

## SA GROWER

# Ag embracing tech future

## POTATOES SA

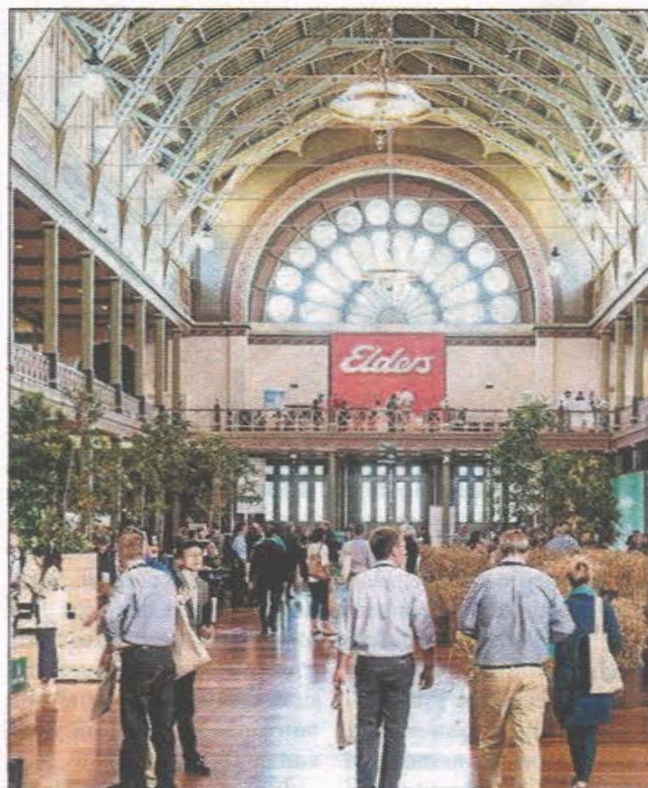
BY ROBBIE DAVIS, CEO

ADVANCEAG, South Australia's first AgTech Adoption Showcase event, was held on February 24 at the Adelaide Showground.

Presented by Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA), its objective was to drive innovation and its uptake by primary producers.

It provided an opportunity for 300 delegates (primary producers, researchers, government) to hear and share ideas through case studies on cutting edge technologies from local, national and global sources.

Supported by Platinum sponsor Elders Ltd with event supporter, the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce, key speakers included Dr Astorre Modena from Terra Venture Partners ([www.terravp.com](http://www.terravp.com)), and Mr Darren Thomas, CEO of Thomas Foods International (TFI) ([www.thomasfoods.com](http://www.thomasfoods.com)). Dr Modena founded the Israeli start-up venture capital fund which is focused on improving the quality of life for people through clean



**HISTORY:** EvokeAG was held in a Melbourne in the 1879 World Heritage listed building Royal Exhibition Building.

technology, efficiency and sustainability.

Most of the fund's companies are focused on energy efficiency and storage, rather than the traditional cleantech fields such as solar

power.

Mr Thomas spoke of the 2018 fire which destroyed the family-owned company's previous facility at Murray Bridge. The company has turned this catastrophic

problem into a unique opportunity which would have otherwise not been realised.

He commented that the food processing industry was on the cusp of a new era in its utilisation of technology.

For TFI, this means re-building a new 'flagship' plant with all the advances from blockchain technology to electronic ID and robotics.

The several-hundred-million-dollar abattoir would have a processing capacity of between 1200 to 1400 cattle a day and be the most advanced in Australia.

The South Australian agribusiness sector supports some 152,000 jobs and contribute \$19.7 billion to the state's economy.

Adopting innovation and advancement in the field of AgTech is essential to increase the productivity, growth and sustainability of our primary industry sectors.

Panel sessions, discussing the barriers to this, were a highlight of the event.

I wrote an article here in 2019 about Agrifutures Australia evokeAG.

In 2020, I am again.

The importance of the

uptake of smart technologies in agribusiness is increasing and this year's event again in Melbourne's Royal Exhibition Building on February 19-20 did not disappoint.

So incongruous to consider challenges and transformative advances for future farming in an 1879 World Heritage listed building.

More than 1300 delegates and 100 speakers from eight different countries attended this sell-out event which is aiming to help us achieve a vision of "collaborative thinking to change the future".

Industry knows that it must embrace disruption and is seeking out and strategically investing in all forms of new technologies; and it is the millennials who are directly influencing agribusiness. Sustainability in all its guises, the value of 'food waste', and the narrative behind the food we eat are the growth sectors.

Speaker Mr Frank Terhorst, Bayer's head of crop strategy said that agriculture was facing several challenges including adaptation to climate change and feeding a growing middle-class

population with different dietary needs. And now on to money. AgFunder's founding partner, Mr Michael Dean, provided insight into Australia's investment in agri-food technology which has seen record growth over the past three years up by 83 per cent to a total investment of \$90.3 million. As impressive as this may seem, our agricultural technology entrepreneurs must be further supported for Australian Agribusiness to remain globally competitive. This will be in the form of foreign capital.

This is not new. Australian agriculture has always relied on external funds and to truly take advantage of AgTech, attracting this capital will be a priority for all of us in agribusiness.

However, any technological idea or innovation must be accountable and must deliver on the key criteria of productivity, profitability and sustainability. We must ensure this.

Otherwise it's just an idea. Perth will host city the third AgriFutures Australia evokeAG, on February 16-17, 2021.