

Smartphones and cloud computing the key to farmers' future

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Smartphones are set to replace tractors as a farmer's most useful tool and cloud computing will be just as important as rain clouds for WA's grain growers.

They were some of the themes that emerged at the Grain Research and

Development Corporation's research update held in Perth earlier this month.

Much of the two-day conference focused on innovation and smarter farming techniques, such as the better use of gathering and interpreting weather, paddock and crop data.

In his keynote address, Canadian broadacre [farm](#) expert and GMO advocate Robert Saik outlined 10 trends affecting agriculture over the next decade.

They include the need for GMO technology, bio-engineering and continuing improvements in robotics, drones and 3D printing.

"We're going to need all kinds of agriculture technology including genetic engineering if we're going to ensure global food security going forward," Mr Saik said.

He also referred to disruptive technologies and the advances such as the low-cost [CRISPR](#) gene editing process that can slice out portions of genomic material, enhance it, and put it back in to exactly the same position.

"Plant breeding has advanced more in the last five months than in the previous 5,000 years," he said.

Another important change he outlined was the need for growers to get their farm data into the cloud and manage it via a smartphone or hand-held device.

"What you're really doing here is starting to think about putting your entire farm in your pocket so you can manage it in real time. That's what you should be looking at," he said.

Harnessing innovation is a key goal of WA's grain industry. The industry plays an important part in WA's economy with some 14.5 million tonnes harvested last year and 95 per cent of that exported.

That output is set to grow, with the Grain Industry Association of WA (GIWA) having set an ambitious goal of doubling the value of the WA [grains industry](#) by 2025.

The need to continuously collect and analyse farm data was emphasised by Tammin farmer Brad Jones who said the soil on his farm was sampled at hundreds of spots every three years to help make better decisions.

"We don't just look at our yield maps and think they're a pretty picture and hang it off the fridge like a three-year-old's kindy panting," he said.

"We have to really look at our data because that's telling us what our paddock is actually doing."

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