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## The Promise — and Challenges — of Ag Tech Are Clear

By [Rob Dongoski](#), Global Agribusiness Industry Leader, [Ernst & Young](#)

*Dongoski, a speaker and "[The Agriculture Perspective: Successes and Challenges in Building a Digital Strategy](#)" panel moderator at the inaugural [PrecisionAg Vision Conference](#), considers the far-ranging impacts technology is likely to make on global agriculture and food.*

Successful technology is not just about gadgets, data, science advancements, or the infrastructure that enables all of these to function. Success is measured more by how these interact with each other, bring a differentiated

### The Agriculture Perspective: Successes and Challenges in Building a Digital Strategy

This expert panel will focus on the challenges faced by the industry related to rapidly evolving and emerging data and precision ag technology, including providing value to producers, digitizing the producer experience, convincing producers to share data, and opportunities to partner and share data between agribusinesses.

#### Moderator



**Rob Dongoski**  
Global Agribusiness Industry Leader  
EY

#### Panelists



**Ernie Chappell**  
President and CEO  
EFC Systems, Inc.



**Rich Benner**  
Digital Commerce Strategist  
Monsanto



**Brendan Deck**  
General Manager – North America  
NuFarm



**Dave Gebhardt**  
Global Director, Strategic Partnerships  
GEOSYS

experience to the customer/user, and drive value – real or perceived. We have all seen buzz words come and go, but the prospects of the Internet of Things (IoT), analytics, and machine learning appear to be more grounded in evolution than revolution.

While some of these technologies are not entirely new, the ability to produce them at reasonable costs and scale are what may spur meaningful innovation to unlock value in today's agriculture economy. We have all heard that population growth to nearly 10 billion people will

require 70% more food on only 10% more land. While this sounds daunting, we have also seen estimates that we waste 30% of our food and that farmers in emerging markets achieve only 30% of their yield potential. If the application of technology is harnessed appropriately and supported by the right infrastructure and policy, I am confident it can close these gaps.

However, we should also be prepared that increased technology use may introduce new challenges as well. For example, it is conceivable that at some point a consumer in a grocery will routinely be able to use their mobile phone to read the label on the beef in the freezer section and know where the cow was raised, how it was fed, and how it was harvested. While this may satisfy the consumer's desire to "know their food," it may also raise challenges related to privacy, supply chain transparency, and bioterrorism. I can certainly envision a day in the very near future where IoT, analytics, and machine learning will create significant value – real and perceived – to the everyday farmer.

Wide-scale technology adoption and impact will need to adapt to the diversity of farming across the world. The 5,000-acre U.S. farmer is certainly different than the subsistence farmer in Ghana. However, just like Africa "leapfrogged" telephony with the mobile phone, will technologies be available in agriculture that allow for a similar leapfrog effect that will transform the subsistent farmer at a rapid rate?

The investment in ag tech is evidence of the impact to be created and the transformation underway in this industry. But, never forget the long-lasting principle – "know thy customer" – if you truly want to make a difference. The promise of ag tech is clear, but the ability to scale and drive adoption and farmer profit ultimately will determine if the potential is realized.

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