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PADDOCK MAPPING TARGETS WEED CONTROL

Smart technologies are being used by Dr John Heap of SARDI to map the weeds in a paddock to better target spraying.

The work which is being funded by SA Grain Industry Trust and GRDC has the ultimate aim of cutting herbicide costs by using less herbicide and by using expensive herbicides only on the tough weeds.

It is particularly suited to herbicide resistant weeds such as annual ryegrass and wild oats.

Dr Heap is using a range of methods to map weeds including various sensors using different light spectra to differentiate weeds from other plant material.

Most recently he has developed a remote control plane to take digital photographs of the paddock. Similar approaches have been successfully used overseas. He has successfully flown several target paddocks and the results look very promising.

The mapping technologies when used with variable rate spray technology will allow different parts of a paddock to be sprayed at different rates or not at all depending on the weed density. It lends itself particularly to summer weed control and will be demonstrated at three sites over this summer/autumn.

South Australia aimed to become a leader in this weed mapping technology. Other States were concentrating on disease mapping for the similar purpose of reducing costs

“It all goes to demonstrate that Australia is at the cutting edge of smart technologies and its farmers were eager to see these improved methods continue.” Dr Heap said

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