

# Robotics in poultry production to transform sector

Robotics in poultry production can be expected to make the sector more efficient, but producers should help to shape how the technology is employed.

MARK CLEMENTS

The market for robotics in agriculture is forecast to reach US\$11 million by 2023, according to Research and Markets. While, for many, robots may seem the stuff of science fiction, they are already appearing in chicken and egg production.

Discussions at trade show SPACE suggested that robotics would not only transform the efficiency of livestock production but, rather than being a technology to be feared, their use could make agriculture more attractive, transform the role of livestock producers completely, and take on activities that are repetitive or dull.

It may not simply be the lives of producers that are improved. Where poultry and other livestock are concerned, use of robots could improve welfare, through reducing contact with human beings.

The evolution of the agricultural robotics industry is expected to gain pace. Poultry and egg producers must keep abreast of change and adopt new technologies and, as the sector continues to mature, producers will need to guide what exactly the robots of the future will be, and how they will fit into the production methods society deems acceptable.

## Friend or enemy?

While there may be numerous positives to employing robots on the farm, there is also the risk of various negatives. For example, society is al-

ready ever more disconnected from livestock production and use of robots may hasten this trend. To counter this, producers will need to become better communicators, not only to allay concerns expressed by the public but also to ensure that robots exactly carry out the tasks required of them.

Among robots already being commercialized for poultry production at SPACE were:

### ✓ Octopus Scarifier

The Octopus Scarifier is said to be the first robot of its kind in the world, designed to aerate litter and monitor facilities.



**The Octopus Scarifier improves litter quality, monitors house conditions and can apply biocides in aerosol form to reduce bacterial load.** Mark Clements