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Aerial Farm Aid

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Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) may be flying over America's heartland soon to help farmers increase production, improve protection and better manage their crops through the early detection of diseases, infestations and other conditions affecting optimal crop production.

UAI International of Grand Forks, N.D., UAVision of Dayton, Ohio, and the University of Dayton-led Institute for the Development and Commercialization of advanced Sensor Technology (IDCAST) are teaming to develop and market UAV-based solutions for agricultural applications.

"It is our goal to have conceptual solutions tested by the end of 2012 and robust solutions available within three years," UAI International President Tom Kenville said during the announcement made at the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International convention in Washington, D.C. "The combination of skills, talents and resources that this team has helps ensure in the end we will reach our goal of providing cost-effective UAV-based solutions for agricultural problems."

The group will work on delta-wing UAVs between four and seven pounds that can fly at speeds of more than 100 mph and stay stable in high winds. The UAV will incorporate small form factor hyper-spectral sensors and RF sensors that can detect things such as crop damage, infestations and even soil compaction.

"We have a real opportunity here to do something that would have a significant impact on helping the nation's farming community with the problems they face every day and that puts their ability to produce a good crop at risk," said IDCAST Director Larrell Walters. "Imagine being able to have early detection of problems so they can be treated before it spreads. This type of awareness will help the farmers manage the risk they face every season by giving them the information they need to be proactive and more effective."

UAI International is a North Dakota-based 501(c)(3), the first of its kind in the UAV industry, that enables and performs UAV based testing, training, research and program management. UAI has extensive industry experience and looks to help partners grow in the commercial applications of this new UAV industry.

In its four years, IDCAST has created 289 new jobs, garnered more than \$90 million in awards for research and \$6.2 million for commercialization, created five startup companies in Ohio and attracted five additional sensors companies to the state. The estimated impact for the state of Ohio is \$140 million.

UAVision is a small business that manufactures UAVs in Dayton, Ohio. It manufactures two classes of UAVs weighing 4 pounds to 45 pounds. UAVision also offers UAV flying services and vehicle flight preparation services for customers. The company's mission is to bring affordable UAV solutions to market.

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