AUSTRALIAN FARM INSTITUTE
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Digital agriculture empowering community resilience

DIGITAL FARMERS: BRINGING AGTECH TO LIFE this June

While lack of connectivity is one of the five barriers to agtech adoption noted in the Accelerating Precision Agriculture to Decision Agriculture (P2D) project, the technology enabling digital agriculture has application beyond the farm gate.

Despite obvious constraints in mobile coverage and internet connectivity, 21st century communications infrastructure allows rural, regional and remote communities to be more socially connected now than ever before. What non-agricultural benefits can agtech bring to communities? How can the ag sector use new media to best advantage?

After exploring 'Digital Disruption in Agriculture' in 2016 and 'Harvesting the Benefits of Digital Agriculture' in 2017, the Australian Farm Institute (AFI) is examining these trends at **Digital Farmers: Bringing AgTech to Life**. The **Digital Farmers** program will examine the impact of digital agriculture adoption on people both within the sector and in the broader community, and the influence people are having on development and use of agtech. More than **25 speakers** are confirmed for seven panels and two keynote addresses, representing farmers, community leaders, students, workers, business managers, technology developers, communicators and advocates.

"The full implementation of digital technology could boost the value of Australian agriculture by 25% – a $20.3 billion increase from 2014–15 GVP – and when the value of agriculture increases the communities that depend on agriculture also benefit," said AFI Executive Director Richard Heath.

"There is no question that the technologies which enable digital agriculture are also enabling connection well past the farm gate. Digital technology is being used for telehealth, to drive inter-community engagement and to promote agricultural advocacy – with these examples of technology empowering community resilience, what other social benefits could we derive?"

Mr Heath said the AFI has been immersed in the rapidly evolving world of digital agriculture and agtech since starting work on the Big Data research project in 2015, yet the speed of development meant that almost every day there are new challenges for understanding and defining the changing environment that farmers are working in.

"The reality that digital agriculture is rapidly becoming standard operating practice, and it's imperative we understand the social impacts and the social good the agtech revolution is bringing."

While the entire conference will focus on examining the impact of digital agriculture on people, two Digital Farmers sessions – on **communicators** and **communities** – will investigate these social topics specifically.

A breakfast panel of **communicators** will discuss how digital technology can drive community engagement with the farm sector and promote agricultural advocacy in the new social environment. The panel includes: **Verity Morgan-Schmidt**, CEO of Farmers for Climate Action; **Catherine Forge**, Curator of the Invisible Farmer Project; and rural photographer **Edwina Robertson**.

Following the communicators session, the **communities** panel will investigate what non-agricultural benefits agtech can bring to rural communities. Covering this topic are:**Alexandra Gartmann**, CEO of Rural Bank and former CEO of the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal and the Birchip Cropping Group; Prof. **Susan Brumby**, Director of the National Centre for Farmer Health; and **Georgie Somerset**, Deputy Chair of AgForce Queensland.

Additional sessions across the two-day program will cover farmers, students, farm workers, technology developers and consumers. The opening address will be delivered by**Matthew Pryor**, Chair of Rocket Seeder, and the dinner address will be delivered by **Mick Keogh**, founding Executive Director of the AFI, on the topic: **Will future agriculture still need people?**

Digital Farmers: Bringing AgTech to Life will be held on 13–14th June at Doltone House on Jones Bay Wharf in Pyrmont, Sydney, with a gala dinner at the Maritime Museum. Tickets & more details are available from www.farminstitute.org.au

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