

P2D - Media Release

ACCELERATING PRECISION AGRICULTURE TO DECISION AGRICULTURE

Enabling digital agriculture in Australia

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Report recommends Australian agriculture go digital

Producers and agribusiness are urged to give their views on a new strategy to unleash the full potential of digital agriculture, following Australia's first whole-of-industry project to spearhead the digital revolution.

"For the first time, all of Australia's Rural Research and Development Corporations have banded together to transform farm business management through the fourth revolution," said Jane Trindall from the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) who are leading the project.

"As business sectors and individuals across the world grapple with how to adjust, in rapid time, to the digital age, here in Australia agriculture and primary production have joined forces through the Accelerating Precision to Decision Agriculture (P2D) Project.

"As far as we know, this project is the first of its kind in the world, where an entire industry sector is taking a national approach to drive digital transformation in a coordinated and coherent fashion," said Ms Trindall.

"While the report shows that we have much work to do to bring Australian primary producers fully into the fourth revolution, this project puts primary production on the front foot in terms of a collaborative approach."

The summary report shows that better support for digital agriculture could unlock opportunities for production growth to the value of \$20.3 billion (25 percent increase on 2014/15 values) and highlights areas where Australia is lagging behind international competitors to utilise data and digital advancements.

"What we've found is that the industry's digital maturity is low. We knew there were issues, which this draft report has uncovered, but we didn't have enough confidence in the definition of the problems to devise a plan to overcome the challenges," said Ms Trindall.

"Through P2D we have worked with leading experts across this country's research institutions to narrow our focus and determine what needs to be done to make the most of opportunities.

“The key recommendations within this report call for leadership, new data policy, digital strategy and investment in data assets and digital literacy.”

Consultation around the project findings began last week with a series of targeted forums and webinars.

“The initial feedback we’re getting from key stakeholders and peak industry bodies is that the project puts forward an undeniable case for change by highlighting critical challenges and potential solutions,” said CRDC consultant and project leader Dr Rohan Rainbow.

“But we’re all conscious of the size and complexity of the task ahead and the need for cross-industry cooperation.

“Connectivity remains a major barrier to adopting digital agriculture and as we’ve seen in countries like America, it’s often the technology providers who will have the most influence over addressing these problems.

“Here in Australia, we’re currently suffering from a significant lack of collaboration across different agriculture sectors, to combine our spending power and attract market solutions.

“That’s got to change if we want to get private business, particularly technology suppliers, to the table.

“And we will also need better collaboration between industries to enable optimum data sharing for making smarter and more profitable decisions about all aspects of production, from inputs to pricing.”

Dr Rainbow said there are significant advantages and efficiencies to be gained by producers, agribusiness and the government working together to address the recommendations.

Feedback from the industry is currently being sought, until the end of December 2017. The report can be found on the project website www.farminstitute.org.au/P2Dproject

The final report is due to be released early in 2018, along with three web-based tools to assist with delivery of solutions.

“We will welcome thoughts and ideas at any stage to make sure a workable framework is produced for moving forward,” said Ms Trindall.

The P2D project involves research support from three universities, CSIRO Data 61, the Australian Farm Institute and the Data to Decisions CRC.

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