Moving beyond our reliance on the resources sector, the Western Australian economy seeks prosperity through new industry development. The largest and most important of these sectors is the agricultural sector. Israel’s innovation in AgTech has assisted to transform desert terrain and water-starved pastoral regions into territory for fertile and high yield agricultural production.

Mr John Cluer, AICC(WA) Chief Executive introduced the inaugural Technology Series AgTech event by emphasising the Chamber’s role in brokering Israel’s knowhow into WA, particularly at this time when Israel is delivering new and impressive AgTech around the world.

Professor Peter Davies, globally renowned as a leader in fresh water ecology and water resource management research, placed context into the presentation through discussion of agricultural yield within a warming, drying environment. With a current global population of 7.5 billion people to feed, and the need to double food production by 2050, the role of science and technology cannot be understated.

Professor Davies discussed elements beyond productivity such as the protection of natural resources and ecosystems, food security, climate change and incident biodiversity threats as examples of humanitarian risk.
At a local level, Professor Davies submitted that Western Australia’s interest in AgTech can be represented in terms of economic opportunity. The Agricultural sector is already worth 30,000 jobs, and an $8.7 billion contribution to State GDP. Sharing the example of UWA research farms, he demonstrated Research and Development outcomes from crops, grazing systems and farm management education that all fed into the growing productivity of local agriculture. He also emphasised the importance of collaboration in the field of agricultural and veterinary science across the academic sector, citing the CSIRO’s work across a number of academic institutions as an example. Professor Davies concluded that stronger collaboration will enable Western Australia to translate research into better management and policy for AgTech.
Mr Ben van Delden, an alumnus of an AICC AgTech Trade delegation to Israel, and Head of Markets and AgTech, KPMG, shared his Israel experience and insights into the evolution of AgTech in Australia.

With a passionate belief in driving prosperity through an AgTech future, and a visionary pathway for Australia’s global contribution, Mr van Delden observed Israel’s macro-economic approach towards solving problems that was driven by Israeli culture and supported by Israel’s business ecosystem. He suggested that AgTech was both a disruptor and an enabler.

“We need to lean in, maintain and enhance product yield. Australia is the seventh largest exporter of food in the world. The global opportunity for AgTech from the private sector estimated to be approximately US$189 billion in the period to 2022, in terms of efficiencies, new products and waste reductions. However to improve the value of the agricultural sector we need to make the sector a more attractive investment proposition. Agtech investment struggles to compete with Fintech because the return periods associated with product development and monetisation are longer.”

Further delving into the elements of productivity, Mr van Delden discussed the transition and affordability of ownership within Australia’s agricultural industry. He noted greater corporate investment, generational change, and non-traditional roles within the sector for data analysis and digitalisation as contemporary trends. He also discussed the decision support stage that positions AgTech “at the farm input stage”, optimising the value chain that then follows.

Having participated in the AICC AgTech delegation to Israel, Mr van Delden drew on the educational and social structures of Israel that feed into the nation’s innovation culture. He noted the ability to challenge, the safety associated with trial and error (“it is safe to fail, and learning experience is valued”), and the collective sense of pride that is bedded into the nation’s ethos. Mr van Delden
was inspired to write a paper called “Dial up the Chutzpah” that summarised his observations and learning’s for Australia.

Mr van Delden further emphasised the urgency associated with Israeli business culture. “There is a word called ‘Yalla’, borrowed from colloquial Arabic, which essentially means ‘do it now’. Living in an environment where security concerns are real risks there is a feeling of “don’t wait until tomorrow, because tomorrow might never arrive.”

“Australia has equivalent science to Israel, and in some cases we have better science. The fundamental difference is that our science sits in publications on bookshelves, and Israel’s science is visible in start-up business enterprise”.

Mr van Delden provided examples of how science was respected and supported by access to capital. He challenged Australian policy makers, and noted some progress in redirecting Australian innovation funds into incubators for AgTech research. He advocated for academic exchange between Australia and Israel, further endorsed Professor Davies call for academic collaboration, and noted the involvement of Universities in measuring the impact of the sector’s development. “This is a collective responsibility and a call to refresh the incentive model”.

More information on realising Australia's AgTech potential is also available in the KPMG 2016 report on Powering Growth: Realising the potential for Australia AgTech.
The third speaker, Mr Tom Goerke, Director of Innovation Centres Australia for Cisco Systems, shared example of new business models and technologies, centred around networking and communications.

He noted that the pace of innovation outstrips the business structures and operating environment.

“A technology cycle may now be a period of one to three years. However a regulation cycle may be a period of five to ten years and an infrastructure cycle has traditionally been as high as fifty to one hundred years”.

This lack of alignment can stifle the optimisation of AgTech investment.

Using Cisco project examples such as Network Topology, Mr Goerke presented his vision for an AgTech future.

Noting business models such as “Farming as a Service” he proposed that cybersecurity, robotics, automated agriculture, and digital infrastructure will prominently feature.

Mr Goerke further demonstrated data connectivity, showing how industrial scale networks and data analysis would feature in AgTech Research and Development.

Ensuring a common theme for the event Mr Goerke also concluded “no one company can do it alone” and joined the call for cross industry collaboration within the AgTech sector.
The Honourable Alannah MacTiernan, Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food; Minister assisting the Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade, Government of Western Australia

In the course of panel discussion and audience questions, further issues were raised regarding public policy and industry development. The Hon Alannah MacTiernan MLC. Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food was present and endorsed AgTech development. “We are keen to invest, and to bring Universities and business together with Government to develop new AgTech industry based on ideas and innovation”.

The AICC(WA) will further develop an AgTech profile with future events already scheduled to showcase Israel’s leading science and technology for crop and animal farming.

A future delegation to Israel in 2018 is also planned to introduce WA industry leaders to new business opportunities and technology development.

In addition the AICC(WA) is hosting an Indigenous Business Leaders delegation in September 2017, which will also incorporate Agtech and desert farming within its itinerary.

About the presenters:

**Professor Peter Davies**

Professor Peter Davies, as special host sponsor for this event, will facilitate our world leading panel of speakers. Peter is an internationally renowned agricultural expert in river ecology and currently Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the UWA. He was foundation director of WA’s Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management and during his tenure at UWA, has won many major project grants, including a large and significant ARC Linkage Grant, enhancing the UWA’s standing as a world-class research institution. Peter will set the context for this AICC(WA) Cisco Technology Series event on Agtech and outline UWA’s pivotal role in the changing agribusiness landscape through rapid technology adoption.

**Mr Ben van Delden**

Ben van Delden is a KPMG Partner, AgTech Leader and Head of Markets for Australia. He is also leader of KPMG’s SmartAgriculture stream and their Internet of Things business. Ben has worked in markets across the globe and recently visited Israel on an AICC AgTech trade delegation. He will keynote the event by presenting a thought provoking view on the AgTech question Australia must confront; “Do we want to be a builder, a buyer, or a bystander?” Ben will argue that there are some great Australian AgTech innovations making an impact nationally and internationally, such as; online marketplaces for labour and assets, herd management technology to improve quality, yields and farm efficiencies, robots and drones. Yet despite Australia’s competitive advantages, Ben believes there remains a significant opportunity for Australia to do more and make itself a global builder of Agtech technologies and innovation.

**Mr Tom Goerke**

Tom Goerke is Director, Innovation Centers Australia for Cisco Systems. He will outline how Cisco is applying digital transformation to create smart agriculture and how Cisco is seeing exponential digital transformation across the agricultural industry. He will site examples such as; digitising newly connected broad acre farms with new age sensors, allowing farmers to optimise their assets thereby creating and being part of Smart Agriculture in Australia. Tom will expand on this, as well as the numerous partnerships Cisco are driving with Industry, Universities and Data61.
The AICC(WA) acknowledges its sponsors, whose generous support contributes to AICC(WA) thought leadership in the development of WA’s AgTech future;