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NEW EARLY MATURING SERRADELLA AVAILABLE TO SEED PRODUCERS

Seed of a newly-developed yellow serradella cultivar, "Uniserra," will be released to seed producers for sowing this autumn. Release of the seed was announced this month by the Chairman of the Western Australian Herbage Plant Liaison Committee, Mr. E. N. Fitzpatrick.

Uniserra yellow serradella was developed by Dr. J. S. Gladstones of the Agronomy Department, University Institute of Agriculture, who made it available for release to seed producers through the Committee. Uniserra flowers some two to three weeks earlier than the standard Pitman yellow serradella. It is suitable for the same types of soil and, because of its earlier maturity, it makes better winter growth. It sets seed profusely and showed good drought tolerance in 1969.

The new cultivar should not be looked on as a substitute for subterranean clover or barrel medic. Pitman yellow serradella is more successful than other pasture species only on some of the deeper sands of the south and west coastal districts and Uniserra will probably have a similar adaptation. From indications to date it might be expected to extend serradella growing into slightly lower rainfall areas than at present and could replace Pitman in the drier parts of Pitman's range. There is a possible future market within the State for some 50 to 100 tons of seed each year.

Seed for distribution will be dehulled and scarified before despatch. This is a slow and expensive process but gives 2½ times as many seeds in the same weight. The treated seeds normally have a germination capacity of 75 per cent. or more. (Untreated seed still in the pod may have a germination rate as low as 5 per cent.) A sowing of 5 lb. per acre should give a thick stand suitable for seed production in the first year. The seed cost is $1 per pound.

The release of Uniserra yellow serradella this autumn and the harvesting and subsequent release by growers next summer is conditional on satisfactory experimental results in 1970. Uniserra is a new cultivar and although it has given promising results in early tests, the possibility of some weakness showing up late in testing can not yet be discounted. The Committee believes this is unlikely and in the interest of rapid seed increase an early release to seed producers is warranted. However, seed producers must agree to the condition of possible withdrawal at the end of the first year.

Preference will be given to seed producers experienced in growing and harvesting serradella. They should have suitable new land in a 20 to 35-inch rainfall zone in districts along the south or west coasts. Only about 500 lb. of seed is available and it will be distributed in minimum lots of 50 lb.

Growers interested in obtaining seed should apply to the Chairman, Herbage Plant Liaison Committee, c/o Department of Agriculture, South Perth, giving brief details of the land available for sowing, and their general experience in seed production.

Uniserra was developed in a serradella and lupin breeding programme financed by West Australian wheatgrowers.