

## CANOLA

## Canola plantings decline by 20%

This year, the area planted to canola is expected to decline by almost 20% from that of 2014. The total area planted was estimated at 77 000ha, which is 17 000ha less than last year. Martin Heydron, a farmer from Bredasdorp and chairperson of the Canola Specialist Work Group, ascribed this to difficult planting conditions at the start of the season.

“A lot of seed ordered for planting was not planted because of the late rains in the Swartland and Southern Cape,” he said.

Farmers, however, indicated in April that they would plant only 88 000ha, which was already 10% lower than the previous year.

Franco le Roux, agriculturist for the canola processing company SOILL, saw this as the market correcting itself.

“The industry produced a lot of canola in 2014, which in combination with yields adversely affected by warm climatic conditions, had a negative impact on price margins. Other crops, as a result, also realised better returns,” he said.

Although Proteem and Albertina in the Southern Cape have the potential for a high yield, the canola is still too immature in other areas for accurate predictions, said Le Roux. Because of the late rains, farmers in the Swartland planted in dry soils and these seeds had germinated only with the rain of late May or early June. In the Southern Cape, late rains had resulted in a mix of canola in full flower with the rest very immature.

The rain would be the greatest determining factor of yield over the next two months, said Le Roux.

Meanwhile, no problems have emerged with the Beet western yellows virus that made its first appearance on some farms last year. The disease caused losses of up to 40%. Heydron said he hoped it was a once-off occurrence as there was little control over the disease. It was spread by aphids, a severe problem due to a wet summer that had led to a weed infestation alongside plantations. Only one cultivar, Zircon, had been affected, which made it difficult to determine whether it was the only cultivar susceptible to the disease. – *Glennis Kriel*