



Media Release

12 December 2015

Prime Minister Turnbull announces new initiatives to revolutionise agriculture

Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, has today announced three initiatives led by the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) that promise to digitally transform Australian agriculture and help the industry seize the vast growth opportunities before it.

Today's announcement includes:

- a bold new online platform for Australian farmers;
- the National Farmers' Digital Agriculture Service; and
- a new incubator for agricultural start-ups and technologies.

The initiatives are underpinned by partnerships which include some of the biggest technology, communications and financial institutions from across Australia and around the world.

The new measures will also allow Australian farms to maximize the benefits of improved connectivity offered by the National Broadband Network (NBN).

NFF Chief Executive Officer, Simon Talbot, said the NFF's vision, along with partners including Accenture, Crowe Horwath part of Findex, Prime Super, Commonwealth Bank, Vodafone and Coles, was two-fold.

"Through these initiatives we are seeking to facilitate digital disruption within the farm sector, and help farmers seize the benefits of faster connectivity," Mr Talbot said.

"Australian agriculture is entering a new growth phase and is likely to generate \$1.2 trillion between now and 2030, while this year alone, agriculture is predicted to reap a record farm-gate return of \$57.6 billion.

We need to reposition agriculture as an industry not of the past, but of the future with a flourishing culture of entrepreneurialism and innovation.

These three initiatives will help facilitate this shift, while bolstering prosperity across the sector."

Online Platform

NFF's new Online Platform aims to bring farmers, agribusiness professionals and consumers together in an engaging online platform designed to create value for farmers, agribusiness and consumers.

It will deliver the most up-to-date food and agribusiness news, weather and market information; integrate best management practice; and provide member benefits, blogs, commentary, and the ability to magnify the industry's voice using campaigns and live policy development.

This marks a major step for Australian agriculture by enabling the industry to tell its story to a much wider audience than ever before.

“As the country's most geographically dispersed industry, agriculture can gain real value by engaging more effectively online,” Mr Talbot said.

“The Online Platform is a major investment by the NFF in ensuring farmers get the most from improved connectivity.”

Vodafone Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs Dan Lloyd said their investment in the platform further strengthened Vodafone's commitment to regional Australia.

"Through our network investment and our advocacy for greater regional mobile coverage and choice, we are standing up for regional Australia.

“We are excited to be contributing our global expertise in communications technologies to help support the digital future of Australia's agricultural sector through this partnership," Mr Lloyd said.

The Online Platform will go live in May 2016.

National Farmers' Digital Agriculture Service

NFF is collaborating with Accenture, its Official Strategy and Digital Partner, to develop and deliver new digital technologies and services, which will help Australia's agriculture sector compete globally.

In bringing Accenture's global capabilities to the sector, NFF is committed to enabling Australian farmers to make better data-based operational decisions that seek to increase yield and boost revenue while reducing expenses - this Digital Agriculture Service (DAS) being a global first for a peak industry body.

“By creating a new digital service by farmers, for farmers, the NFF, in collaboration with Accenture, can help avoid the scenarios playing out overseas where farmers are overwhelmed by complex and disconnected data locked away by individual service providers,” Mr Talbot said.

“The NFF will implement extensive data security measures to provide protection of farmers' data for their benefit, and the benefit of the wider industry.”

“Today farmers generate volumes of complex data and there is enormous scope to use this data to enhance decision making and improve farm gate returns.”

“By taking advantage of major innovation trends such as Big Data and the Internet of Things, tools like the Digital Agriculture Service have the potential to add significant value to farm gate returns in coming years. For the first time in a generation, digital technologies can enable farmers to achieve a quantum leap forward in their performance.”

The NFF aims to launch a publicly available service for all farmers in July; as well as specific solutions for the Cotton, Horticulture and Beef farmers in late 2016, with other commodities to follow soon after.

Sprout

The new innovation hub for agricultural technologies, ‘Sprout’ will be a mechanism to identify, foster and promote the best new ideas in the food and agribusiness arena.

The NFF and Crowe Horwath parent company, Findex, have assembled a highly skilled assessment panel, and are developing relationships with capital partners to provide agri-entrepreneurs with financial backing.

“The agriculture sector has a proud history of innovation, often led by our farmers themselves,” Mr Talbot said.

“As the pace of innovation globally continues to increase, we need pathways to identify the best ideas and get them to market sooner in order to remain at the cutting edge”.

Spiro Paule, Chief Executive Officer, Findex, said Sprout would be a powerful tool to help drive agricultural innovation.

“This program will be the first of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere, supporting grassroots innovation in what is arguably the country’s most important sector,” Mr Paule said.

“Findex will leverage its global expertise in business establishment to assist people and businesses who have new ideas to ultimately further agriculture’s success.”

The first round of applications for incubation via Sprout will open in early 2016.

Coles Managing Director John Durkan, said Coles was pleased to support the initiatives which would help to drive innovation and ideas in Australian agriculture.

"We know from our experience dealing with thousands of food producers that there are so many innovative farmers continually coming up with powerful new ideas to improve the quality of their food, and boost their efficiency and productivity," Mr Durkin said.

"We are delighted to help support this first-ever national online platform dedicated to Australian farmers, which will mean they can share information more easily and deliver ideas which will lead to greater innovation and investment in agriculture."

For more information, please visit the official website: www.nffdigital.org.au

Ends.

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National Farmers’ Federation

Australian farmers. Australia’s future.

Event Information (please contact Stacey Wordsworth to register)

Attendees: Prime Minister, The Hon Malcolm Turnbull; NFF President, Brent Finlay; NFF CEO Simon Talbot; agricultural innovators; and corporate partner representatives.

Location: Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute, Woodridge Road, Menangle NSW

Time: 12.30 pm for a 1.00 pm commencement, concluding 2.00 pm

