



OSR varieties

Picking a winner

Anyone with half an eye on oilseed rape will know prices are sky-high and demand is as vibrant as ever, but which variety should growers choose? *CPM* looks at some of the most attractive varieties for growers this coming autumn.

By Melanie Jenkins

After several years of suppressed OSR planted area compared with previous heights, the extraordinary prices may be turning a few heads back in its direction. So what should they be considering for the coming season?

Variety choice is always a key part of being able to establish a crop and manage it through to harvest, says Beckii Gibbs of United Oilseeds.

To help with this big decision, Beckii gives a breakdown of some of her stand out varieties she thinks are worth considering for this autumn.

Conventional OSR

Of the conventional OSR varieties, Limagrain's Acacia has proven itself on farm, according to Beckii. "With a 40% share of the conventional certified seed market and a 10% share of the overall OSR certified seed market, it's a popular choice."

Coming in as the number one conventional with the biggest gross output on the ADHB Recommended List at 104%, Acacia is also the top performer across the UK and in the East/West regions and boasts a high oil content of 45.3%, she says. "It's averaged 103.5% gross output on farms over the past four years."

Characteristically, it has a strong autumn and spring vigour and is a short, strong and durable variety, says Beckii. "It's robust too, with a 9 rating for stem stiffness and an 8 for lodging resistance, this means it stands well for the combine at harvest."

The next notable variety to consider for the coming autumn is a new addition to the RL and also comes from Limagrain. "Annika is a Turnip Yellow Virus (TuYV) resistant conventional that's particularly well suited to the early drilling slot," explains Beckii. "It has strong disease resistance, with a 6 rating for stem canker and a 7 for light leaf spot."

It also boasts twin 8s for stem stiffness and lodging resistance, and is a shorter plant at 149cm, she says. "It offers high yield potential across all regions, with a gross output in the UK and East/West regions of 103% and a provisional 102% in the North. It also has a high oil content, which comes in at 45.2%."



Variety choice is a vital part of OSR establishment, says Beckii Gibbs.

“Phoma is one of the most important diseases with widespread occurrence in OSR.”

Hybrid OSR

Looking at the hybrid varieties, Aurelia stands out to Beckii. “Aurelia is a farmer friendly variety,” she says. “It’s the number one selling OSR variety of both conventionals and hybrids, with 13% of the overall UK OSR market and nearly a fifth (18%) of the UK certified hybrid seed market.”

Aurelia has proven itself on farm and has a 105% output across all three AHDB regions, plus an average yield of 105.3% over the past four years, she adds.

It’s known as a ‘trait loaded’ Limagrain variety, meaning it has TuYV resistance, the Rlm7 gene for phoma resistance and genetic resistance to pod shatter.

“It also has twin 7 ratings for light leaf spot and stem canker, plus twin 8 ratings for stem stiffness and lodging,” says Beckii.

“Its oil content is high at 45%, and all-in-all, it’s a proven variety and an excellent choice for growers looking for a hybrid performer.”

Those looking to try out an up and coming variety need look no further than H9160195 — provisionally referred to as Granos, she suggests “A new candidate to the RL in autumn 2022, Granos is a new generation hybrid from KWS. Granos has vigorous autumn growth and, importantly, it also has verticillium stem stripe tolerance — verticillium can be a real yield robber at harvest.”

It has good resistance to light leaf spot, with a rating of 7 and tolerance to TuYV, plus a 5 for stem canker.

“It’s good for growers looking for medium timed flowering and medium maturing variety,” she adds. “It also has the POSH pod shatter resistance gene and an oil content of 44.6%.”

Another candidate for growers to consider is DK Expose (see Insider’s View, page 60) from Bayer. “In National List 2 trials, Expose’s gross output was 104% with an oil content of 44%,” says Beckii.

“It has TuYV resistance and offers great autumn growth, ▶



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Primed seed gets head start



Seed priming is essentially pre-germination, according to David Leaper.

Following the successful introduction of priming technology into OSR, new commercial trials aimed at confirming its agronomic benefits are currently being carried out by independent breeder Elsoms Seeds, alongside key strategic partners including Openfield and Agrii.

The aim of the trials, which range in size and scope from plot trials to full commercial farm scale trials, are to confirm the agronomic benefits of faster germinating OSR crops. They also set out to confirm the yield benefits already recorded in five of seven recent UK trials conducted by Elsoms Seeds, which developed the priming technology.

David Leaper of Agrii, who began working with Elsoms on primed seed trials last year, sees priming as a 'known' technology with established benefits which have been confirmed through previous research in both the vegetable and beet sectors.

"The focus for most OSR growers historically has been yield and oil content. However, with the dual threat of CSFB and drier autumn conditions in recent years, there's an emphasis on improving OSR establishment, and I firmly believe priming can help growers tackle both these challenges."

So what is priming? "Priming is essentially



Priming could help growers to optimise input efficiency, explains Duncan Durno.

pre-germinated seed," he explains. "Unlike seed treatment, it speeds up germination as the seed is physiologically more advanced. Primed OSR seed enables farmers to produce bigger, healthier plants that can grow away from pests, such as CSFB. Critically, primed seed requires less soil moisture as it's already imbibed much of the moisture it needs to germinate.

"In terms of the production timescales for primed seed, it has a good fit on over-year seed, with the advantage that the priming process itself can be done out of season to fit around other crops," says David. "Intentionally, over-year seed is common in Northern Europe where drilling starts early and where seed companies can't supply it from the new crop."

However, there are no disadvantages in this given that OSR naturally holds its germination and vigour very well, and can remain perfectly viable for many years, he adds. "At Agrii we've seen a strong demand for intentionally over-year seed, particularly following Brexit.

"Last year we incorporated primed seed from the conventional variety Elgar into our established variety trials. Results so far have been positive, and for 2022 there will be a new opportunity for us to trial the Elsoms hybrid variety Tennyson in a primed format," he says.

This will be done together with the fungicidal seed treatment Integral Pro (*Bacillus amyloquefaciens*) — a sustainable and full non-chemical treatment for OSR that controls damping off, stimulates early growth and reduces low to moderate attack from CSFB.

"Tennyson is a new high gross output and TuYV resistant variety, with a stiff canopy and an overall disease profile that's suitable for early drilling," explains David. "Newly added to the RL last year for the East/West regions, it has performed well in both official RL and Agrii trials and we're confident that it will confirm, and potentially improve on, the positive results we've seen so far from primed Elgar."

Openfield has supported Elsoms with its own research and development on priming technology for the past two seasons and is currently running primed and non-primed seed comparisons in large scale plots, drilled side by side to allow accurate comparisons, explains Duncan Durno of Openfield.

Priming technology is proven in many high value crops where crop uniformity is critical, he says. "We wanted to see if this evenness of germination and establishment could be used in the fight against CSFB. Plant counts at 17 days post drilling showed 78% establishment in the primed plot and only 28% in the non-primed — an impressive start.

"Pre-winter growth area index (GAI) assessments were done on 20 November before any winter defoliation had taken place. Results were



Priming trials are ongoing for 2022 and with more results expected, says Jack Holgate.

again very positive with the primed plot showing a GAI of 3.0 and the non-primed plot showing a GAI of 2.4," he says.

"The evenness of crop canopy was notable across the whole of the primed plot with all plants of an equal size and at the same growth stage," says Duncan.

Crops will be assessed throughout the growing season to see if the priming continues to have positive effects on spring regrowth and uniformity of crop development. If this level of crop uniformity continues, it will help growers to optimise input efficiency with improved timing of nutrient and crop protection applications, he says.

With plans to supply primed Tennyson seed later this summer, Jack Holgate of Elsoms says the company is in a strong position with current seed production, with the tests and timescales for the priming process all well in hand.

"Elsoms took a strategic position on the Tennyson 2021 crop in order to be confident of supply for primed Tennyson for the 2022 season.

"In terms of yield benefits, trials at Wickhambrook, Harlexton and Cowlinge recorded higher yields of between 0.19 and 0.24t/ha on the primed OSR crops versus the non-primed crops, across all three sites. Trials are ongoing for 2022 and we await the next series of results from those crops drilled last August with interest," he concludes.



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Variety	Aurelia	Acacia	Annika
Gross output UK (% treated control)	104.8	103.6	102.6
Gross output East/West region (% treated control)	104.8	103.6	102.6
Gross output North region (% treated control)	105.3	103.6	[102]
Untreated gross output (% untreated control)	106.6	103.8	-
Oil content (%)	45	45.3	45.2
Resistance to lodging	7.8	8.1	[8]
Stem stiffness	7.8	8.8	8.4
Pod shatter resistance	R	-	-
Light leaf spot	7.3	5.7	7.1
Stem canker	6.9	5.1	5.7
TuYV	R	-	R

Source: AHDB Recommended List, winter oilseed rape 2022/23 ([] = limited data)

► providing excellent autumn development for flexible drilling.”

Expose offers good disease ratings with an 8 for stem canker and a 6 for light leaf spot, she adds. “Notably it has a 9 rating for lodging and an 8 for stem stiffness. Expose is relatively early maturing and has pod shatter resistance. It looks like a reliable performer and shows yields that are consistent in both East/West and North regions, so it has good potential for the RL come later this year.”

A further new candidate vying for a spot on the next RL could be said to bring flashing lights, high stakes and all the glitz and glam of the USA’s city of lights: meet Vegas from LSPB.

“Vegas has a high gross output in the UK and the East/West,” says Beckii. “With a good combination of yield and agronomics, Vegas features *RlmS* phoma resistance with a rating of 9.

“*RlmS* is a new genetic trait that brings effective and sustainable resistance to



Although CSFB is often seen as the biggest threat to OSR, phoma can actually cause losses of up to 50% of yield.

phoma stem canker,” she explains. “While cabbage stem flea beetle (CSFB) is often seen as the major threat to OSR, it’s recognised that phoma is one of the most important diseases with widespread occurrence in OSR, with the potential to rob up to 50% of yield.”

Vegas also has high LLS resistance, with a score of 7.4, has an oil content of 44.7 and is vigorous in both autumn and spring, adds Beckii. ■

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