

Senate Select Committee on Financial Technology and Regulatory Technology
Answers to questions on notice
Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

Committee: Senate Select Committee on Financial Technology and Regulatory Technology

Inquiry: Financial Technology and Regulatory Technology

Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

Topic: Agricultural Technology (AgTech)

Question Date: 7 July 2020

Question Type: Written

Senate Select Committee on Financial Technology and Regulatory Technology asked:

Please outline what initiatives the department and any portfolio agencies are undertaking in relation to Agricultural Technology (AgTech). What programs and/or policies are in place in relation to the development of AgTech products and services in Australia?

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and portfolio agencies are undertaking a range of activities to support the opportunities offered by AgTech, such as:

- The 2019 Ernst & Young report *Agricultural Innovation—A National Approach to Grow Australia's Future* was commissioned by the department to develop a shared vision for the future of Australia's agricultural innovation system. The report recommends creating a next generation innovation platform by enhancing data infrastructure and governance, promoting data sharing and improving awareness of connectivity solutions. The report is being used to guide efforts to accelerate AgTech.
- *Horizon Scan: The future of agricultural technologies*, undertaken by the the Australian Council of Learned Academies to examine impacts, opportunities and challenges associated with sensors, Internet of Things, automation, bio and nanotechnology, and transactional technologies such as blockchain. The Horizon Scan was commissioned by the Australian Government National Science and Technology Council and Australia's Chief Scientist and funded by the department.
- The \$157 million *Rural Research and Development for Profit Program* aims to improve farm-gate productivity and profitability with many projects targeting digital agriculture and AgTech. For example, the 2016 *Accelerating Precision to Decision Agriculture (P2D)* project made a set of recommendations to improve the uptake and use of digital technology in Australia's agriculture sector. These recommendations are providing a framework for further activities across government and industry that address uptake of technologies in the agriculture sector.
- The *Traceability Grants Program*, part of the department's Modernising Agricultural Trade initiative, is investing \$7 million into projects that will enhance the supply chain traceability systems and arrangements that support export of agricultural commodities. These technologies improve the competitiveness of Australia's agricultural exports.
- The *Biosecurity Innovation Program* is investing \$25.2 million over five years to accelerate innovative technologies and approaches to safeguard Australia's biosecurity system and protect Australia's agricultural industries. For example, the ionIQ project is developing a portable mini mass-spectrometer for improving the detection of brown marmorated stink bug in cargo.

Each year around \$300 million is invested by the Australian Government through Australia's agricultural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs). RDCs invest in a wide range of research activities that include developing AgTech solutions such as robotics, automated irrigation, precision agriculture and virtual fencing. Examples of RDC initiatives include:

- *Growing a digital future for Australian agriculture*, RDC's are implementing key recommendations from the P2D report and have invested in three key projects to accelerate the digital transformation of the Australian agricultural sector - focusing on digital strategy, digital literacy and data governance.
- *AgTechFinder* is a database with three main search options – one for producers to informed decisions about AgTech, one for agronomists to build knowledge to offer the best available advice to their clients, and one for AgTech vendors to market their products. AgTech Finder is a joint industry undertaking of KPMG, Food Agility Cooperative Research Centre, National Farmers Federation, Insurance Australia Group and AgriFutures Australia.
- Agrifutures Australia's *evokeAG* event is the largest agrifood tech event in the Asia Pacific. It aims to bring the world's brightest agriculture, technology and investment minds together, with opportunities for entrepreneurs, research and development organisations, rural research and development corporations, start-ups, investors and producers.
- *growAG*, also being developed by AgriFutures Australia, is a digital platform that will strengthen commercialisation of AgTech R&D by building connections between investors, start-ups, producers, researchers and RDCs.