



# The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

## Minister for Primary Industries

---

### MEDIA RELEASE

---

Monday 2 February 2015

#### **AGRICULTURAL ROBOTICS STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**

NSW Primary Industries Minister Katrina Hodgkinson has welcomed the first students to a unique agricultural school, the first of its kind in the world.

The inaugural IEEE RAS (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Robotics and Automation Society) Summer School on Agricultural Robotics, has attracted 60 of the world's top agricultural roboticists, from the United Kingdom, the United States and around Australia, to the University of Sydney to discuss future directions for the globe's horticultural and farming industries.

"The Summer School on Agricultural Robotics is bringing together leading academics from across the world to educate and foster collaboration among the next generation of researchers and industry leaders," Minister Hodgkinson said.

"Robotics has the potential to play a significant role in improving the efficiency of existing agricultural methods and in introducing fundamentally new methods.

"Autonomous systems are currently being developed for tasks such as pruning, thinning, harvesting, mowing, spraying, and weed removal.

"Systems are also being developed that collect valuable real-time information that will enable new ways to estimate yield and reduce pesticide and herbicide use."

Minister Hodgkinson said it is a wonderful opportunity the next generation of engineers to exchange ideas, learn from and inspire one another.

"Agriculture is a critically important sector and this is a fantastic opportunity for the world's leading scientists, who are as passionate about innovation in agriculture as I am, to be here among a group of people focused on advancing the field of robotics in agriculture," said Ms Hodgkinson.

"Robotics will be one of the key emerging technologies contributing to advances in Australian food production in the near future.

"This school is the perfect time to collaborate in developing new ideas and technologies that can significantly improve our agricultural production systems in the future."

Professor Salah Sukkarieh, Director of Research and Innovation at the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies Australian Centre for Field Robotics, says automation can increase efficiency and yield.

"The Asia-Pacific region is looking to Australia for farming and agriculture solutions and there are discussions on Australia becoming the food bowl of Asia."

"We are currently developing autonomous systems for tasks such as pruning, thinning, harvesting, mowing, spraying, and weed removal.

"Systems are also being developed that collect valuable real-time information that will enable new ways to estimate yield and reduce pesticide and herbicide use," Professor Sukkarieh said.