Southern Great Plains
Canola Crop Update
December 14, 2016

A Collaborative Report from Canola Researchers and Extension Specialists at
Oklahoma State University, Kansas State University and Texas A&M University
And the Great Plains Canola Association

Anyone who has lived or worked in the southern Great Plains knows how fickle Mother Nature can be in this part of the world. The best crop production plans can be laid to waste by an ill-timed dry spell (is there ever a good time?) or by too much moisture coming too quickly. Temperature extremes can come in prolonged assaults such as a summer heat dome or in a short but unexpected and harmful cold snap, catching crops at a particularly vulnerable growth stage.

During the decade and half of canola production in the southern Great Plains, producers have "seen it all"; having been tested by the array of weather extremes that occur in the region but such is the reality of farming here. Despite the challenges, we've seen the commitment to canola increase over time. This is contributing positively to the regional goal of establishing a "canola culture" where each year, growers are not deciding on whether to plant the crop but how many acres they will plant. The number of canola stalwarts who are planting the crop each year has grown and that is critical to the long term sustainability of the industry in the region.

In the reports below, Extension specialists and researchers from OSU, KSU, and TX A&M provide updates on fall planting conditions, how the crop is faring currently, and crop outlook. Of course, it's a dynamic situation and we'll continue to monitor crop progress and prospects as the season moves along. Thanks to the university experts who have provided the updates. They are working hard and effectively in contributing to the expansion of the southern Great Plains canola industry.

Southern Great Plains Canola Acreage 2016/17 – We're pleased to report that the canola acreage has rebounded in the region following a couple of tough years. We considered various information sources and here's what we know about how much was planted: OK – 175,000 - 200,000 ac, KS - 60,000-70,000 ac; and TX - 21000 ac. We will fine tune these numbers as the season progresses.

Canola College 2017 is scheduled for Jan 19th in Enid at the Chisholm Trail EXPO Center. We have a great group of experts lined up to present research and experience based information. Topics covered will include: canola basics, advanced production practices, improvements in planting technology, risk management, canola economics, and weed, insect, and disease control.

Canola College will also include the popular, hands on experience *Canola Learning Lab*. You can see what's on the program and sign up too at the OSU canola website – www.canola.okstate.edu. For more information, you may contact either Josh Lofton, OSU Cropping Systems Specialist (josh.lofton@okstate.edu) or Ron Sholar, GPCA Executive Director (jrsholar@aol.com). Hope to see you there.

And finally, thanks to all for what you do for the southern Great Plains canola industry. Best wishes for a productive year ahead.

Ron Sholar
Executive Director
Great Plains Canola Association

Jeff Scott
President
Great Plains Canola Association

Kansas Report

Mike Stamm, Canola Breeder, Kansas State University

Winter canola areas rebounded significantly in Kansas in fall 2016. We anticipate between 60,000 and 70,000 acres were seeded, an increase from 22,990 the previous year. In addition to favorable conditions for establishment, a strong commodity price and a weak wheat price prompted many producers to continue growing or to give canola a try for the first time.

Soil moisture conditions in Kansas dictated planting dates for winter canola in 2016. Adequate soil moisture allowed for early planting in the central, west central and southwestern parts of the state. Other areas (south central) had adequate to surplus soil moisture for planting. In some cases, planting was delayed because of wet soils and in other cases producers had to replant their crops following heavy rainfall events.

In areas with early planting dates, some canola has become excessively large because of warmer than normal fall temperatures. This could put the crop at increased risk for winterkill, especially if temperatures drop off rapidly and the crop does not have adequate time to winter harden. Temperatures in 2016 stayed warmer longer into the fall than in 2014 when a rapid decline in temperatures, without adequate acclimation, caused severe winter stand losses. However, the recent decline in temperatures should adequately acclimate the crop for colder winter temperatures.

In areas where planting was delayed, the concern here is that the crop could be too small to overwinter. However, the warmer than normal temperatures produced rapid fall growth and this gives us confidence that the crop grew sufficiently for overwintering.

Overall, the crop in Kansas is in excellent condition as winter dormancy sets in. Although we are entering a dry spell, nearly all canola was seeded into adequate soil moisture conditions to begin its growth and development. The three-month forecast is neutral for above or below normal precipitation, so we could be relying on spring moisture to carry us through the rest of the season.

Oklahoma Reports

Josh Lofton – Extension Cropping Systems Specialist, OSU

The 2016-2017 winter canola season in Oklahoma has been full of both ups and downs. Overall, the acreage within the state has rebounded nicely from the previous year. This was due not only to lower wheat prices but also the recognition of declining quality and performance of continuous wheat production systems within the state.

As with most of the southern Great Plains, environmental conditions have dictated when and where the crop could be planted. For a majority of the state, moisture was present and allowed for planting during prime planting conditions. Other systems, however, had fields move from too wet to too dry within a matter of days. This resulted in either delayed planting or required growers to replant. The need to replant did cause some growers to move on from winter canola, either to winter wheat, cover cropping, or fallowing the field out until summer. Other parts of the state were hit by tremendous flooding during

early October. This created a need for a large portion of those acres to be replanted or moved to other crops. Some of these acres that were replanted were outside of the recommended planting window. Those acres that were replanted shortly following this window have seen good growth and growers are hopeful for the plants they have out in the fields. The growers that were fortunate to plant early within the planting window have seen abundant growth due to good moisture and very mild fall temperatures. While in some years this can be an issue that can cause high winter kill, it is believed that the sporadic cooler temperatures experienced over the last several weeks have allowed the crop to properly acclimate prior to severe freezing conditions experienced in early December.

Pest pressure was sporadic throughout most of the fall. Due to the milder temperatures, growers had to contend with several cycles of armyworms and diamondback moth larvae which resulted in many acres having to have at least one insecticide application. Due to the wet and mild conditions, growers have also had to contend with higher weed pressure, especially in heavily infested fields. The primary concern going into winter will be fertility. Wet or flooded conditions in many areas (especially the north central area) resulted in fields showing varying degrees of N deficiency. These deficiencies have been met with several acres already having the first in-season N application. Additionally, drier conditions over the final weeks of November and early December paired with large, still active plants have many concerned with diminishing subsoil moisture. This subsoil moisture can help the crop continue to grow and experience minimal issues with dry conditions during the early spring. However, if the soil moisture has been depleted during these late fall conditions, the crop can lose a small amount of its hardiness and require more timely rains in the spring.

While there are some minor concerns with the current crop, overall the crop in Oklahoma is in very good condition. Even more importantly, grower spirits and favor for the crop are higher than a year ago. With such big growth and high crop potential, growers just need to be ready to make timely production decisions to ensure the crop is optimized and does not fall behind early in the spring.

Heath Sanders – SW OK Area Extension Agronomy Specialist, OSU

Fall 2016 winter canola acres in southwest Oklahoma have increased when compared to last year's plantings. More canola would be planted but growers continue to experience issues with county crop insurance availability and low canola T-yields. Lower wheat prices and higher canola prices encouraged the planting of more canola in southwest Oklahoma. Growers do understand the benefit of including canola in their crop rotations to help clean up grassy weed infested wheat fields.

Fall planting got off to a good start but was interrupted in certain areas with too much rain. Growers had to wait until soil conditions dried in order to get the seed in the ground. This delayed planting in some cases until the 1st and 2nd week of October. Most, if not all, acres were planted that were intended too for the region.

Of all the years I have been working with winter canola in Oklahoma, this fall has to be one of the mildest I have experienced. Average air temperatures were above normal for long periods throughout October and November without any interruptions from cold or freezing temperatures. This allowed the later planted canola to reach a favorable plant size before the first hard freeze. Early planting dates did increase overall plant size due to the mild fall and good growing conditions. At this time, these fields look very good, even though they have excessive plant growth.

The southwest Oklahoma crop did have the appropriate air temperatures to become acclimated ahead of the arrival of low winter temperatures. Air temperatures gradually transitioned the canola plants instead of temperatures dropping suddenly as I have seen in some years. Top soil moisture remains adequate at this point. Sub-soil moisture conditions remain very good and many growers are pleased to transition into the winter with a good soil moisture profile under the crop.

I've looked at many fields of canola in southwest Oklahoma and all look good. I am very pleased with the crop at this point. If moisture events will continue and not just shut off for extended periods, growers will be set up for an excellent crop next summer. Every grower I have visited with over the last couple of weeks has a very positive attitude about their crop and outlook for canola in their operation. Winter canola remains a bright area for producers as prices for other commodities continue to be low.

Josh Bushong - NW OK Area Extension Agronomy Specialist, OSU

Canola in the north central part of Oklahoma has finally hit dormancy. The planting season started out great with many acres getting sown earlier than normal due to exceptional soil moisture being available in mid-September. Unfortunately, there were a few instances where heavy rains either crusted newly planted fields or worse delayed planting. Usually planting in early October in north central Oklahoma comes with risk, but this fall has shown that those who replanted to fill in bad areas or those who finally had a chance to get across the ground this late proved to be well worth it.

A vast majority of the canola producers in this region were satisfied with the stands they achieved by late October. As the fall progressed we know the crop needed a little extra time to develop compared to a normal year. We saw above average temperatures in November, but we also became very droughty as rains ceased and strong winds took the much needed soil surface moisture. Stands that were well established with roots reaching a few inches or more didn't seem to have been impacted as much as the late seeded crops.

As usual, pest management was critical in the early seedling stage this fall. There were a few isolated instances of fall armyworm infestations that warranted control measures in October, but as the season progressed there were hardly any insects present except for some low populations of diamondback moth larvae. Since November was so dry, blackleg leaf spots and other diseases were very minimal. Herbicide applications continued from late October into November with great success.

As December came, early seeded stands became excessively lush and most later planted stands were developed enough to survive winter dormancy. Some early planted fields were nearing three feet in height and started to exhibit elongated crowns causing some concerns with winter survival. Fortunately, the region has experienced some transitional temperatures to acclimate all stages of the current crop to become winter hardy.

Winter canola acreage has definitely increased in north central Oklahoma and I would estimate that this year's planting are at least three times last year's acreage. This increase was influenced by the tight budget margins on wheat earlier this fall. There were a few instances where acquiring canola crop insurance or acceptable coverage were an issue and prevented planting also had an impact on acreage. There were even a couple instances where the producers had concern about local markets and delivery points for canola which influenced their decision on whether to plant canola. Overall, as the crop goes into winter dormancy, it is showing more yield potential compared to the past couple of years.

Northcentral and northwest Oklahoma farmers are improving in their understanding of the value of canola in this part of the state and there is good opportunity for continued growth of the industry here.

Misha Manuchehri – Extension Weeds Specialist, OSU

Following is an update on field research we are conducting on weed control in canola.

I have three research sites planted to canola this year. Two sites were not tilled prior to planting (Stillwater and Lahoma) while the third site was minimally worked (Lamont). Crop stands at all of the sites were adequate with the best stand being in Stillwater. Diamondback moth infested the Lahoma location, but growing points appear to be healthy.

Preemergence herbicide applications were made to all of these trials. Treatments consisted of Command and Dual Magnum applied alone and in combination at various rates. Weed control at Lahoma and Lamont is limited as fall rains (exceeding 10") moved the herbicide to a depth below this season's active weed seed bank. Rainfall at the Stillwater location was ideal for preemergence activation. Unfortunately, weed control isn't much better, suggesting that these very low rates, (compared to currently labeled crops) are not enough to control our target weed species. Regarding crop tolerance, significant injury was noted at the Stillwater location. At Lahoma and Lamont, minimal injury was observed as canola roots were above the herbicide zone and were able to grow large enough to overcome any injury.

In another trial at the Lahoma location, the timing and efficacy of various winter canola herbicides are being evaluated. Roundup PowerMAX, Select 2EC, Assure II, Poast, and Stinger were applied alone and in various combinations during the fall. Nearly 100% of the weeds present at the site are being controlled with Roundup PowerMAX alone. Stinger is bringing nothing to the table, but the grass herbicides are effective with Select 2EC being slightly less efficacious than Assure II and Poast. Henbit, evening primrose, shepherd's-purse, volunteer wheat, and various mustards are the primary weeds of concern at these sites.

Texas Report

Clark Neeley – Extension Small Grains and Oilseed Specialist, TX A&M Univ

I have mostly good news to report from Texas on the 2016 canola crop. It looks like our acres have bumped back up this year. FSA reports 21,380 insured canola acres in Texas, which are 1,100 more than the previous high in 2014 and following a considerable dip in 2015. This is confirmed from my sources in the northern Rolling Plains which thought acres were at or above normal for their area, which remains the bulk of our canola acres in the state. It appears we have a second "hot spot" developing for acres in the southern Rolling Plains (5,000-10,000 acres ballpark), mostly between Abilene and San Angelo, with a number of first-time producers and I am working closely with a new grower in the Blacklands region in eastern Texas. Most of the acreage expansion is due to unfavorable prices for wheat and better prices for canola and growers looking for alternatives to wheat. Moisture was very good throughout most of the Rolling Plains which allowed for timely planting and good stands. Armyworms were bad early and required some growers to replant – numerous times in some cases. The mild temperatures have led to larger than desired plants (8-10", maybe bigger in some cases), which is of concern if we deal with any severe cold this winter (but not predicted with La Nina winter). Research wise, we have successfully established variety trials in Bushland, Wichita County, Thrall (rotation study also established at this site), Marlin (strip trial), and College Station. One variety trial was lost in McGregor due to ~9 inches of rain following planting. The trials at Thrall and Marlin were "dusted in" due to very dry condition throughout September and all of October, but made it through the heavy rains in early November and now have acceptable stands.