Erucic acid testing for certified seed
CODE OF PRACTICE

AIC and BSPB, as representative organisations of the seed breeding and certified seed industry, are keen to take steps to demonstrate that elevated levels of erucic acid seen in commercial crops over recent years do not originate in certified seed.

All new oilseed rape varieties marketed in the UK are tested for erucic acid levels as a requirement of official registration with results consistently close to zero. Given that there is a high genetic stability for the expression of erucic acid, subsequent seed crops will retain that extremely low erucic acid level. However, AIC and BSPB believe that added certainty can be given to that position, and to the range of testing which is already undertaken post-registration, if testing results are made available. This would give confidence that the erucic acid level of certified seed being supplied onto farm is not responsible for the elevated levels of erucic acid being found in some harvested crops.

The AIC Seeds Committee and Working Group propose a Code of Practice for the testing for erucic acid in certified seed:

- All testing of seed and seed lots undertaken at any stage prior to delivery of certified seed onto farm should be undertaken using the Gas Chromatography test (GC) – which can be accurate down to 0.1%.
- Results from a GC test should be available on request. Companies may determine the route by which this is achieved (ie. website, email, written notification). Companies are free to make available test results other than on request.

Adoption of this best practice approach is voluntary but both AIC and BSPB encourage their members to consider participation as a means of providing reassurance to both farmer customers and the wider oilseed chain that certified seed provides the certainty expected of it in terms of providing seed fit for purpose.

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