4cast shows Two-spray Fungicide Treatment essential for Highest Oilseed Rape Yields

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With a high Sclerotinia risk this year following two consecutive years of the worst epidemics, many Oilseed Rape crops, even backward ones, would benefit from a two-spray fungicide programme, according to ProCam.

The Company's 4cast agronomy database shows that the top 25% of oilseed rape growers last year spent £42.33/ha on fungicides and achieved an average yield of 3.9 t/ha, whereas the bottom 25% spent £35.65/ha on fungicides and achieved yields of just 2.28 t/ha.

"Our 4cast data extracted from many very different and diverse growing seasons shows that attention to detail and investing in a robust two-spray fungicide programme results in improved yields and margins," says ProCam Group Agronomist Nick Myers
"4Cast shows a positive correlation between yield and fungicide inputs. Rape crops that received no fungicides yielded just over 2.1 tonnes/hectare. Crops that received a three-spray fungicide programme, autumn, stem extension and flowering, yielded 3.7 t/ha, a significant yield benefit of 1.6 t/ha.

Nick explains that Sclerotinia erodes yields by causing premature senescence, reducing seed weight and causing early seed loss.

"A comprehensive two-spray fungicide programme to protect the crop from this damaging disease makes sound economic sense." Nick advises that a two-spray fungicide programme will give optimum control of Sclerotinia.
"But you also need to have spot-on timing with your fungicides. The programme usually starts at yellow bud stage with a fungicide such as metconazole or tebuconazole. This helps to reduce lodging, evens up the canopy, synchronises flowering, improves branching and protects against early infection of the flowers by sclerotinia spores.

"This first spray should then be followed two to three weeks later by a robust fungicide treatment with good activity on Sclerotinia. In some areas this first spray has already been applied. The HGCA Appropriate Fungicide Dose (AFD) trials demonstrated good activity from a number of products including boscalid, azoxystrobin, iprodione/thiophanate methyl and prothioconazole. With the likelihood of prolonged flowering once again, the second spray is needed to maintain protection of the crops during the critical infection phase.
"Keeping the canopy green and protecting the crop from disease for as long as possible at the start of the yield building phase is vital if high yields and good margins are to be achieved," Nick Myers concludes.

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