

2001

Controlling crop contamination

The potential for contamination through cross-pollination from conflicting crops had long been a thorny issue for the vegetable seed crop industry. Member companies used a manual process based on sticking pins on a paper map once a year.

In 2005, a digital tool developed by the Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) with SFF funding provided a revolutionary solution – and helped secure the position of the \$85 million export seed industry at the same time.

The key output of the “management of specialist seed crop isolation” was an innovative web-based system known as a Seed Crop Isolation Distance (SCID).

FAR Chief Executive Officer Nick Pyke recalled that while the system was ambitious at the time of its 2005 launch, the industry almost immediately grasped what it was offering and accepted it.

The process remains simple. Seed companies wanting to book a paddock, log on to the SCID website and input crop sites. The system performs an automated isolation check and returns a conflict notice if or when other cross-pollinating crops are entered onto the system and fall within that crop’s entered isolation distance.

An automated email notification is then sent to the seed company of the conflicting crops to alert them of the conflict and allow them to discuss a resolution. An automated paddock history check also occurs.

Scheme membership is currently voluntary, with no mandatory or legislative requirements for operators to enter crop sites.

However, for the scheme to operate effectively, all operators who are producing vegetable or forage brassica seed crops and/or oilseed crops are strongly encouraged to use the system.

Nick remains proud of the SCID system and its significant, enduring, barely acknowledged contribution to the seed crop industry. Other countries have elements of the system, but SCID is the most advanced and extensive one.



Hybrid radish plants flowering, male and female.