

Identity Preservation in Oilseeds

The pending commercialisation of GM canola in Australia in 2003, an opportunity for access to higher value markets such as specialty oilseeds and rapidly expanding interest in industrial oilseed crops has accelerated the need for broader adoption of Identity Preservation systems.

This Fast Facts paper has been developed to inform Australian oilseed growers about Identity Preservation systems and answer some commonly asked questions on Identity Preservation.

What is Identity Preservation?

Identity Preservation Systems aim to ensure that product integrity and/or purity is maintained (within given standards) along the supply chain.

Tests to verify product identity can be conducted at any stage of the supply chain from seed selection, sowing, grain production and delivery. Associated documentation is critical to demonstrate that Identity Preservation has occurred.

Are Identity Preservation Systems New?

The implementation of Identity Preservation in agriculture is not new. Identity Preservation systems have operated for many years in the seed and grains industry.



For growers, Identity Preservation is essentially an updated version of grain quality segregation, but the difference is a whole-of-season, planting through to harvest approach, with higher standards of purity, accountability and traceability. To achieve these standards, attention has to be paid to purity of sown seed, paddock selection, seeding and harvest equipment hygiene along with storage and transport integrity.

In addition, many Food Industries implement Quality Assurance (QA) systems. Refer to AOF Fast Facts Sheet No. 4 for information on QA programs.

Why implement an Identity Preservation system?

The decision to implement an Identity Preservation system is usually governed by the flexibility of customer/end user specifications and the consequences of not meeting those specifications. These may include rejection or price penalties. Identity Preservation systems are generally required where:

- Purity of the crop is integral to capturing value of a particular characteristic – usually driven by consumer demand
- A feature of a crop is not acceptable to other parallel supply chains or to consumers



This is reflected in increasingly tight specifications from processors in regard to variety and production system; and increasing emphasis on traits such as nutritional value, non allergenic properties, etc. It will usually involve a need for full traceability of the production system or product integrity.

For growers of oilseeds, the imminent introduction of specialty oilseeds, GM Canola and industrial rapeseed increase the requirement for Identity Preservation systems.

While most existing Identity Preservation systems are designed to capture the economic value of a quality or other trait specific to a variety/crop, they also offer significant potential to manage environmental risk and product liability.

Industry Developments and Possible Implications

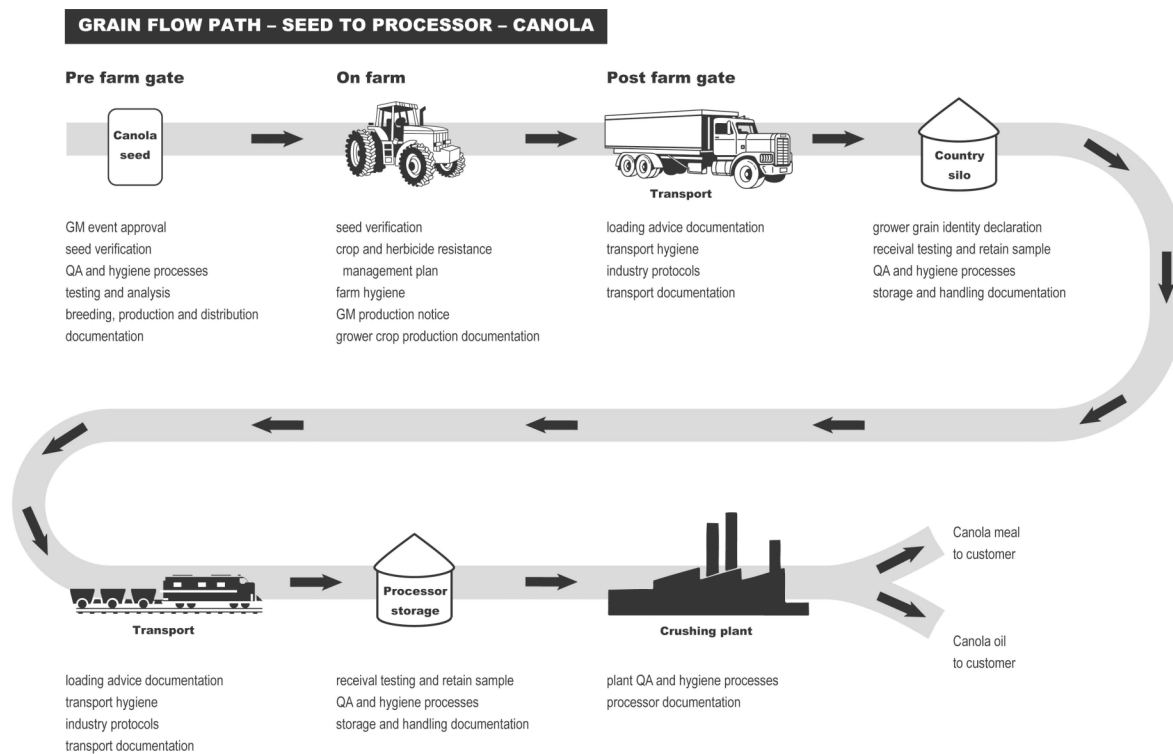
In recent years, food safety incidents have resulted in significant losses to regional or national primary industries. By adopting Identity Preservation systems, industries have the dual benefit of lifting the quality of the product and having a system that assists with tracking problems. The quality of Australian oilseed crops and derived products is critical to maintaining access to preferred markets, especially in times of over supply.

The key elements that are driving the shift to formal Identity Preservation systems include:

- Consumer demand for safe, clean food and greater choice, resulting in tighter specifications across quality, processes, residues and other food safety issues
- Consumer demand for greater consistency in products purchased
- Companies using the status of "Certified QA Company" as a marketing tool
- Industries seeing the opportunity to reduce costs by moving from end point inspection
- Industries or sector organisations wanting to create minimum standards / code of practice
- Producers wishing to participate in / or continue to access higher value markets
- Regulatory pressures and requirements
- Producer demand for protection against potential product liability.

Grain flow path – seed to processor – GM canola

Reproduced from “Canola Industry Stewardship Principles, for coexistence of production systems and supply chains”, with kind permission of the Gene Technology Grains Committee August 2003.



Is there a simple system?

There are no “Off the Shelf” Identity Preservation systems that growers or others can readily purchase. Each grower / seed producer will need to develop their own system depending on customer / value chain specifications.

In summary adopting an Identity Preservation system involves four basic steps:

STEP 1

Know your customer's specifications.

Contact your direct customer and agree together on an Identity Preservation system, including test and documentation requirements, to suit both your needs.

STEP 2

Know your seed.

Ensure that only certified seed is delivered to your property, or the origin of FSS (farmers saved seed) is documented.

STEP 3

Eliminate chance for other grain or contaminants to enter the production system.

Inspect, clean and document - seeding equipment, growing crops, harvesters, transporters and storage vessels.

STEP 4

Provide clear labels, documentation of processes and test results.

Be clear and precise about your system.

STEP 5

Be open to independent audit.

Regular independent audit will ensure your reputation as a supplier of grain "to specification". The frequency of audit depends on the level of identity preservation required.

Further advice on Identity Preservation can be sourced from:

- Grain-handling organisations
- Grain marketing organisations
- Department of Agriculture
- Federal Department of Agriculture
- Industry organisations
- QA systems providers
- QA and Identity Preservation consultants
- Farm management consultants

Key Points

Identity Preservation is not a new concept although some of the terminology may be.

Demand for Identity Preservation and the resultant benefits to supply chains are increasing rapidly.

Specialty oilseeds with unique health benefits, GM crops, and industrial oilseeds are exciting new opportunities for the oilseeds industry. Identity Preservation systems are integral to optimising the value of these crops.

The perceived high quality and integrity of Australian oilseed crops and derived products is critical to maintaining access to preferred markets, especially in times of over supply. Producing quality assured and Identity Preserved oilseed products requires commitment from everyone in the value chain. Proof of commitment to quality can be supplied through accurate and auditable measurements and recordings that are the basis of Identity Preservation systems.

Visit the AOF website for more information on Australian oilseeds – www.australianoilseeds.com