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## Media Release

### Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## National focus on agronomy in Hobart

More than 350 of Australia's leading agronomy scientists will be in Hobart next week to present their latest research findings on increasing agriculture productivity and sustainability.

Organised by the Australian Society of Agronomy, the focus of the 17th Australian Agronomy Conference is on building productive, diverse and sustainable landscapes.

President of the Society and Director of the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, Professor Holger Meinke, said the theme was chosen to reflect the role and importance of agronomy in all aspects of production agriculture and the wider environment.

"The theme is particularly relevant to this year's conference host, Tasmania, as new opportunities and challenges are arising through the substantial investment in new irrigation developments across the state," Professor Meinke said.

"The ongoing expansion of small-catchment irrigation schemes in Tasmania has focused attention on the need to proactively manage a range of issues emerging from the irrigation-based intensification of agriculture in Tasmania such as selection of crops to get the best returns and managing production on fragile soils.

"As part of the conference experts from around Australia and overseas will visit farms in Tasmania and discuss the potential for agricultural systems research to make the most of these opportunities and address future challenges."

The conference also has a strong global theme, with research focusing on global food security.

The new Director General of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT by its Spanish acronym) based in Mexico, Professor Martin Kropff, is spending this week visiting Tasmania's major agricultural regions prior to delivering the conference keynote address on Monday (21 September).

His talk will consider how agronomy can help develop a global food system to feed more than nine billion people by 2050, and possibly up to 11 billion in 2100 with limited resources, depleting aquifers in several regions and a changing climate.

"Though the obstacles to improving agricultural productivity may vary according to context, the approach that must be taken is global," Professor Kropff said.

"Each individual innovation represents only an incremental improvement, but in combination with others and in the right context, they can become transformative."

The conference will also feature talks by:

- Professor Jerry Cherney (Cornell University) - Advances in new animal forages.
- Dr Steve Phillips (International Plant Nutrition Institute) - Achieving sustainable improvements in nutrient efficiency with precision agriculture.
- Dr Tina Acuna (University of Tasmania) and Dr Jim Pratley (Charles Sturt University) - Repositioning education in agriculture.
- Dr Colin Piggitt (University of Western Australia) - Improving crop productivity through zero tillage.

Innovative technology that models crop yields in response to management and environmental conditions is now available and is increasingly being used by agronomy scientists to help improve yields.

To capture this increasing interest, a 3D crop modelling workshop will be held during the conference to provide a hands-on demonstration for scientists interested in using the tool.

Conference delegates will also get the opportunity see and talk with some of Tasmania's agriculture innovators by attending one of [four field trips](#) to visit Tasmanian farms on Wednesday 23 September.

For more information on the conference program visit [www.agronomy2015.com.au](http://www.agronomy2015.com.au)

The 17th Australian Agronomy Conference Twitter hashtag is #agronomy2015

### **Information released by:**

The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture

Phone: 03 6226 6216

Email: [tia.comms@utas.edu.au](mailto:tia.comms@utas.edu.au)

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