

Making the most of a golden opportunity



“Variety choice allows growers to implement strategies that increase the chances of a successful OSR crop.”

DUNCAN DURNO

Having highlighted the top three oilseed rape varieties with potential last year, how do those options stack up amid what appears to be a sudden uplift for the crop? *CPM* speaks to Openfield to find out whether those varieties remain front-runners.

By Janine Adamson

Following two autumns of strong establishment and minimal cabbage stem flea beetle damage, plus a good harvest last summer, there’s undoubtedly an air of positivity when it comes to UK oilseed rape.

This is heightened further by improved price and value compared with the past, begging the question, could OSR have finally found its sweet spot? According to Openfield’s Duncan Durno, with breeders continuing to innovate and bring new traits to the market, despite the crop’s volatile

performance, suddenly, there are very compelling varieties available to growers at just the right time.

However, despite the renewed industry optimism, he recognises that risk remains. “We can’t predict what’s around the corner, that’s why Openfield will continue to abide by its strict selection criteria for OSR varieties, based on balancing genetic traits and gross output for maximum performance.”

He notes that where farmers have been successfully growing OSR during the past few seasons, it’s



Prime time

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Yield buster

Anecdotally, reports suggest some growers broke their OSR farm records with Armada last year, points out Limagrains's Florentina Petrescu.

- ▶ down to attention to detail around all aspects of growing the crop. This includes variety choice and type, with approximately 85% of the UK OSR area now being hybrid.

"We know drilling date flexibility is required to allow crops to be drilled into optimum conditions; both growth habit and disease resistance allows this. We also require plants with strong spring growth and thick stems to help reduce

the impact of any CSFB larvae.

"Variety choice allows growers to implement these strategies increasing the chances of a successful rape crop," highlights Duncan.

"If we take ADHB's top 10 management strategies for CSFB, these tips are a good starting point for optimum OSR establishment regardless of whether the pest is present or not. In then opting for a trait-loaded variety, you're giving the crop the best chance of delivering its maximum potential with the least risk," he explains.

Last year, in the wake of unpredictability, Duncan selected three hybrid OSR varieties that the co-operative believed were the best of what

was in the market. Reflecting back, he says these varieties indeed appear to be delivering what they promised 12 months ago.

The first was LG Armada, which Duncan comments continues to hold firm and prove its consistency within both the trials system and on-farm, having been available to growers for a few seasons. "No matter what the situation, Armada performs consistently with one of

the best packages of traits available, giving it the highest untreated yield published on the RL."

Considering Armada's current standing, Limagrains's OSR and sunflower product manager, Florentina Petrescu, says it remains a farmer favourite due to its high performance and breadth of traits and features. "Throughout the years it's been one of the most consistent varieties – offering very stable gross output results for all areas of the UK despite the variance in weather each year."

She points out that anecdotally, reports suggest some growers broke their farm records with Armada last year. "It also has very good oil content,

which helps with the profitability of the crop, instilling confidence to choose Armada again and again."

For Florentina, among the variety's highlights include its strong agronomic package – Pod Shatter resistance, Sclero-Flex sclerotinia tolerance and strong light leaf spot resistance, offering clean stems, good branching and pod set.

"Beneficial traits and characteristics are stacked in Armada, offering

"It's all about reducing risk and maximising performance."

What makes a leading OSR variety?

Factors that help a variety to sprint ahead of the pack for UK growers

According to Openfield's Duncan Durno, over and above gross output certain factors are non-negotiable when it comes to selecting an oilseed rape variety.

1. Growth habit – vigour during both autumn establishment and when the crop wakes up in the spring
2. Disease resistance and yield protecting traits – varieties must have pod shatter resistance and high disease resistance scores
3. Flexible drilling window to ensure seedbed conditions are optimum – abiding by best practice improves the chances of strong crop establishment





Reduced nitrogen

Having the option to potentially reduce inputs throughout the season to help improve gross margins can only be beneficial during current times, suggests KWS' Rory Hannam.

growers proven performance across seasons and in real farming conditions," she says.

New to Openfield's OSR portfolio last year was DSV Dompteur, which Duncan says is exceeding expectation. Topping the 2026/27 AHDB Recommended List as the highest yielder (107), it's now available on-farm.

He comments that as well as delivering outstanding output, it also offers something different through its phoma blocker trait – the combination of two complex phoma resistance genes, *RLMS* and *RLM7*, which provide the plant with added protection against varying phoma strains.

DSV's marketing and sales manager, Sarah Hawthorne, adds that this hasn't come with compromise, and that Dompteur is an 'all-in' variety. She suggests that it's the best OSR variety DSV has bred in the past 10 years, arguably confirmed by the attention it's already gaining.

"With strong genetics, Dompteur is built to perform. This includes the phoma blocker trait as well as light leaf spot resistance (8), TuVY protection, pod shatter resistance, and performance under verticillium wilt pressure.

"For growers, with an impressive oil content of 46.3%, this places it firmly at the top of current varieties. It also combines well at harvest which is a factor that shouldn't

be downplayed," she says.

Another benefit is Dompteur's excellent NUE function, enabling a crop to make the most of soil-based nutrients, suggests Sarah. "In replicated company trials, Dompteur produced standard yields with 40% less nitrogen. This all stacks up for higher margins and lower risk – key reasons to believe in this exceptional variety."

The third hybrid that Duncan highlighted last year was KWS Domingos, which he says is another trait loaded variety reducing growers risk as much as possible "This is another variety with an excellent phoma score. While this is based on *RLM7*, what the high score suggests, is that major gene is supported by robust minor genes, for heightened protection," points out Duncan.

Rory Hannam, KWS product manager for oats, OSR, peas, and rye, raises that Domingos has all of the traits required to mitigate risk throughout a season. "It has both pod shatter and TuYV resistance, but also a comprehensive disease profile with a 7 for light leaf spot and 8 for phoma stem canker."

Like all Openfield-approved varieties, Domingos has good autumn and spring vigour, helping plants to grow away from any pest pressure present. Equally, it also performs well within reduced nitrogen scenarios, as proven during three years of European trials, comments Rory.

"When reducing from a full nitrogen dose by 25%, Domingos lost only 1% of its yield compared with the



Top of the crops

With its strong genetics, Dompteur is built to perform, says DSV's Sarah Hawthorne.

N-efficient check variety which lost 4%. This highlights that if you're looking to reduce nitrogen rates to save on input costs, or if nitrogen uptake is poor throughout the season, the variety will continue to perform."

For Rory, Domingos is a well-rounded variety that should give growers flexibility. "Having the option to potentially reduce inputs throughout the season to help improve gross margins can only be beneficial during current times."

When asked if he'd choose these varieties again as his front-runners, Duncan confirms that his confidence remains. "Dompteur and Domingos were limited commercially last year but they are available now; initial growth and establishment from autumn-plantings looks excellent.

"It's all about reducing risk and maximising performance, which is what all three of these varieties successfully offer," he concludes. ●

Better buying, better selling

To remain at the forefront of arable farming and maximise the value from every hectare of crop grown requires a keen understanding of the grain market, the seed to supply it, and the fertiliser to feed the crop.

Through this series of articles, *CPM* is working with Openfield to provide market insight and help farmers to focus on these major business decisions to ensure better buying of inputs, and better selling of the produce.

Openfield is Britain's only national farming grain-marketing and arable inputs co-operative and is owned by over 4000 arable farmers. Openfield's team works with 6000 farmers to supply some of the biggest and best-known names in the British food and drink manufacturing industry.

But there's more than just grain to Openfield, supplying seed and fertiliser, providing grain storage and offering expert advice on grain marketing and risk management. This delivers innovative supply chain solutions to its farmer members and consumer customers.

