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SLICK ALTERNATIVE OILSEEDS SET TO SPREAD

Better linking alternative oilseeds growers with domestic and overseas markets is what the Council of Grain Growers Organisations (COGGO) hopes to achieve after receiving funding from the Australian Government's New Industries Development Program.

The \$12,500 scholarship will assist COGGO Marketing Manager Eliot Jones and COGGO partners, Centre for Legumes in Mediterranean Agriculture (CLIMA) and University of Western Australia (UWA), develop markets for the niche, high value oilseeds camelina, linseed and Indian mustard.

Germplasm from Russia's Vavilov Institute has been evaluated in WA's south-west for the last three years and COGGO now hopes to link researchers with growers, via a specialty oilseeds grower group, bulk-up seed across WA and then move from experimental to commercial scale production using the expertise of COGGO Seeds.

Mr Jones said developing an alternative oilseeds industry in WA was a complementary fit with COGGO's foundation investment in Canola Breeders WA.

"Prospects are exciting and, in the case of camelina, in May this year 19 tonnes of seed from 25 hectares grown last year at John Thomas' Dowerin farm, was cold crushed at Riverland Oilseed Processors in Pinjarra. This was WA's first camelina crushing.

"Interestingly, that oil, produced here from seed generated from camelina germplasm from Russia will now be exported to Europe for use in the food and cosmetics industries.

"The by-product, camelina meal, will be used domestically as race-horse feed," he said.

Researcher Margaret Campbell, who has headed the alternative oilseeds project at CLIMA, with support from RIRDC, said alternative oilseeds camelina, linseed and Indian mustard were shaping up well.

Indian mustard, for example, is quite drought tolerant and therefore quite productive in Australia's low rainfall areas.

Ms Campbell explained some of the pros and cons of Indian mustard: "While it doesn't require swathing and can flourish with minimal fertiliser inputs, animals are sensitive to the glucosinolates that make it hot, so its meal must be limited in stock rations."

Linseed, with high Omega 3 linolenic acid in the oil (60 to 65 per cent), is a desired health food supplement.

Mr Jones explained that COGGO's partners had unique, visually appealing golden linseeds, which could be valuable as a differentiated health product attractive to the baking and health food sectors.

The New Industries Development Program scholarship will fund Mr Jones and COGGO to conduct market research, create alliances with potential customers, undertake training courses, experience new areas of business and markets and receive advice from experts.

Mr Jones invited WA growers keen to help develop the alternative oilseeds industry, to contact him, Tel 9363 3400, to register their interest and share in valuable market, technical and agronomic information.

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Eliot Jones, Tel 08 9363 3400

Margaret Campbell, Mob 0403 122 630

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