



# New oilseed officer

## Felicity Pritchard

Oilseed Industry Development Officer, Victoria and southern New South Wales

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► A new oilseed industry development officer will facilitate the delivery of agronomic extension, to enhance farm and crop management best practice, and ultimately assist in expanding the area of oilseed crops in Victoria and southern NSW

**The Irrigated Cropping Forum has appointed a new Oilseed Industry Development Officer for Victoria and southern New South Wales, to expand the area of oilseeds, particularly canola and soybeans, grown in the region. The position is funded by the Grains Research and Development Corporation and the Australian Oilseeds Federation.**

Felicity Pritchard will work with growers and groups, advisors, oilseed marketers and researchers to assist in the flow of information and feedback between the various groups within the industry, with the ultimate aim of boosting the production of dryland and irrigated oilseeds in the region.

Felicity is based in Horsham and has a background in dryland cropping. She completed a Master's degree in 1996 after studying the effects of drought, high temperatures, sowing time and location on the oil and meal quality of canola and other specialty *Brassica* oilseeds used for edible oils and diesel substitutes.

She spent seven years as an extension agronomist with TopCrop groups in the Victorian Wimmera, initiating a number of groups and facilitating them at a high level. It was in this role that Felicity developed a passion for working with farming groups in crop agronomy and enjoyed the opportunity of helping them achieve higher water use efficiencies and improve their risk management, as well as bringing small communities together while they faced what is now a nine year drought. In 2004, Felicity took on a role as a Crop Industry Training Specialist at Longerenong College with the University of Melbourne, training students in crop management and developing other rural training courses.

Felicity is looking forward to the challenge of the new role, which covers a range of issues, from marketing to agronomy to research, and she hopes to instil more grower confidence in oilseed crops.

The need for an industry development officer arose, in part, out of concerns by the Australian Oilseeds Federation that growers needed more confidence in growing canola. A run of late breaks and current low price have led to a reduction in the area sown to canola. However, canola still has an

important place in the rotation, and the Australian Oilseeds Federation believes that more profitable returns at lower risk are possible for most growers through more careful management of inputs, particularly fungicides and fertiliser. The Federation wants to remove the perception that canola is a risky crop to grow.

Felicity will also work with soybean growers in southern NSW and Victoria to help them work together to better plan for growing the crop, improve its agronomic management and to promote the adoption of newer varieties.

Felicity's role is likely to also extend to developing agronomic packages for other oilseeds, such as canola quality mustards ("junola") and biodiesel crops.

The new position will allow for the delivery of agronomic extension that will enhance farm and crop management best practice, particularly in relation to disease management, pest management and yield improvement, ultimately assisting in the expansion of oilseed crops in Victoria and southern New South Wales. 🌞

### Further information

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**Figure 1** Felicity Pritchard has been appointed as the Oilseed Industry Development Officer, for Victoria and southern New South Wales