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## Ceres Imaging provides 'whole picture' of a crop's health

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**  
For the Capital Press

Ceres Imaging is breaking new ground thanks to its eye-in-the-sky technology.

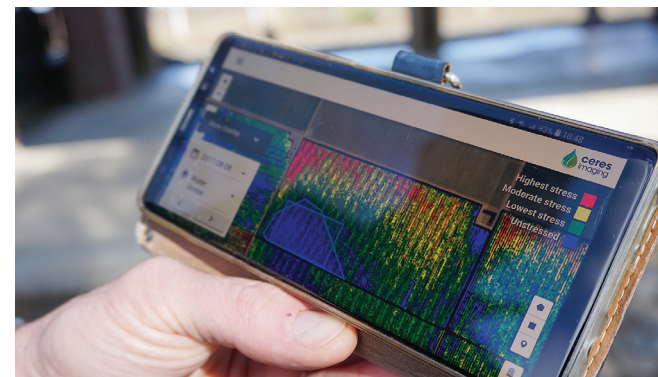
The Oakland, Calif.-based company combines high-resolution aerial imagery with advanced analytics that help farms, orchards and vineyards optimize irrigation strategy and performance.

Ashwin Madgavkar began Ceres Imaging as a graduate student in 2014, inspired by emerging technology in spectral imagery and its potential to help drought-stricken California growers, focusing primarily on specialty crops in the Central Valley.

Today, Ceres Imaging is a venture-backed company delivering irrigation management solutions to growers across the U.S., Australia and Latin America. Its plane-based image capture helps detect acute issues, track and measure progress and improve farm performance.

"To equalize the performance of an entire field you must be able to see the whole picture," Vice President John Bourne said. "It enables growers, for instance, to find out why a certain segment of an operation is not performing like the rest."

Geared to operations of 1,000 or more acres, Ceres Imaging delivers precision irrigation solutions including pinpointing irrigation issues that affect uniformity such as clogs, leaks and pressure failures before they impact crop health along with recommendations to refine irrigation strategy based on the unique goals of the operation. By integrating its industry-leading aerial imagery with the in-field sensors growers already use, they make it easy to make



**A grower examines results Ceres Imaging gathered in flight. Information includes such factors as chlorophyll levels, water stress, sprinkler distribution uniformity, thermal maps and tree counts.**

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decisions with farm data all in one place.

"It's not just a great tool; it's a whole toolbox," Bourne said. "A lot of times we are able to identify things two or three weeks before they are visually noticeable, often before they impact yield."

The results are so detailed that growers can assess crop health at the individual plant level so farmers are able to quantify the impact of their decisions in the field. The system, geared to integrate seamlessly with most farm management software, delivers imagery with recommendations of specific actions to be taken within 24 hours of flying.

Ceres Imagery's proprietary algorithms result in valuable data that helps growers uncover opportunities to improve uniformity and make better irrigation decisions for their businesses.

Bourne estimates that growers managing 20% of

all specialty crop acres in the Pacific Northwest are now using Ceres on a weekly basis, and the numbers are growing every year.

"There's a lot going on in the background but for the grower it's actually very straightforward," Bourne said. "It's just recommendations of things you can do that morning and that week to improve your uniformity and get ahead of yield issues."

The cost ranges from \$10 to \$25 per acre over the course of a season. Planes usually fly weekly or biweekly depending on the situation, enabling farmers to track their progress and engage on an ongoing basis.

"While there are real challenges facing farmers, the other story right now is technological innovation that growers can harness," Bourne said. "Growers today have access to detailed snapshots of how their operations are performing, making it easier than ever to get ahead of yield issues and make data-informed decisions to improve growing outcomes."

Ceres raised \$23 million in its latest Series C funding round, bringing the total monies raised over the company's history to just over \$50 million.