

Making an impact through strategic innovation

As an independent, not-for-profit organization, Vineland's success relies on real and tangible impacts for the horticulture industry. This past year, Vineland updated its innovation strategy by reviewing its accomplishments since its inception in 2007 and determining where the organization should go in the future.



*Tania Humphrey, Vice President,
Research and Development*

"The agricultural innovation space is a busy one, where each crop has its own opportunities and potential. Part of our strength lies in knowing where the greatest needs are and where we can create the most commercial impact to benefit the sector," said Tania Humphrey, PhD, Vineland's Vice President of Research and Development.

That's what led Vineland to narrow its innovation focus to three key areas in its new strategy: plant products, automation and environment. "If you want to drive profitability, competitiveness and sustainability for the industry, you have to make sure your resources are directed to what will make the most impact and that they aren't spread too thin," she added. "We needed to make some bold calls in key areas and clearly define what we're going to do."

Canada relies on global supply chains for much of its produce and their fragility has become more apparent through the COVID-19 pandemic, reinforcing the need for production closer to home. Vineland has a strong foundation to help find and adapt new varieties of produce and plants thriving in the Canadian climate and growing seasons.

Challenges around horticulture's mobile, seasonal workforce has highlighted the need for more automation in the sector and although Vineland has been working on these types of solutions for several years, the need for practical, implementable solutions has become more acute.

Fundamental to making everything happen will be government support for innovation and a stronger role for businesses to help move technology into primary food production.

"There are many industries and businesses that are unaware that agriculture is a growth sector and if they do know, they have no idea how to get into this market — and that's where an organization like Vineland is playing an important role in bringing together partners," she said.

This story and many more can be found in [The Innovation Report 2020-2021](#).