

# Media Release



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## **Choosing a profitable break crop**

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After recent rainfall across the Wimmera and Mallee, grain growers are reconsidering what area they will sow to break crops and which break crops they'll plant.

This rainfall has provided the opportunity for farmers to sow vetch in early March or to use stored soil moisture for other break crops such as canola.

BCG trials coordinator Claire Browne said that break crops are often considered risky but over the last three years, crop sequences involving a broadleaf break crop have been more profitable than continuous wheat.

BCG trials conducted on sand and clay soils found that wheat yields were between 0.4-0.9t/ha higher following pulses (peas and vetch) but there was generally no difference in wheat yield following canola, fallow or wheat.

Increased wheat yields after pulse crops and the profitability of canola during the years of the trial meant that canola grain, pea hay, vetch hay (sand soil) and pea grain (clay soil) were more profitable than wheat on wheat or fallow followed by wheat.

Canola, field peas, vetch and lentils are all break crop options in the Mallee.

When selecting a break crop, Ms Browne said growers should consider available soil water, soil nitrogen and the timing of the break.

Break crops should also be strategically selected for paddocks with agronomic problems such as weeds, root diseases and low soil nitrogen.

According to Ms Browne risk is reduced by remaining flexible with crop selection going into the growing season.

"Growers can also reduce risk by keeping inputs to a minimum and only applying inputs in response to favorable conditions," she said.

Selecting an end use (grain, hay or brown manure) in response to grain price, hay price, growing season rainfall and grass weed pressure further reduces risk.