

Sowing mainstream wheat varieties too early can risk yield

April 7 2016, by Grant Hill, Sciencenetwork Wa



The winter wheat variety Forrest achieved similar yield results when planted on April 9th as compared to Magenta and Mace planted on April 23rd. Credit: Žarko Šušnjar

Local farmers who are preparing to sow their wheat crops over the next fortnight should hold off, according to local scientists who warn sowing mainstream varieties too early can risk yield penalties at the end of the season.

Despite a recent focus on the value of early sown [wheat crops](#), trials in the northern Wheatbelt are indicating commercial varieties such as Mace, Yitpi and Magenta, should not be sown any earlier than late April.

This is regardless of how much early moisture is available.

The trials are evidence that many commercially available varieties were best suited to a late April, or even later, sowing date to achieve optimum yields, Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA) research officer Ms Christine Zaicou-Kunesch says.

"Part of the reason why growers are wanting to sow early is because they have larger cropping programs and they are looking at ways to be able to get the crops in as soon as possible," she says.

"But these results show that when planted too early, varieties such as Mace and Yitpi will bolt too early in the growth stage which will result in reduced biomass and reduced yield."

However, Ms Zaicou-Kunesch says the trials did show that if moisture was available early in the season, some long season winter wheats could handle the lengthy growing period and achieve good yield potential.

She says the winter wheat variety Forrest achieved similar yield results when planted on April 9th as compared to Magenta and Mace planted on April 23rd.

Ms Zaicou-Kunesch says some growers may consider a long season wheat variety for its early biomass potential, using the crop as a stock grazing opportunity during traditional feed shortages.

"While the yield results were in a similar range, the downside is that Forrest can only achieve the Australian Standard White (ASW) grade,

while Mace and Yitpi are both able to achieve Australia Hard (AH) grade, which has a significant price premium over ASW," she says.

"Growers would need to weigh up the financial gains of planting early with an ASW variety like Forrest or holding off and planting a more commonly acceptable AH variety later in the month."

She says any crops sown early in April should not be dry sown but planted into moisture to ensure good early germination to carry it through the [season](#).

This article first appeared on [ScienceNetwork Western Australia](#) a science news website based at Scitech.

Provided by Science Network WA

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