

Hon Geoff Brock

Minister for Regional Development

Tuesday, 13 February 2018

Pilot program to safeguard crops from spray drift

A \$1.46 million State Government-funded network of state-of-the-art automatic weather stations will be constructed at 40 locations across the Mid North.

The network will give growers unprecedented access to the vital weather data needed to minimise the risk of spray drift.

The Ag Excellence Alliance pilot project will see the 40 solar-powered weather stations installed at selected sites throughout the Mid North, Clare Valley, and including some stations in the northern Adelaide Plains and northern Yorke Peninsula.

The weather stations will provide farmers with highly accurate and localised data about atmospheric stability. This information will allow farmers to avoid spraying pesticides when weather conditions indicate spray drift is likely.

Estimates put the potential loss in production value from spray drift in the Mid North to be around \$178 million a year if not addressed.

The first four stations are expected to be installed by the middle of this year with the network scheduled to be in place by September 2019. A functional website for growers to access weather data from the stations is anticipated to be operational by July 2019.

Locations have been identified for 37 of the stations so far, with 14 in the Mid North area, 10 in the Adelaide Plains, nine in the Clare Valley, and four in the northern Yorke Peninsula.

Background

The Ag Excellence Alliance was established in 2005 to help increase the viability of South Australian farmers through providing leadership and effective linkages between grower groups and key stakeholders.

Ag Ex manages a range of projects that contribute to the sustainability of farm businesses across South Australia. Projects are supported by a diversity of funders and delivered in collaboration with grower groups.

The project will be jointly funded from the State Government's Economic Sustainability Program and the Regional Development Fund.

This project is an example of the State Government's investment in infrastructure for regional business, along with the government's investments in services like mobile telephone towers and water infrastructure.

Quotes attributable to Regional Development Minister Geoff Brock

The food most of us put on our tables each night comes from our regions – including the Mid North.

This pilot network of automatic weather stations is a critical investment to ensure our producers will have the necessary data to make informed decisions in managing their properties into the future.

Spray drift mitigation systems are incredibly important to safeguard South Australia's reputation for premium food and wine produced in our clean environment.

In 2016–17, our food and wine generated \$19.97 billion in revenue and accounted for 49 per cent of the state's merchandise exports.

We've worked hard to build our reputation for premium food and wine across the globe, and it deserves this investment to see it maintained.

Quotes attribute to Mr Mark Stanley, Executive Officer, Ag Excellence Alliance

The investment in the automatic weather station network is critical in protecting primary industry production in the Mid North into the future.

The automatic weather station network has potential to provide additional information in the future that will add further value to the investment.

Media Contact: Pamela Perre 0481 918 491