Media Release

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Global Agtech Investment in Barossa

Deep Planet has the world at its feet as it continues to revolutionise the international grape and wine industry through remote sensing and AI technology, but you won't find its Australian head office in a city high rise.

Instead, this global start-up has selected the Barossa in regional South Australia for its initial investment in Australia, this month appointing four positions with plans to expand further.

Former Wine Industry Suppliers Australia (WISA) chief executive officer and wine-tech evangelist Matthew Moate was the first local appointment for the company, leading the team in the global executive position of head of sales joining on the 1st February.

Moate has been consulting on wine-tech adoption for the past two years, which included supporting Deep Planet to build its initial network across grape and wine producers, industry and government. He has a long history in supporting the growing wine-tech landscape through helping innovative businesses to make connection and become trusted industry suppliers.

He will be joined by three other staff - two business development executive roles and a project and events coordinator. Initially they will be based in Tanunda's co-working facility, Workspace Barossa.

Deep Planet, founded by an Oxford University trio based in the UK and California, uses satellite imagery, AI and machine learning to analyse vine and soil health, eliminating labour intensive testing regimes to advise and optimise vine management and predict grape maturity for harvest. The company has an extensive roadmap, developed in conjunction with producers, to meet the needs of the industry in an ever-changing climate.

Deep Planet has supported a range wine producers and growers during its research and early commercialisation phase. After the first major commercial projects during South Australia's 2021 vintage with companies including multi-national wine producer, Pernod Ricard Winemakers, Deep Planet has the industry talking. Now, a range of producers, including some of the industry's biggest wineries across Australian and New Zealand, are engaging with the company.

Co-founder and chief executive officer Sushma Shankar said the Barossa location made sense for the company's national office, being a central location to other wine regions in South Australia, allowing Deep Planet to stay closely connected to the vineyards, growers and winemakers. But more than that, the location will be central to Deep Planet's southern hemisphere operations, research and product development adding further to the expected investment over the coming years.

"We want to invest and be seen in the regions as we are working with the wine industry and that's where it is based. We also wanted to show how a start-up doesn't have to be city-based," she said.

"With South Australia producing about half of the country's wine and the Barossa's high concentration of some of Australia's largest wine producers it was a good fit.

"South Australia is known for attracting tech start-ups and what we are doing at Deep Planet is taking viticulture and winery operations to the next level.

"By using satellite imagery, the technology can identify and forecast problems with disease, soil moisture and sugar levels, while also predicting grape tonnage by block and variety with 90 per cent accuracy.

"Essentially we are showing how space technology translates beyond the defence industry.

"With clients across Australia, New Zealand, Europe and the United States, it will highlight South Australia on a global scale and that is exciting.

"Securing the talent and expertise of a respected and knowledgeable wine industry professional like Matthew is a real coup for our business that is scaling rapidly. Having executive level staff now based across the UK, US and now Australia provides exceptional reach and scope to drive our plans forward."

Moate is excited by the challenge the position brings, leading the Deep Planet team locally along with the global sales strategy.

"Our wine industry competes on an international scale, and I've seen the cycles of boom and bust over my 20 odd years in the sector," he said.

"I am a firm believer that for Australian wine to remain globally competitive we need to embrace more technology; it isn't a choice it's a necessity.

"Working with the Deep Planet team over the past two years in a consultancy capacity has been immensely rewarding. I am humbled they are now putting their trust in me to grow their business, not just in Australia, but across the globe.

"Their commitment to investing in the industry, regions and people strongly aligns with my values and I look forward to the challenges ahead."

With South Australia's strong reputation for supporting innovation and ag tech, Regional Development Australia, Barossa Gawler Light Adelaide Plains, CEO Anne Moroney welcomes the announcement, which will deliver benefits across the region through employment opportunities, technical know-how while also supporting important sustainability goals.

"Our region plays a critical role in South Australia's wine industry that generates about $2 billion to the state's economy each year and produces almost 80 percent of Australia's premium wine, which is exported to more than 100 countries," she said.

"Attracting global innovators like Deep Planet, that bring cutting edge technology, aligns with our regional objectives in enhancing the operational efficiency, sustainability and also the excellent reputation of our world class grape and wine producers."

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Image
"Cheers to Deep Planets' investment in the Barossa with newly appointed Head of Sales Matthew Moate"