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Vineyards fenced in cyber space

NIGEL AUSTIN

A NEW vineyard monitoring system designed to keep South Australia's wine industry free of devastating pests and diseases was launched yesterday.

The cutting-edge vineyard cyber monitoring system – funded by the State Government and Vinehealth Australia – creates a virtual boundary or geofence around vineyards and uses smartphone app technology to monitor the movement of people entering vineyards.

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

"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 per cent of Australia's grapes."

Vineyard owners are alerted when anyone crosses their property line, a critical defence against pests such as phylloxera which can be spread by machinery or on shoes and clothing worn by people travelling between infected and non-infected areas.

The pilot project is being rolled out to 30 of the leading wine producers in McLaren Vale and the Barossa Valley and runs until mid-2017.

They include Chapel Hill

Winery, Charles Melton Wines, D'Arenberg, Dorrien Estate, Gemtree Wines, Henschke Cellars, Noon Winery, Scholz Estate, St Hallett Wines, Torbreck Vintners, Wirra Wirra Vineyards and Wright Vineyard Trust.

Vinehealth Australia chief Inca Pearce said the geofencing technology enables growers to better integrate an important farm gate hygiene practice of recording visitor movements in daily operations.

The smartphone system will protect vineyards from pest and disease threats

LEON BIGNELL