



 Universal Field Robots founder Jeff Sterling. Picture: Mark Cranitch.

QLD BUSINESS

Brisbane-based Universal Field Robots has developed technology to help pick avocados

STEPHANIE BENNETT, The Courier-Mail

May 27, 2018 3:42pm

 Subscriber only



ADVANCES in agricultural technology are set to change the way many farmers run their properties, with robotic machines heading into the fields.

Brisbane-based Universal Field Robots, founded by local engineer Jeff Sterling, is busy developing outdoor robotic machinery with the potential to shake up the long-standing industry.



“We decided to put our focus into developing a robotic product that can be useful on the land, and one of the first areas we researched into was avocado picking.”

It led to the development of an autonomous robotic avocado picker, which can attach to the company’s three-tonne robotic Caterpillar excavator.

Not only can does the avocado picker have the capability to identify whether fruit is ripe for picking, the equipment operates at a similar speed to manual picking, but with the potential to operate 24/7 and without the added labour costs or dangers.

Mr Sterling, who was one of the 2500 experts and exhibitors to attended last week’s International Conference of Robotics and Automation in Brisbane, said the next phase of testing of the equipment was set to begin this year on avocado farms near Esk, Childers and Bundaberg.

For the machines to get to a commercial sale level, Mr Sterling said there would be “long conversations” with insurers and safety agencies, but said it was something he was confident would eventuate in future. “We’re really committed to being a Queensland business,” he said.

“There are some challenges – the randomness of an outdoor environment compared to indoor factories for example – but the transformation of machine learning and artificial intelligence is overcoming some of those factors.”

But Mr Sterling’s focus for Universal Field Robots is not just within the agricultural - industry.

He said he has been in discussions with construction companies to potentially build solar farms, a notoriously rigorous and repetitive process, as well as possible collaborations with mining giants such as Newcrest Mining about developing robotic mining equipment.

Innovation and Tourism Industry Development Minister Kate Jones said the conference had given Brisbane innovators a chance to showcase their ideas to a global audience.

“Being the first city in Australia to host the world’s peak robotics and automation conference is recognition of the fact that we’re leading the way when it comes to innovation,” she said.





BUSINESS

BREAKING NEWS

CITY BEAT

QLD BUSINESS MONTHLY

PR



guide to stocktake

Headaches and long nights
are common.

BY **MYOB**



10 new business tax myths

SETTING up a new business means being
tech savvy. But when it comes to tax,
startups often get it wrong.

SPONSORED BY **MYOB**



**17 commonly overlooked ATO
deductions**

MAKE sure you're getting everything
you're entitled to.

SPONSORED BY **MYOB**

BROUGHT
TO YOU BY



SPONSORED STORIES

FIVE GUARANTEED SKILLS TO GET YOU A JOB

Sponsored Content



Menu

Read the Paper

 Rewards

Hi Hannah



BUSINESS

BREAKING NEWS

CITY BEAT

QLD BUSINESS MONTHLY

PR