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## **Tasmanian farms dotted with thousands of sensors in Sense-T Alpha Trial**

Thousands of sensors are being installed at farms across Tasmania as part of the first full-scale trial of the whole Sense-T system, including new sensing technology and smart phone apps.

The Sense-T Alpha Trial was officially launched today (Thursday 10 July) by Assistant Minister for Infrastructure, Jamie Briggs, at Houston's Farm in Richmond, one of 20 trial sites throughout the State.

"The Australian Government is committed to driving economic growth and creating new jobs through targeted investments in productive infrastructure and innovative technologies that will help the Tasmanian and Australian agricultural sectors be the most competitive, efficient and sustainable in the world," Minister Briggs said.

Sense-T Director, Ros Harvey, said the Alpha Trial marked the next phase of Sense-T, which is based at the University of Tasmania, following a two-year foundation period.

"This will be the first large-scale trial bringing together all the elements we've been working on over the past two years. That includes brand new sensing technology and smart phone applications, as well as the big data platform that manages the flow of data from the sensors to Sense-T and back to farmers," Ms Harvey said.

"Once the trials are complete, we'll commence work to make the technology available to farmers more broadly so they can all access the benefits."

Each sensor system wirelessly connects hundreds of sensors measuring temperature, humidity, soil moisture, leaf wetness and solar radiation. The trial sites include a wide range of agricultural businesses including vineyards, broad acre pasture, dairy, annuals, biannuals, berries and floriculture.

Ms Harvey said that Sense-T had brought together four other experienced companies, all leaders in their respective industries, to manage particular aspects of the trial:

- Serve-Ag to install, maintain and service the sensors
- nSynergy to design the initial smart phone apps and web tools
- Grey Innovation to continue to refine the design of the sensing equipment
- Sirca to develop the big data platform

"We're harnessing the expertise of local people such as those from nSynergy and Serve-Ag, while attracting interstate companies like Sirca and Grey Innovation. Everyone is doing what they do best," she added.

General Manager of Agriculture at Houston's Farm, Shaun Heidrich, said it was hoped the system would replace onerous manual testing and data collection, taking some of the guess work out of many daily decisions.

“We will effectively have a digital map of conditions across the whole farm, allowing us to forecast, predict and plan in a way we’ve never been able to before. We’ll be able to make more accurate decisions around irrigation, pest control and harvesting,” Mr Heidrich said.

Sense-T and its partners will work closely with farmers throughout the trial, seeking feedback on the new sensing technology, the app design and how they would like the technologies developed. Engineers will stress-test the technology to confirm its durability and telemetry capacity.

The Alpha Trial is just one part of the Sense-T program, with extensive research diving deep into specific challenges in viticulture, aquaculture, beef, dairy and water management. Around 100 scientists from UTAS and CSIRO are involved in the projects, which have also involved the installation of hundreds of sensors.

Sense-T was recently awarded \$13 million in funding by the Australian Government as part of its Tasmanian Jobs and Growth Plan.

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**Sense-T** is based at the University of Tasmania (UTAS). It is creating a real-time digital view of the state’s economy, drawing data from public and private sensors and combining it with other important data sets. Data can then be available through online tools and smart phone apps that support people to make better decisions. Sense-T is building a shared data resource that will be available to businesses, governments, researchers and communities. Sense-T is a partnership between UTAS, the Tasmanian Government and CSIRO. It is also funded by the Australian Government.

**Serve-Ag** is Tasmania’s leading agricultural advice and product supply company specialising in production agronomy and agricultural sustainability. The company has been offering advice and delivering a wide range of agricultural products and services to Tasmanian clients since 1976. Serve-Ag is about people and science. Innovation and strong relationships underpin reliable supply of products, agricultural technology, research and advice to agribusiness clients across a range of industries.

**Sirca** is an Australian Big Data knowledge infrastructure company that supports financial market research and analytics for over 600 customers globally and works across the university, business and government sectors. Our Big Data capability is now being deployed in agribusiness (in partnership with the Tasmanian Sense-T program) and a range of other sectors.

**Grey Innovation** is a cutting edge, engineering technology commercialisation company with proven results across a number of industries. It provides a unique product development and commercialisation service, from the initial technology commercialisation strategy through to design, testing, technology innovation, manufacture and market penetration. Its current projects include the development of the world’s first bionic eye with Monash University.

**nSynergy** is an information management and technology firm and specialist SharePoint consultancy. Established in 2002, it now has staff located in Hobart, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, London, New York, San Francisco, Mexico City and Shanghai, delivering services to companies all over the world. It is an accredited provider of services for Microsoft Office 365 and an expert in developing online collaboration solutions.

**Houston’s Farm** is a grower of fresh baby lettuce and herbs, nestled in the beautiful Coal River Valley of Southern Tasmania. Lovingly nurtured, picked and washed these tender leaves form the inspiration for an innovative range of fresh, ready to eat salad products which are enjoyed throughout Australia.