Hort Innovation

media release

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NEW PLANT PEST AND DISEASE SURVEILLANCE TECH DELIVERED

A high-tech mobile surveillance unit was delivered at the end of October as part of Hort Innovation's multi-agricultural industry surveillance initiative – *iMapPESTS.*

The *iMapPESTS: Sentinel Surveillance for Agriculture program* is researching and developing novel surveillance and cutting-edge diagnostic technologies. These include custom-designed mobile surveillance units (termed 'Sentinels') that incorporate specialised airborne trapping equipment and technology. Sentinels are deployed to various locations around the country to capture airborne samples that are examined in a laboratory to test the presence or absence of priority pests and pathogens.

Hort Innovation's Research and Development Manager Jessica Holliday said, "The program aims to lay the foundations for a national surveillance system capable of rapidly monitoring and reporting the presence of airborne pests and diseases for multiple agricultural sectors, including viticulture, grains, cotton, sugar, horticulture and forestry."

iMapPESTS is delivering six sentinels by the end of 2020. The fourth sentinel in the suite of six was delivered at the end of October. Sentinels 5 and 6 are under construction and will be delivered by December 2020. Sentinels will be deployed to different environments and crops around the country next year for extensive testing and optimisation.

Every sentinel looks unique but all six share similar features – each is equipped with several airborne samplers, power supply, a weather sensor, telemetry and an industrial computer for remote control and monitoring. They also include automated technology to configure samplers for different sampling requirements.

Jessica said, "The newest unit, Sentinel 4, is smarter, smaller, lighter and more flexible compared with earlier sentinels, which is particularly important in the current COVID-19 environment where movement of people and goods are restricted in some parts of the country.

"Nearing the end of this phase of iMapPESTS, in 2021 we will be able to focus on deploying all six sentinels to multiple strategic locations across the country for in-field trialling. Each trial gives us the opportunity to engage with stakeholders in the region and deliver important pest and disease data that could help inform on-farm pest management actions, biosecurity response efforts and proof-of-freedom claims."

South Australian vegetable grower, Anthony De Ieso, Thorndon Park Produce said, "The sentinel will help us be more efficient on-farm. The information will offer insights into the patterns of insect pest numbers and how weather may be influencing their movement, allowing us to make informed pest management decisions."

The program began in 2017 and will continue until 2023.

Media Kit:

- For photos and video footage please go to https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bB90XVmThJIXN5RSKl9mK6cPb3fhRjhm?usp=sharing

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