

Telco Fund to improve rural infrastructure

WA government launches \$22m telco fund to improve infrastructure in rural areas. The State Agricultural Telecommunications Infrastructure Improvement Fund will be used for investment in telecommunications infrastructure and other technologies that will support agribusinesses in Western Australia.

The State Agricultural Telecommunications Infrastructure Improvement Fund will be used for investment in the development of telecommunications infrastructure and other technologies in regional areas of Western Australia.



Commerce Minister Michael Mischin said the improved connectivity will allow agribusinesses to develop a more "agile supply chain" through ecommerce and make use of applications readily available. "It's not just about the phone reception now; it's the ability to send and receive data where farmers can manage their equipment, paddocks, and staff remotely," Mischin said.

The telecommunications fund is part of a wider \$75 million Infrastructure Investment Fund for agriculture infrastructure across regional WA, through the Royalties for Regions \$350 million Seizing the Opportunity Agriculture initiative.

Regional Development Minister Terry Redman said investments in improved mobile and internet coverage, knowledge management systems, wireless technologies, and computer-aided or controlled devices will help drive the future economy of regional Western Australia.

"The ability of organisations and businesses to understand and fully participate in the environment in which they operate will ensure they optimise the success of their businesses and wider agricultural industry," Redman said.

Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Lewis believes access to high-speed internet is a necessary precursor to future business improvement and productivity gains, and to re-establishing WA's competitiveness.

In 2015, the University of New England (UNE) began to digitally transform a 2,900 hectare commercial farm called Kirby-Newholme into a "smart farm" thanks to access to the fixed wireless service. This has allowed the soil, light, and weather sensors fitted throughout the Kirby farm to send a continuous stream of data to a remote cloud-based computing and analytics service.

Those communities that understand, adapt, share and ultimately exploit digital infrastructure and technology are more likely to achieve better social and economic outcomes.

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