




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Agriculture Industry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (10.09 am): Queensland farmers have always been early adopters and beneficiaries of technology. Whether it is advances in growing techniques, new varieties of crops or new methods of animal husbandry, our primary producers have always been ahead of the curve. That is why we have an agriculture sector that not only weathered the COVID-19 storm but also has come out stronger than ever—an industry that has risen in value every year of the pandemic to now be worth more than \$23 billion of GDP.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to delivering better services to farmers. That is why we are investing \$140 million in research development and extension. Farmers are also asking for help in harnessing new technologies to make them more agile and resilient as we continue our economic recovery from COVID-19. That is why the Palaszczuk government is developing a network of smart farms to help drive research, innovation and demonstrate agtech solutions to the sector.

The Gatton Smart Farm precinct is a \$9 million partnership with Hort Innovation that will see new infrastructure on site such as climate controlled glasshouses, retractable roof protected cropping structures and coldrooms with the latest controlled atmosphere technology. Producers and agribusinesses will be able to take part in trials demonstrating the newest forms of agtech. Work is similarly underway on the Smart Cropping Centre at Emerald.

My department has also been meeting with businesses across the agriculture supply chain throughout Queensland over the last few months and is now compiling an agtech road map. Some of the work that DAF is doing in this new field is already bearing fruit. Staff in Toowoomba have developed a robot that is helping them understand how to use fertilisers better. The robot takes 3D scans of plants, allowing researchers to identify which type of fertiliser formulations supply just the right amount of nutrients and when the crops need it. The end result is less environmental contamination and better yields. The Palaszczuk government is committed to delivering better services to our farmers. Helping farmers embrace the agtech future will drive the growth of good jobs in farming and enhance the great lifestyles of regional Queenslanders.