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## **DON'T GET TOO CARRIED AWAY WITH OSR**

Recent improvements in off-farm prices for oilseed rape could tempt crop producers to look at tightening rotations to include more of the crop next year, but new financial data from ProCam's 4cast system suggest this may not always be the most profitable way forward.

Based on 4cast yields and costs from 2005 the new price levels would give top 25% producers gross margins of £535/ha for Winter OSR compared with £495/ha for second wheats, and £380/ha and £355/ha respectively, at average performance levels ProCam technical agronomist Nick Myers says.

At top 25% performance levels, a 240 ha arable farm growing a two wheats/oilseed rape rotation would be expected to achieve a total farm gross margin of £163,000 compared with £168,000 for a 50:50 wheat:oilseed rape rotation. At average farm performance, the gross margins would be £135,000 and £137,000 respectively.

"These are not huge gains considering the potential problems that could be encountered when going for these tighter rotations. One reason is that the gap in margins between first and second wheats has closed in recent years.

Growers considering growing more winter oilseed rape should consider the availability of combining, drying and storage facilities, the ability to establish crops on time, crop management issues such as sprayer capacity and the implications in terms of pests and diseases.

“There is considerable evidence from here as well as France showing that where rotations include more oilseed rape, the disease threat grows considerably – particularly with regard to stem canker. That could become a real problem here and in areas where there is a high area of other brassicas grown too, club root could become very serious.

Growers should not rush to increase oilseed rape areas, but instead look at the finer details of oilseed rape production to ensure they can maximise yields and quality, Nick Myers says.

“Second wheats are too valuable to overlook, and whilst it’s tempting to produce more oilseed rape, the long term implications may well outweigh the short term gains.”

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