,000, and a large portion of this is derived from the production of seed of radish and of *Brassica* species, including cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and their many relatives. The WVSSA is requesting the support of other seed industry stakeholders. More than 50 organizations (including the CBVSA) and companies have agreed to endorse their position statement.

An advisory panel, appointed by the ODA, will be reviewing the rapeseed growing restrictions later this year. They will be particularly interested in preliminary findings from an Oregon State University (OSU) study on rapeseed. Three years ago, the state Legislature provided funding for OSU researchers to study the potential for rapeseed to spread and establish in field borders, to provide a haven for insects and diseases that would be harmful to other crops, and to determine the likelihood that pollen from rapeseed would spread and outcross with other crops. ODA is expected to start public hearings on this issue in June. They anticipate a final ruling by September 1, 2009.

Cooperating agencies: Washington State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Grant and Adams Counties. Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local extension office.

Washington's Brassica Seed Production Rules

What about rapeseed or canola production in Washington? On January 24, 2008, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) adopted new rules regarding the production of *Brassica* seed crops (WAC 16-326). These rules are meant to support oilseed production while protecting established vegetable seed industries. The new chapter in WAC designates two *Brassica* seed production districts; district 1 includes areas in northwestern Washington, and district 2 includes portions of Grant and Adams counties. District 2 is further subdivided into two sub-districts; designated 2A (the Quincy/Winchester areas) and 2B (portions of Grant and Adams counties within the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project not included in sub-district 2A). The rule specifies requirements for growing, transporting, and processing *Brassica* crops within the *Brassica* seed production districts. It sets a minimum isolation distance between *Brassica* crops at two miles. It also requires that locations of all *Brassica* crops produced for seed or oil within the districts are identified through the pinning process (in district 2, at the WSU Grant County Extension office). The strictest provisions apply to district 1 and sub-district 2A, where *Brassica* crops are limited to those grown for seed for planting. Rapeseed crops intended for oil or fuel production in districts 1 and 2A may only be grown under conditions of a *Brassica* production agreement (RCW 15.51.040). Such agreements must be developed by the applicant and the WSDA in consultation with an advisory committee.

Dr. Lindsey duToit to Investigate Fusarium Wilt in Radish Seed Crops

About 1,500 acres of radish seed crops grown in the Columbia Basin (WA) and Willamette Valley (OR) annually produce a significant percentage of the US and world's supply of radish seed. There have been increasing reports/observations of Fusarium wilt in radish seed crops, including complete crop failures, despite 7+ year rotations between radish seed crops. Information gathered on cropping history and soil analyses for the affected crops suggests acidification of soils in the Columbia Basin under irrigated cropping may be increasing the conduciveness of soils to the radish Fusarium wilt fungus (*Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *raphani*) in the Basin, where soils typically have been more alkaline. Based on Lindsey du Toit's research experience over the past 5 years with Fusarium wilt in spinach seed crops in western WA, where soils are naturally highly acidic and very conducive to the spinach Fusarium wilt pathogen (*Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *spinaciae*), Lindsey prepared a grant proposal for 2009 on radish Fusarium wilt. The project will investigate developing a soil bioassay that will enable growers to select appropriate fields in which to grow radish seed crops, by predicting the risk of Fusarium wilt for specific fields when parent lines with different levels of susceptibility to the disease are planted. The proposal will also evaluate the efficacy of agricultural limestone (calcium carbonate) applications for suppressing Fusarium wilt of radish in soils that have become acidic. The proposal has been funded by the CBVSA, the Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association (WVSSA), and the WA State Commission on Pesticide Registration (WSCPR). Lindsey will be sampling fields in the Basin in which radish seed crops have been grown in the past 1-10 years, particularly fields in which radish Fusarium wilt was observed. If you would like further information on this project, or have ideas/recommendations for the project, please contact Lindsey at dutoit@wsu.edu or 360-848-6140.

Sincerely,



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If you have any questions or comments, do not wish to receive this newsletter, or would like to receive the newsletter via e-mail contact me at... (509) 754-2011 ext. 413 or cwohleb@wsu.edu