VIRTUAL FENCE PROTECTS WINE INDUSTRY

A cutting-edge vineyard cyber monitoring system, designed to keep South Australia's wine industry free of devastating pests and diseases such as phylloxera, was launched during December.

Funded by PIRSA and Vinehealth Australia, Project Boundary Rider (http://www.vinehealth.com.au/projects/project-boundary-rider) creates a virtual boundary – or geofence – around vineyards and allows users to monitor the movement of people entering vineyards through a smartphone app.

Pests such as phylloxera can be spread by machinery or on shoes and clothing worn by people travelling between infected and non-infected areas. The app notifies vineyard owners when anyone crosses their property line.

Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Minister Leon Bignell said the innovative system was a first in biosecurity for the wine sector nationally.

"It will protect vineyards from pest and disease threats and provide critical intelligence about the movement of people coming in and out of properties," Mr Bignell said.

"Wine is one of South Australia's key export industries and we grow about 50% of Australia's grapes.

"Historically we have an enviable reputation globally for the strength of our biosecurity systems and Project Boundary Rider will take it to another level."

Vinehealth Australia CEO Inca Pearce said the geofencing technology will enable growers to better integrate an important farm gate hygiene practice of recording visitor movements into daily operations.

"It means growers can remotely record the arrival and departure of visitors as part of their day-to-day management, which is essential in preventing damaging pest and disease incursions in our vineyards," she said.

Growers receive an immediate notification when someone has entered a vineyard, while visitors with the Boundary Rider app are greeted on their smartphone with a welcome or instructional message.

Information from app users is uploaded to create an electronic log book accessible to the owner of the vineyard.

The pilot, which runs until mid-2017, has attracted strong support from winegrowers.

Those taking part include Chapel Hill Winery, Charles Melton Wines, D'Arenberg, Dorrien Winemaking, Gemtree Wines, Henschke Cellars, Noon Winery, Scholz Estate, St Hallett Wines, Torbreck Vintners, Wirra Wirra Vineyards and Wright Vineyard Trust.

The pilot is being supported by the McLaren Vale Grape, Wine and Tourism Association and Barossa Grape and Wine Association.

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