$150,000 to improve soil health for potato industry

The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) has commenced a $150,000 research project to enhance the productivity and sustainability of the nation’s potato industry through a focus on soil health.

The one-year project is funded by Hort Innovation with in-kind contributions from TIA. It will provide tangible benefits to potato industry levy payers around Australia through the development of extension materials and identification of priorities for future research, development and extension (RD&E).

TIA Research Fellow and Project Lead Dr Robert Tegg said the project aimed to help Australia's potato industry achieve long-term sustainability and ensure productive and profitable businesses.

“The first part of the project involves an extensive review of existing research about soil health for the potato industry, to identify knowledge gaps and areas for further investigation. From this we will consult with industry experts to identify a plan to guide future investment in soil health RD&E for the industry,” Dr Tegg said.

“We will engage with the potato industry by identifying user-ready information, tools and technologies that can be implemented through existing communication and extension programs. This will provide growers with practical advice on improving their soil health.”

Dr Tegg said sustainable soil management practices were essential to ensure long-term productivity across the agricultural sector.

“There is a wealth of knowledge available on the topic of soil health. We want to help potato growers to increase their productivity by providing them with knowledge of what constitutes healthy and productive soils and where the current best practices are for improving soil health,” Dr Tegg said.

“Highly mechanised harvesting techniques, such as the ones used in potato production, can have a disruptive impact on soil structure. Effective management approaches are required to minimise repetitive soil disruption and aid with reformation of soil structure.

“The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture has a core focus on supporting a productive, competitive and sustainable Tasmanian agriculture sector through impact-driven RD&E. This project is an example of the work that we’re doing to help grow the industry sustainably.”
The highly experienced research team has disciplinary expertise across potato and vegetable pathology, soil science and management, microbiology and molecular biology. TIA is also collaborating with key national and international experts in soil health.

TIA is a joint venture between the Tasmanian Government and the University of Tasmania.

**Information released by:**

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