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SEPWA seeks to improve data availability for farmers

Farmers in the Esperance Port Zone could soon have access to high speed internet connections.

The South East Premium Wheat Growers' Association (SEPWA) is behind the move to further investigate the concept of a farm scale Wi-Fi to keep farmers connected.

Project Officer, Nigel Metz said mobile devices are now an integral part of farming.

“Farmers use them for live tracking of machinery, to access Apps and other valuable information which is pertinent to the running of their farming businesses.

“Unfortunately the mobile phone network which services WA grain growers is patchy in coverage and struggles to cope with current demand levels.

“It has created a major bottle neck for technology adoption going forward and is holding farmers back from maximising its potential.

“As more and more farmers adopt this technology and further technological advances come to the fore, there is a necessity to investigate new methods for them to have a data connection,” said Nigel.

The Council of Grain Growers Organisation (COGGO) recently approved funding to the value of \$37,231 to SEPWA for the project entitled “Farm scale Wi-Fi - the future of data for WA grain farmers”.

The project will test the potential application of farm based data Wi-Fi transmission which is aimed at ensuring grain growers will be able to access information and communication tools while in the paddock.

SEPWA will work collaboratively with the State Government of WA to conduct on ground testing of a wireless data network concept that will be connected to the optical fibre communication network.

The data network will use wireless transmission technology to revolutionise data connection speed and coverage.

Nigel said initial testing would commence next year in the Esperance region and it will investigate options available for data transmission at a farm level prior to installing a data transmission test service which will be tested for reach and reliability.

He said the project would also investigate the potential for an entirely new business model which would see farmers to co-invest in their own local data network.

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“Under a system like this, a main tower would be created and individual farm businesses may be required to invest money to build their own on-farm infrastructure to access the service.

“It’s early days and if it is successful, it could revolutionise agriculture throughout the state and have the capacity to accommodate the ever increasing data requirement of farmers and rural communities,” said Nigel.

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