Media release

1 SEPTEMBER 2020

Research reveals the nbn™ network can help support a $15.6 billion annual boost to Australian agriculture by 2030

- **By 2030 internet-enabled technologies could add $15.6 billion, an increase of 20 per cent, to the farming, forestry and fishery sectors' gross value of production each year.**
- **Digital technologies predicted to enable growth include artificial intelligence and decision support, monitors and sensors, and robotics and automation.**
- **NBN Co is working closely with the agricultural sector to leverage the network's capability to support on-farm uses right across Australia.**

NBN Co's *Connecting Australia*[1] research on agriculture, launched today, has shown how the **nbn**™ network can support vital growth in Australia's agricultural sector to help strengthen the economy.

The research estimates that connectivity, combined with the right digital technologies, could increase the sector's gross value of production by $15.6 billion per year by 2030. Modelling undertaken by economics and analytics firm AlphaBeta Advisors suggested the potential farming productivity gains required strong adoption of emerging digital capabilities.

Increased adoption of digital agriculture on-farm is essential to the industry achieving its objective of being Australia's next $100 billion industry. With poor connectivity estimated to cost farmers up to $5 per hectare[2], the availability of services over the **nbn**™ network can help enable the realisation of digital agriculture across Australia.

According to the findings, the internet-enabled technologies set to enable the highest productivity growth across the future of connected farming in Australia include:

- **Decision support ($8 billion productivity growth potential):** Technologies such as Artificial Intelligence that collects information to help farmers make data-driven decisions to manage their farms through precision farming.
- **Monitoring ($4.3 billion productivity growth potential)**: Technologies that provide farmers with real-time information about the state and performance of their farms, such as soil moisture sensors for water efficiencies.
- **Automation ($3.3 billion productivity growth potential):** Farm automation that saves time by replacing human labour with machine labour, which includes autonomous irrigation or autonomous tractors.

The adoption of emerging technologies is also set to deliver additional benefits for farmers, such as helping save almost three hours per week of farm workers' time through automation, and helping farmers access new markets which is estimated to deliver a $1.2 billion boost to the premium agricultural exports by 2030.

To help enable the range of benefits identified in the research, NBN Co has initiated an agriculture development strategy, including plans to work collaboratively with sector stakeholders in research and technology demonstrations utilising the **nbn**™ network. The company is already working closely with the agricultural community to address the connectivity needs of farmers to support greater efficiency and productivity.

Gavin Williams, Chief Development Officer of Regional Development and Engagement:
"The research clearly identifies the importance of emerging technologies that could help farmers save time and money, while accessing new markets to boost economic growth. Our focus is on providing access to broadband services to help enable the agriculture sector to get the most from the opportunities available.

"To help Australian farmers take full advantage of the digital opportunity we are collaborating closely with the agricultural sector to design connectivity solutions that support these emerging technologies. This is all about helping to enable success, and we want to go beyond improving productivity and growth on the farm to see improvements to community wellbeing across regional Australia as well."

Tony Mahar, Chief Executive of National Farmers' Federation:
"Australia's farming community had been through a challenging time in recent years, but the sector continued to perform strongly in the context of global uncertainty brought about by COVID-19. We're excited about what could be possible in the years to come with the support of technology.

"Whether adopting sensors and analytics to help increase crop yields or using robotics to automate dangerous tasks and reduce workforce risks, there is significant scope for connected farming to grow exponentially across Australia, particularly as technology and infrastructure improves.

"The National Farmers' Federation has a goal for farm gate output to reach $100 billion by 2030 – up from approximately $60 billion today.

"The report released by NBN Co today shows how on farm adoption of internet-enabled tech can help deliver on this goal and build on seminal work by the Australian Farm Institute into how digitalisation can boot agriculture's bottom line."

For more information on what NBN Co is doing to support Australian Agriculture, please visit:
nbn.com.au/learn/regional

Media enquiries

Sharon Chang

Phone: 0447 582 337

Email: sharonchang@nbnco.com.au

NBN Co Media Hotline

Phone: 02 9927 4200

Email: media@nbnco.com.au

Notes to editors

- The Connecting Australia report on agriculture was commissioned by NBN Co and undertaken by AlphaBeta Advisors to analyse the benefits of internet-enabled technology by categorising agricultural technology into 3 types of technologies (automation and robotics, decision support technology and monitoring technologies), identifying the degree of internet connectivity required, and estimating the potential benefits of these technologies to different agricultural uses (e.g. dryland cropping) to 2030. The analysis is aligned to and builds on the Farm Institute of Australia, Accelerating precision agriculture to decision agriculture 2017 project.
- The Cost of Digital Inequality in Regional Areas: https://www.bcg.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/170804-Connectivity-report-fin.pdf

For more information, visit www.nbn.com.au