

Energised by agribusiness

Learning about everything from food science to future proofing is firing up our best and brightest high school students for careers in the primary sector.

As one of four sisters on her parents' dairy farm, Bex Watson thought she'd had enough of growing up around cows.

But taking part in the Agribusiness in Schools programme at St Peter's School in Cambridge, Waikato, has given the 17-year-old a new-found enthusiasm to go dairying.

The Year 13 student says the course has helped her learn more about current and future on-farm technologies, which she thinks make a career in farming more attractive, fun and enjoyable.

"What we learn in the course relates to what's currently happening in our primary industries," says Bex. "Stuff like the ProTrack automatic drafting system, automatic milking machines, Halter technology, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the latest innovations in farming. We've also done other Achievement Standards like future proofing and cashflow forecasting."

Agribusiness in Schools was created in 2014 after DairyNZ and other sector partners worked with St Paul's Collegiate School, Hamilton, to design an agribusiness course for New Zealand secondary school senior students.

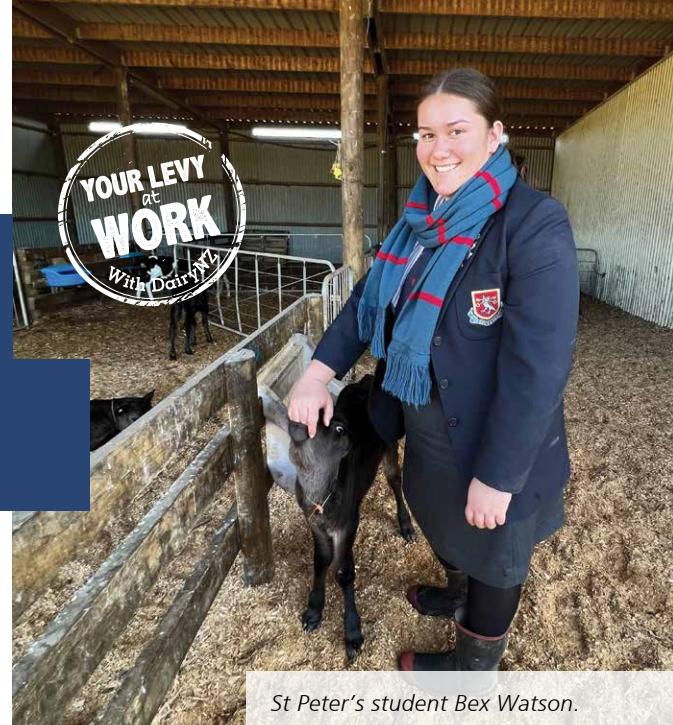
It's offered at NCEA Levels 2 and 3 and is designed for students who excel in science and commerce subjects. By 2021, the course was reaching 3216 students and receiving an enthusiastic uptake in schools nationwide (57% of them urban, 43% rural).

More students choosing agricultural careers will also help address labour shortages in the sector. The programme is led passionately by St Paul's staff Kerry Allen and Melanie Simmons, plus regional coordinators around the country.

"Access to the expertise of the DairyNZ team and resources ensures the programme has up-to-date, dairy-sector-specific information focusing on real-life issues, knowledge and skills. This ensures students understand individual agriscience and agribusiness career pathways and how their skills can provide practical solutions to the sector," says Melanie.

Bex is off to Lincoln University next year to do either a Bachelor of Commerce or Agriculture, as she's interested in the both the practical and business sides of dairy farming.

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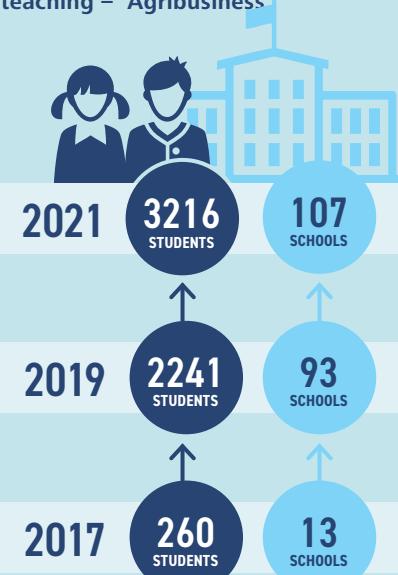
St Peter's student Bex Watson.

She's keen to encourage other students into the agribusiness course, so they can learn what's great about dairying too.

"It's super fun. You're outside, you're with animals and there's always something different during different seasons and times of the year."

By the numbers

There's been a significant increase in how many students are learning – and schools are teaching – Agribusiness



Spread the word

Know a student who might be interested in doing the course? Send them to agribusiness.school.nz