

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Media Release

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#### **South-West WA Drought Hub announces innovation projects**

Innovative agricultural projects worth more than \$4 million have commenced in Western Australia after grants were awarded by the South-West WA Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub (SW WA Hub).

“A total of 10 exciting and diverse projects are rolling out, with focus areas ranging from paddock-level carbon benchmarking, through to drone-mounted feral species recognition and improved vineyard management in a warm and dry climate,” SW WA Hub Director Mark Holland said.

The grants were made possible by \$2.5 million provided by the Australian Government to the Grower Group Alliance-led SW WA Hub earlier this year, enabling it to expand its remit beyond drought to include agricultural innovation.

Co-contributions to the short-term projects have been provided by SW WA Hub consortium Partners which successfully applied for a targeted and competitive grant opportunity through the Hub.

“These projects are great news for agriculture in the South-West WA agricultural region and align with National Agricultural Innovation priorities targeting exports, climate resilience, biosecurity and digital agriculture,” Mr Holland said.

“Innovation and collaboration are critical to unlocking step-changes in productivity and profitability for farmers and their communities, and these initiatives will help the Hub to deliver on this key aim.”

The new projects and lead organisations include:

- Implementing improved vineyard floor management for premium grape production in a warm and dry Mediterranean climate – The University of WA (UWA): Testing and demonstrating whether cover crops can be used in vineyards to address future drought and temperature change challenges.
- Value-added lupin exports – Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD): Establishment of an incorporated lupin value-adding syndicate to advance the production and export of lupin food ingredients, finished food products and concentrated livestock feeds.
- Drone-mounted species recognition – Southern Rangelands Pastoral Alliance (SRPA): Using a drone-mounted species recognition system to locate and visually record feral animal species that contribute negatively to total grazing pressure.

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- Developing automated technology to assess natural capital on pastoral leases – SRPA: Digitising the measurement, management, and processing of biodiversity and soil organic carbon through the establishment of an in-field methodology with readily available devices.
- Supporting the adoption of biodegradable mulch technology in vegetable and perennial fruit enterprises – DPIRD: Demonstrating a novel, semi-commercialised Sprayable Biodegradable Polymer Membrane (SBPM) developed by CSIRO.
- Avondale First People’s Traditional Produce Innovation and Manufacturing Hub – Wattle Seed Enterprise: Noongar Land Enterprise Group (NLEG): Facilitating ongoing wattle seed research and product development, a more expansive harvest and enabling products to be available for purchase.
- Agtech decoded; growers critically analysing the role of new technology in on-farm decision making – what are the possibilities? – Liebe Group: Assessing the ability of modern data analytics to address farming system challenges and improve in-season decision making when faced with a variable climate.
- Paddock level carbon benchmarking – Farmanco: Development and implementation of Clean Energy Council-approved University of Melbourne carbon calculator within a cloud-based data capture and benchmarking platform.
- Reducing technical barriers for malting barley market access using innovative technology – Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre: Generating value to barley growers, barley breeders and the entire barley industry by supporting a faster pathway to market and market acceptance of new higher yielding malting barley varieties.
- Digital Edge: Next generation agribusiness analytics for the Eastern Wheatbelt – Curtin University: Deploying the next generation of agribusiness models aimed at improving climate resilience in the eastern wheatbelt of WA by targeting profitability and sustainability at paddock, farm and farm enterprise scale.

SW WA Hub information is available at [www.gga.org.au/activity/drought-hub](http://www.gga.org.au/activity/drought-hub).

**Caption:** South-West WA Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub Director Mark Holland says 10 innovative new projects align with National Agricultural Innovation priorities.

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