

SA's Aerobotics raises \$600k funding from 4Di, Savannah Fund



By [Tom Jackson](#)

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South African aerial data analytics specialist Aerobotics has secured R8-million (\$602,000) in seed funding from Cape Town-based VC firm 4Di and Kenya's Savannah Fund.



Launched in Cape Town in 2014 by James Paterson and Benji Meltzer, Aerobotics has developed data analytics platform Aeroview, which uses satellites, drones, and artificial intelligence to help farmers optimise crop performance and reduce input costs.

It provides farmers with the data to track crop health, growth and moisture levels down to individual plants, and to action this data through variable-rate fertiliser maps and yield estimates.



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Having initially focused on proving itself useful to various stakeholders in the agricultural value chain, Aerobotics has now turned its eye to disruption of the crop insurance sector. Paterson said the R8-million investment would take the startup to the next level.

"We couldn't have asked for better partners than 4Di and Savannah who between them have a wealth of entrepreneurial experience, and we look forward to building our existing operations in Africa, as well as expanding further into the global precision farming space," he said.

4Di Partner Anton van Vlaanderen believes the potential of drone technology to impact on existing business models is plain to see.

"The global drone industry is already sizeable and highly lucrative. Spectral imagery and the resultant data and analysis thereof will add considerable value to a number of sectors, and the team at Aerobotics possess a unique blend of exceptional skills and talent that will mount a serious challenge in a developing growth industry," he said.

Aerobotics has built a solid client base of farmers and agricultural consultants in South Africa and the rest of the continent, as well as in Australia and the UK. Paterson said the cash injection will be used to expand Aerobotics' sales and marketing capabilities, adding that they are currently working on finalising a number of pilot projects with large agricultural, finance, and insurance companies around the world.

Savannah Fund Managing Partner Mbwana Alliy said it was only a matter of time before the farming industry embraces drone technology.



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"We're looking to help Aerobotics scale across sub-Saharan Africa, where drone use is still in its infancy. It will be particularly exciting to watch drone hardware costs fall to smartphone price levels, allowing even small-scale farmers to take advantage of their capabilities," he said.

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ABOUT TOM JACKSON

Co-founder @DisruptAfrica. Tech and business journalist in Africa. Passionate about the vibrant tech startups scene in Africa, Tom can usually be found sniffing out the continent's most exciting new companies and entrepreneurs, funding rounds and any other developments within the growing ecosystem

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