

## **(European) Rapeseed under Pressure – Consequences, Actions**

Together with external scientists and industry experts, the *agri benchmark* Cash Crop Network has published a comprehensive report on the challenges and perspectives of rapeseed production in Germany, France, Poland, UK, Australia and Canada.

In all the European countries, the viability of rapeseed was being put under serious threat by the fast-increase of pesticide-resistant insect pests, especially in the years since the neonics ban, and the subsequent reduced yields. The problems were most acute in Northern Germany and the UK. The report contains a comprehensive overview over all the cropping issues across the board, as well as respective alternatives to current methods.

With a shrinking list of active ingredients to combat the issues, and growing insecticide resistance to what is available, farmers are increasingly taking more radical integrated steps to reduce the pest burden, including widening rotations, or in extreme circumstances, giving up rapeseed altogether.

### **Alternatives to rapeseed often low performing in Europe**

At the same time, analysis from typical *agri benchmark* farm data indicates that other broad leaf crops that could replace rapeseed in the current rotations perform rather poorly in economic terms: Rapeseed yields need to drop by over 20% below 2016-18 average levels for the most likely competitor crop to be more profitable. A lower share of rapeseed in the rotation would therefore lead to reduced farm profits, although retaining rapeseed shares at historic levels is no longer an option for many farmers in any case, as yield losses of that magnitude or more are being experienced.

Interestingly, *agri benchmark* reveals that both in Canada as well as in Australia, the on-farm competitiveness of rapeseed is much poorer. Alternative crops would be more profitable than rapeseed if yields were to drop by over 10%.

### **Zoning trials and green corridors as a way forward**

The panel – together with other experts from the International Rapeseed Conference - also explored policy measures to support rapeseed production. One option is to undertake a large-scale zoning trial, whereby rapeseed would be completely withdrawn for several years. Thereby, the effect of wider rotations and a tighter re-infection control could be assessed.

Furthermore, the panel suggested to broadly test the so-called “green corridors” concept, suggested by the Canola Council of Canada: Is it possible to support predator insects through the establishment of specific biotopes, where those beneficial insects can eat and breed?

### **Collaborative action and exchange is needed globally**

Tom Arthey, project coordinator for *agri benchmark*, explained “the study provides a first step into understanding the shared challenges faced by European producers, and what the economic impact would be if rapeseed disappeared from our production systems. More collaborative work needs to be done to develop strategies to overcome the challenges being faced. Whilst Europe is at the forefront of the issue, it was also clear from our Australian and Canadian partners that resistance issues were also a growing problem there too, despite having a greater number of management tools available”.

A copy of the report on “Challenges and Perspectives in Global Rapeseed Production” can be downloaded from the *agri benchmark* website – [www.agribenchmark.org](http://www.agribenchmark.org)

NOTE -

*agri benchmark* Cash Crop is a unique network of agricultural economists, advisors, and growers in crop production.

Since 2006, this global, non-profit, non-political network provides its clients in policy, industry and development aid with internationally standardized proprietary data on crop production systems and related farm economics.

By combining this site-specific farm knowledge with analysis of global commodity markets and value chains we help our clients to make informed, scientifically-based decisions and thereby grow their business.

Through extensive trainings and joint research we deliver substantial and sustainable capacity building – in particular in development aid. Headquartered in Braunschweig, Germany, the network is coordinated by the Federal Thünen Institute and global networks.

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