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FUTURE FARMING: \$103.5 MILLION BOOST FOR NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND PRACTICES

A \$103.5 million package to boost research and modern farming practices was released today under *Future Farming*, the Brumby Government's \$205 million strategy for new services and growth in Victoria's agricultural sector.

Agriculture Minister Joe Helper said the new initiatives were part of the Brumby Government's commitment to delivering services that keep pace with 21st Century ideas and technology.

"The Brumby Government is taking action for rural and regional Victoria and the *Future Farming* strategy will enable our farm businesses to become more productive, competitive and sustainable as they enter an era of unprecedented change," Mr Helper said.

"It will position farmers to meet the challenges ahead through new investment in modernised services, greater access to technology and research, improvements to the regional freight network, and more targeted support for farming communities."

Mr Helper said new technologies and practices are central to the future growth and development of Victoria's farm sector.

He said the \$103.5 million package to boost productivity through technology changes in farming practices was the centrepiece of the \$205 million *Future Farming* strategy.

"The future prosperity of farm businesses hinges on our farmers having access to, and being able to implement, the latest developments in agricultural research," Mr Helper said.

"Our farmers have an impressive track record in productivity growth, despite the many difficulties faced. Through this funding package the Brumby Government will help ensure farmers meet future challenges and remain competitive in domestic and overseas markets.

"The package includes improved GPS access for farmers, assistance to capture the benefits of modernised irrigation infrastructure and support for the dairy industry by building new research and development capability to aid on-farm system improvements.

"It also includes the creation of Farm Services Victoria, a new division in the Department of Primary Industries."

Mr Helper said the Technology and Farming Practices package included:

- \$77 million over four years (then an additional \$23.2 million per year) to expand agricultural research, development and practice change services in Victoria, including the development of new generations of drought, cold and salt resistant crops and improved plant and animal disease control;
- \$8 million over four years to modernise service delivery to farmers through Farm Services Victoria – including more tailored and targeted assistance to support increased take-up of new technologies;
- \$2.3 million over two years to help farmers make decisions to capture the benefits of irrigation infrastructure improvements as part of the *Food Bowl Modernisation Project* in northern Victoria;

- \$4.87 million to provide a high accuracy global positioning system (GPS) to enable more precise farming practices – this includes \$1.47 million over three years through *Future Farming* and \$3.4 million for related infrastructure through the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF). More than 70 base stations will be added to the 30 existing base stations to improve positioning accuracy from 10-20 metres to a potential 2cm across Victoria;
- \$8.57 million over four years to ensure dairy farmers have the information and technology they need to boost annual industry productivity growth to 3 per cent, through the application of new techniques in areas such as water-use efficiency and agronomic management; and
- \$2.71 million over five years to undertake stakeholder engagement and to implement, monitor and further develop initiatives outlined in this strategy. The Government will also establish a future farming stakeholder reference group.

“Over the past eight years, this Government has worked hard to build on the strength of regional communities and economies and unlock the potential for growth,” Mr Helper said.

“There is now a solid foundation on which to grow Victoria’s primary industries and the *Future Farming* strategy will provide the services and support that farmers and their families need to prosper in the years ahead.”

For more information on *Future Farming* visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au/futurefarming