



MEDIA RELEASE

Innovative Software Set to Enhance Farming Techniques

Innovative software developed by the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts and CSIRO with input from pastoralists, is set to enhance property management techniques throughout Australia's rangelands.

The Meat & Livestock Australia supported project delivered world first VegMachine software that allows users to improve their capacity to record, monitor and communicate changes in land condition across their properties.

The software is used together with satellite data and human experience to allow pastoralists to monitor short and long term changes in ground cover across large extents of their properties.

NRETA senior rangeland scientist and VegMachine project leader Luke Peel said the software would also benefit pastoralists through an improved capacity to promote, understand, and where necessary change their management activities and evaluate its effect on the basis of scientific data.

"The software has been trialled at 33 properties across Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory with strong, positive feedback from users," Mr Peel said.

"The key to the software is a viewing tool that has the capability of focusing on areas of interest within a property and run specific analyses to see how the land has changed over time and plan the most suitable management plan for future use.

"This could include the strategic planning of new fence lines, new water points or monitoring grazing effects on the land and evaluating management decisions for the best desired outcome.

"So the software is basically allowing pastoralists to not only properly analyse their land but plan accordingly."

Mr Peel said all participants in the VegMachine pilot project have expressed their enthusiasm for the software and satellite data to progress and grow into a tool that will strongly aid their property management decisions.

"Future uses of VegMachine for Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory vary to an extent," Mr Peel said.

"This is primarily because of the different issues, such as climate, spatial data needs, and regulatory requirements that pastoralists face in these regions and the resources available to implement.

"VegMachine has also generated a great deal of interest from pastoralist representative groups, private companies and government agencies throughout Queensland, NT, WA and NSW, with these parties all showing interest in facilitating on some level the extension of the software to the rangeland management community."

Ends

Media Note – For more information contact Luke Peel on 8999 4809

Issued: 1pm Monday, 3 July 2006