

Summer Trials and new varieties for the Cucurbits team

Vegetables
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By Rachel Archbald, Syngenta Field Biologist - Seeds

The recent Australian Melon Association (AMA) Conference held in Mildura, New South Wales, was a perfect way for us to round out what was a successful 2015/16 season for the Syngenta Cucurbit Portfolio.

The 2015/16 summer trialling season was destined to be a big one, particularly for rockmelon, with two new hybrids being introduced into the Southern growing regions. With the generosity of some local growers, we were able to roll out some grower trials with our Tuscan Melon (MB3281) alongside our Harper Melon (MS3303).

We've been trialling both varieties since 2014 and have seen some huge potential locally on the back of some great results in the United States. These varieties have come out of one of our global breeders, Rakesh Kumar's, breeding program in Woodland, California. These could be the first commercial rockmelon varieties, bred specifically for the Australian market, to come out of his program. Both varieties come with an impressive disease package alongside fantastic agronomic benefits and we are really excited to have them closer to commercial release domestically.

During the AMA field day trials, we showcased the two varieties and not only did they stand out because of their in-field performance, but we were able to showcase, without trying, their respective resistance packages. MS3303 has Cotton Aphid resistance, and it was impressive to see the visual differences between it and other susceptible varieties. Varieties such as MS3303 have biochemical

properties which allow aphids to land on the plant, however, they cannot colonise or feed on it; therefore they pose a lower threat of damage to the plant. Cotton Aphid has particular importance for Southern growers as this is their main Aphid variant.



Our summer trial results, coupled with the AMA field day trials, generated an incredible amount of interest in MS3303 that we have further advanced it to a 6.2 variety. This means we have been able to name it in preparation for potential commercial sales should it continue to perform. Claudia will be our first ANZ rockmelon introduction in 10 years and we cannot wait for the variety to do us and our growers proud!

Our commercial watermelon varieties, Wahoo and Raider, have been in the market for the past 12-18 months now and are continuing to set the bar for other seed companies, and this past season has been no different.

Although a challenging start to the 2016 season for Javelin, with limited seed volumes, the hype around Javelin helped to create substantial interest during the AMA field trials in two of our development varieties, WDL3422 and WDL4432. We still have some work to do during 2016/17 to get these two varieties to the stage of being commercially available, however it is exciting to have a pipeline of new varieties that is just as exciting and fresh as our current commercial offer.



Like every year, we have new screening material in both our rockmelon and watermelon portfolios and wait in anticipation to see what gems our breeders have created specifically for us, and the Australian grower! It's definitely an exciting time to be involved in cucurbits. We have an amazing team both locally and internationally, and as a collective, we are all extremely passionate and committed to our work, making sure the local grower is given every opportunity to produce the best product they can.

Tags:
watermelon
cucurbit