



Minister Gail Gago

Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

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Grape threat put to the test

The State Government is expanding the development of a world-leading soil DNA testing system to help keep the State's grapevines free of phylloxera.

The project will also investigate how to apply the system to other pests and diseases that impact on the State's horticulture and cropping industries.

The system is attracting overseas interest after a recent presentation in Bordeaux, France, and the additional \$500,000 in State Government funding will accelerate its commercialisation.

Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Minister Gail Gago said the campaign to retain SA's phylloxera-free status would be strengthened through this funding.

"Further testing will allow the technology to be commercialised sooner, and delivered to industry to protect our phylloxera-free status," Ms Gago said.

"With phylloxera occurring interstate and overseas and the potential for it to come in on imported vine material or soil, we need to keep our eyes on developing further safeguards.

"South Australia has some of the oldest vines in the world that are famous for producing our premium wines, and we need to be ever-vigilant to protect this priceless resource."

The DNA soil test will help to protect our important grapevine industry – an integral part of the State's \$1.8 billion wine industry – and is in the State Government's Premium Food and Wine policy, which is part of a series of policies aimed at Building a Stronger South Australia.

The simplified test will also help wine regions around Australia and the world combat the pest.

Ms Gago said the funding would help fast-track testing of the system; establish the commercial testing service in consultation with the Phylloxera and Grape Industry Board of South Australia (PGIBSA) in 2016, and assist in expanding the tests to a range of other pests and diseases.

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The additional investment in the research brings the total investment in the phylloxera project to \$2.05 million.

Grape phylloxera is an insect that feeds grapevine roots, with the use of tolerant rootstock the only way to manage infested vineyards. The emphasis in South Australia is on ensuring the pest doesn't enter the state, but there is no cost-efficient testing for its presence in soil.

“At present, the only way to identify phylloxera in a vineyard is to take a shovel and dig up roots of the vine and visually inspect them,” said Alan Nankivell, Chief Executive of the Phylloxera and Grape Industry Board of SA (PGIBSA).

“It is our vision to develop a fail-proof alternative via rapid testing with the South Australian Research and Development Institute's (SARDI) soil diagnostic service, and tests so far have been very promising.”

The State Government through SARDI is co-funding this three-year project with PGIBSA, the University of Adelaide, Victoria's Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Plant Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre, Department of Primary Industries NSW and Adelaide company Rho Environmetrics.