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## Major initiative to drive Aussie smart farms

In an environment where Australia needs to be increasingly competitive in international trade, and consumers are more discerning than ever, Hort Innovation has launched a multi-million-dollar smart production systems fund.

Set to benefit all horticultural growers, the new initiative will comprise investment in projects that increase farm productivity through greater crop intensification, protection and disruption.

Hort Innovation chief executive John Lloyd said the grower-owned research and development corporation is looking to partner with suitable co-investors and research providers – such as universities and technology companies – to deliver a host of new projects.

“The Australian horticulture industry is stronger than ever domestically, and trade is reaching never-before-seen heights,” he said.

“In the past financial year, Australia produced a record 6.36 million tonnes of horticultural products worth more than \$11 billion and the value of our fresh produce exports jumped 36 per cent.

“To keep this momentum going, we need to remain competitive on the world stage and continue to ensure our consumers are getting the consistent, quality produce they need.

“This new investment fund will provide growers with the tools they need to help make that happen in a more cost effective manner.”

The Advanced Production Systems Fund will comprise investments that deliver outcomes such as:

- **Farm automation** such as robotics, sensors and mechanisation
- **Plant genetics** that employs next generation genomics and other platform technologies
- **Data integration** that improves decision making through real-time, reliable crop data
- **Intensive farming** through ultra-high-density cropping and advanced protected cropping systems
- **Access or develop superior planting materials** including rootstocks and cultivars with exceptional characteristics

This fund comes in the wake of the opening of the nation’s first Horticulture Innovation Centre for Field Robotics and Intelligent Systems at the University of Sydney, which is home to more than \$10M in robotics and autonomous technology investment.

The Fund is part of Hort Frontiers, a strategic partnership initiative developed by Hort Innovation that addresses the biggest challenges facing the future of Australian horticulture.

For more information on the Advanced Production Systems Fund, go to the Hort Innovation website.

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