



# Biomass Crop Assistance Program: Camelina Agronomy Sheet

*Conservation Practice Information Sheet*

***(WAPMC 2012)***

Camelina produces oil bearing seeds. The crop can be used to produce a high quality biofuel and bio-lubricant as well as feed supplements for cattle, chickens, and turkeys. The USDA initiated the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) to expedite production of bioenergy crops. Washington along with California, Montana and Oregon has been targeted to produce Camelina.

Camelina is a spring annual crop that tolerates cold well. It grows rapidly and completes its lifecycle a few weeks sooner than spring wheat. Camelina can be direct combined. Seed yields will vary between 1000 - 1400 pounds/acre on better eastern Washington sites.



Camelina is a member of mustard family. Seed is produced in small pods with each pod containing roughly 10 small seeds.



Camelina matures well on the stem. No major adjustments are needed to direct combine the seed. It is important to note that the amount of residue left on the field is less than a comparable wheat crop.



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## **Facts and Myths:**

- “Camelina is small seeded”  
FACT. Camelina seed is about ½ the size of alfalfa seed.
- “Camelina cannot be seeded with a conventional drill”  
MYTH. Camelina must be seeded very shallow but a conventional drill will work if it is set up properly and the seedbed is firm. It can also be broadcast seeded followed by packing.
- “Camelina will thoroughly dry out 4-feet of soil”  
MYTH. Camelina uses no more soil moisture than most cereal crops. However, Russian thistle, a common weed in Camelina, will dramatically reduce moisture in the soil.
- “Camelina is hard on combines”  
MYTH. Camelina is no harder on combines than cereal crops. But, the producer may need to use a lot of duct tape to seal up cracks where the small seed could leak out.
- “Camelina is toxic to following crops”  
MYTH. Camelina produces relatively low amounts of glucosinalates. Glucosinalates can adversely impact soil microbes but pose no threat to wheat, barley, lentils, or peas.
- “Camelina weed control is limited”  
FACT. The only herbicide registered for use on Camelina is Poast<sup>tm</sup>, a grassy weed herbicide, thus perennial broadleaf weeds such as field bindweed, Canada thistle, and skeletonweed, are problematic for Camelina. Fields with histories of weed problems should be avoided. Fields coming out of CRP should not be seeded to Camelina because weed pressure will be very high.
- “Camelina needs to be seeded before other crops are seeded in the spring”  
FACT. Camelina yield is strongly impacted by seeding date. A fall dormant or very early spring seeding is recommended for Camelina.



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- “Camelina shatters easily”  
MYTH. The pods are quite persistent and hold the seed well.
- “Camelina does not require large amounts of fertilizer for high yields”  
MYTH. Camelina needs **adequate nutrients** to yield well. Soil testing is highly recommended. Camelina requires approximately 5 lb N/100 lb expected seed yield. Adequate amounts of P and S are needed too. It is best to band fertilizer below the seed. This reduces surface disturbance and weed flushes.
- “Camelina can safely follow a wheat crop”  
MYTH. Camelina is sensitive to herbicide carryover of many products typically applied to wheat. The lack of a fallow period increases weed control problems. Lastly, there may not be adequate moisture to sustain a crop of Camelina in the drier areas.

## **Soil Erosion Hazard:**

Camelina does not produce high amounts of residue. It is routinely direct combined, and the leaves will have dropped off and the stems will be very dry & brittle. Combining pulverizes the residue, and stem pieces are typically no longer than 6” long. There are erosion modules in both WEPS and RUSLE2 for Camelina.

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