

Linseed growing in Tasmania

Suitability factors for assisting in site selection



Linseed (*Linum usitatissimum* L.) is an oilseed crop from the flax family that originates from the Mediterranean region of Europe. It is of particular importance as a break crop in cereal cropping rotations.

Climate

Linseed is grown predominantly in the winter rainfall climates of southern Australia. It can be sown in autumn or spring depending on specific site characteristics. In Tasmania, most crops are sown between August and to the end of October. Linseed requires warm dry weather to mature for harvest and thus is similar in that respect to cereals.

Frost

Linseed is susceptible to frost during emergence and during flowering. Severe frosts can lift the soil and break the roots of young seedlings. Frosts during early autumn and late spring can reduce yield in susceptible areas. The timing of sowing can be altered to avoid these critical periods.

Soil

Linseed can be grown on a range of soil types, although heavier clay loam soils are preferred over lighter sands. Heavier soils have a higher water holding capacity and hence less irrigation water is required later in the season. Surface crusting can reduce germination considerably due to low seedling vigour. Linseed prefers high fertility soils. Linseed can tolerate acidic soils, however a pH in water of >6 is required for optimum yields.

Drainage

Linseed prefers well drained soils. It will tolerate some waterlogging but not during establishment. Linseed can be grown on raised beds in wetter lying areas. Poorly drained soils should be avoided. Alternatively, spring sowing may be preferred in areas likely to lie wet over winter.

Irrigation

Linseed grows well in areas with 450-750mm of annual rainfall. The amount of irrigation required will depend on the soil type and the sowing date. Irrigation at strategic times can be used to increase production. Irrigation can be used during the critical times of emergence, flowering, early seed development and pod fill to ensure adequate soil moisture. Linseed is generally sensitive to saline conditions, thus quality irrigation water is required.

Weeds

Linseed does not compete well with weeds. Weeds should be controlled when the crop height is between 5 and 10cm. Reduced yields are likely if weeds are not controlled in the early stages of plant growth. Weed management during ground preparation can reduce the impact of weeds.

Photos by Konrad Chung



Developing rules to guide enterprise suitability mapping

Many plants require particular climatic and land characteristics for best performance. Frost, winter chilling, summer heat, drainage, slope and salinity are some of these characteristics. For each enterprise mapped by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE), the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) consulted industry experts and reference material to define land and climate “rules” that distinguish suitable from less suitable areas. These rules define the boundaries between the different classes of the enterprise suitability maps.

Suitability classes used are well suited, suitable, marginally suitable and unsuitable. Any limiting factors are also identified to guide the management practices that could help to overcome the limitations.

Landowners and potential investors are able to access comprehensive soil, climate, crop and enterprise information plus complementary farm business planning tools at:

<http://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/agriculture/investing-in-irrigation>

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