

Farmer Duncan Farrington surveys his crop



Pictures by Michael Jones

# Fields of gold

This time of year the Northamptonshire countryside is a patchwork of green and yellow as rapeseed crops flower and flourish. Amanda O'Hare visits Bottom Farm in the county that is just one of three bottling and branding its own oil . . .

**W**HEN you conjure up images of cooking oils adorning kitchen shelves, sunflower and olive oils probably spring to mind.

Well one entrepreneurial Northamptonshire farmer has launched his own culinary oil made from rapeseed and the concept is proving a great success.

Launched by Duncan Farrington last summer, Farrington's Mellow Yellow virgin cold-pressed oil is creating a small revolution in the kitchens of those who have discovered it.

Father-of-two Duncan is passionate about his golden oil and it is very much a family affair when it comes to creating Mellow Yellow.

It is grown, pressed and bottled entirely on the family's farm at Hargrave, near Wellingborough.

Father Robert runs the farm, mother Angela helps bottle the oil and Duncan's wife, Eli, is the design and marketing brains behind the venture.

In the often-unpredictable world of farming, Duncan is now a part of the family farm that has been farmed by his grandfather and works alongside his father.

While studying at university Duncan was trying to conjure up ways of helping diversify the farm for the future.

The farm is an all-arable enterprise, which includes growing wheat, rapeseed and linseed.

He said: "When I was at university I researched oilseed rape and looked at the opportunities. I was aware of the excellent health properties

of cold-pressed rapeseed oil, as were consumers in other countries around the world. However in Britain, although academics were aware of the properties, British agriculture had not taken advantage of the concept, mainly due to its unfortunate name of rape.

"I discovered we had the potential to produce the fantastic product of this oil and thought if I don't do it now I will miss the boat.

"We launched Mellow Yellow in July 2005 after looking into the feasibility of the production of cold-pressed rapeseed oil and winning a grant towards start up costs from the Department of Environment Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

"When you drive around the countryside you often see these yellow fields, which is the crop in flower. I think it is a wonderful sight. People are often under the misconception that it is a new crop, when in fact it was first brought here by the Romans."

Harvesting begins in earnest at the end of July. The Farrington's farm according to the principles of Linking Environment And Farming (LEAF), which help farmers to identify ways to farm profitably while at the same time caring for the environment.

Duncan is a volunteer and often hosts tours and talks for groups and schools at the farm to help raise awareness.

He said: "We grow the crops in rotation each year so we are not putting the ground under stress all the time. This helps keep the soil fit so you get fit and healthy crops.

"Looking after the ground helps create a good soil structure. From healthy soil we can make healthy oil. ▶