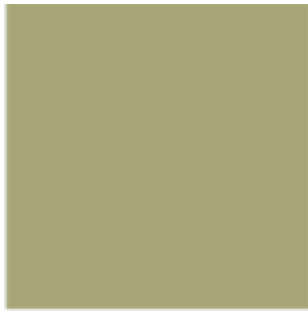
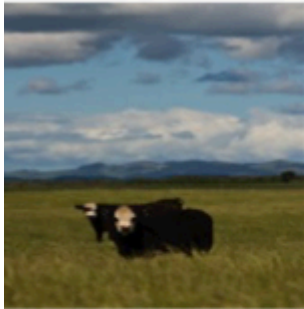


P2D Project
*Accelerating
Precision Agriculture
to Decision Agriculture*



Media Release

3 May, 2017

Cutting through the telco jargon to drive profit through 'big data'

A "how to guide" to cut through telecommunication jargon is one of the ideas emerging from workshops with growers to identify ways to enable better use of big data to increase farm productivity.

Researchers with the *Accelerating Precision Agriculture to Decision Agriculture* project (P2D) have been speaking to farmers from every agricultural industry and across all states to identify the legal, policy, technology and information barriers that reduce the use of aggregated data on farm.

The P2D project is led by the Cotton Research and Development Corporation and jointly funded by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources Rural R&D For Profit Programme and all 15 Rural Development Corporations, contributing more than \$3.5 million over 18 months. It involves research support from three universities, CSIRO Data 61, the Australian Farm Institute and the Data to Decisions CRC.

Project research partner, Professor David Lamb from the University of New England, has been focusing on common issues with receiving and transmitting data, looking at all available telecommunication tools, from mobile phones to radio, WIFI and broadband networks.

"To be able to make the most of technology, farmers need to be able to connect and analyse data from different machines and sources on their own farm and from multiple properties and industries," said Professor Lamb.

"This level of Decision Agriculture requires consistent access to the right telecommunications infrastructure and based on the experiences I've heard over the last few months, that's not happening for farmers right now.

"Access or connection to tools and datasets is patchy and unreliable and while there are some real innovators out there, others are struggling to navigate their way through all the options," says Professor Lamb.

"There's a good deal of frustration amongst farmers right now, who know how important technology has become to their bottom line, and more importantly, the viability of their industry in the future.

"They want to know who's taking the helicopter view of national telecommunications infrastructure for the next 20 years to make sure they don't get left behind in a rapidly changing technology environment and a more competitive global market."

Professor Lamb says there's a range of access issues for farmers, and some of those are currently being addressed by government-led inquiries and the Productivity Commission.

However, he says two key themes have emerged where the P2D project believes it can add value.

"The need for more education is a big factor. Unless you're an IT or communications specialist it's difficult for any of us to feel confident about making the right choices with on-farm communications solutions providers and equipment suppliers.

"We need to provide practical information and tools so that farmers can cut through the jargon and know what questions to ask and how to confidently weigh up the options."

The other area under review is an industry-wide forum to investigate and find solutions to the recurring issues that impact on agriculture.

"An example I've heard recently was about difficulties faced by farmers in accessing an existing web-based tool when they switched over to NBN.

"In this case the problem was solved, but it can be a time-consuming process to work out what's behind these sorts of problems.

"I think it's worth investigating what sort of forum could be established for the agriculture industry to act on behalf of farmers or smart service providers to fix the problems having widespread impact. This can only be good for encouraging innovation in this space."

Professor Lamb says a forum of this kind could also look at the long-term horizon and help ensure that farmers have the telecommunication infrastructure they need for the future.

The *Accelerating Precision Agriculture to Decision Agriculture* project is due to deliver its findings, as well as practical tools and outputs for farmers, at the end of the year.

Growers can learn more about the project by visiting the website - www.farminstitute.org.au/P2Dproject.

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