



Media Release

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### Organic canola oil – do we have to go to North America to find it?

A West Australian niche oilseed processor is gearing up to import supplies of organic canola seed from North America - the home of GM crops. For the marketing director at Aus-Oils, Jon Slee, this is an interesting development.

“While Canada is the world’s single biggest canola producer and near 85% of its crop has been based on GM varieties since 1996, and the USA grows enormous quantities of GM varieties of corn, cotton, soybeans and canola, there are American farmers who continue producing canola under organic principles.

“It looks like we’ll be importing some of it to supply my market.” Jon says he’s looked far and wide for Australian supplies of organically produced canola seed.

“Over the last few years, I’ve had up to half-a-dozen inquiries for organic canola, ranging from a very small, basically household size request to a near-commercial size quantity.

“I’ve looked for commercial scale supplies of organic canola in WA and I’ve even contacted Australia’s main producer of organic vegetable oils in NSW, but they’ve been unable to source organic seed for several years too. So, I found a supply in North America.”

Based in the heart of WA’s ‘canola country’ at Kojonup, Aus-Oils is a niche oilseed processor, specialising in the natural processing of non-GM canola seed for the Australian market. It has a capacity of 9,000 tonnes of seed per year and can process and market non-GM or GM seed and oil as required by the market. Most of Aus-Oils’ product is then refined in WA and packaged for the food service sector.

Mr Slee says organic production guidelines in other parts of the world recognise that a zero tolerance cannot operate in a biological system as trace levels of material can occur by means outside of the controls of farmers.

“If the Americans can have both GM and organic canola farming systems operating together vibrantly, then we should too. All it requires is a realistic, sensible and workable tolerance system.”

“The guidelines in place in North America take the view that ‘adventitious presence’ can occur and should not jeopardise the organic registration of a farming operation. This approach has met customer requirements for organic production and is used elsewhere around the world.”

Australia’s organic production standards were first drawn-up prior to the wider adoption of GM technology and Jon suggests it might be timely to revisit these to open up marketing opportunities.

“So, if the organic sector were to re-think its unique zero-tolerance attitude to GM, then I’m sure farmers could quickly take advantage of the market niche!” he says.

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