

Aerobotics expands its Series A funding with Paper Plane Ventures

South Africa startup Aerobotics has announced the expansion of its Series A funding round to \$4m, through a signed deal with Paper Plane Ventures. The announcement came during Aerobotics new office launch event on Wednesday, 27 February 2019 in De Waterkant, Cape Town.

James Paterson, Aerobotics co-founder and CEO commented: "We are grateful that Paper Plane Ventures has put their faith and capital in our company, which we will use to expand our growth in South Africa, the United States and around the world and increase our ability to help farmers and partners in the agriculture industry."



Aerobotics processes data from drone and satellite imagery through its proprietary artificial intelligence software to discover and analyse problems, pests and diseases affecting individual trees or vines on a farm.

Other announcements from the evening included the launch of the startups first natural step to automated, accurate yield estimation with a new tool for farm yield management.

Currently in development, the yield management tool that is being built within the Aeroview app allows farmers to select a yield sample within their orchard, capture fruit counts and fruit size and get a report on the size distribution and number of fruits.

This yield management tool helps farmers make informed decisions on how much fruit to thin during the early stages of the season to optimise their yield when it is time to harvest. This technology will be commercially available in the United States at the beginning of the 2019 growing season.



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"Farmers traditionally have faced challenges recording the data they capture in the field when scouting and analysing yield samples," said Nasreen Patel, Aerobotics head of product . "We believe this new field management technology that is being built right into Aeroview will empower farmers to collect more accurate data in-field and make more informed decisions on thinning their fruit and, ultimately, optimising their yield."

New appointments announced

Lindsay Griffin has joined the company as head of business enablement. Griffin, a chartered accountant, joins Aerobotics from Coast2Coast Capital where she was an investment associate focused on capital raising and investments in the healthcare and consumer products sectors in South Africa, Europe and Australia. Griffin will be focused on streamlining the corporate finance structure and enabling the business to be scaled efficiently.

"I am excited about joining Aerobotics and playing a key role in ensuring that the company's growth continues," said Griffin. "While Aerobotics has achieved a lot of success over the last few years, I think people should expect even bigger things to come in the near and long term."

Additionally, Aerobotics announced that two members of the executive team are moving to California to grow the company's business development around the United States. Chief commercial officer, Andrew Burdock and chief platform officer, Stuart van der Veen will be based in Los Angeles, where Aerobotics is set to launch its offices in the second quarter of 2019.

Aerobotics currently has two business development managers on the ground in the United States and is working with 10,000 acres of crops.

"Stuart and I are excited to make the move to the United States and expand on the success we have already achieved there. By growing our physical presence, we are confident we will be able to bring our leading technology to farmers and partners in the agriculture industry in a way that helps them meet the immediate and long-term challenges on their farms," said Burdock.

Building on the Cape tech ecosystem

During the launch event, Wesgro CEO Tim Harris made remarks about Aerobotics and the importance of keeping its headquarters in Cape Town. Harris spoke about Cape Town tech ecosystem being the largest on the continent, with 450 tech firms employing between 40,000 and 50,000 people.

"Cape Town has the status of the leading tech hub on the continent and is the ideal growth market for startups like Aerobotics. Aerobotics has managed to merge the Western Cape's traditional agricultural industry with tech initiatives and is creating new opportunities by tapping into local talent and bringing global talent to South Africa."

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