

DAIRY LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES CAREERS IN FARMING

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“Attracting young, keen individuals into the dairy industry is essential for the future of dairy farming within New Zealand,” says SAM O’NEILL.

The 22-year-old is one of seven on the Grassroots Dairy Graduate Management programme – a farmer led initiative with support from DairyNZ and Rabobank – that equips young dairy farmers with the skills to help fast track them into management and decision-making positions.

The hope is the programme will attract, develop and retain more university graduates on dairy farms. Sam joined in February and works fulltime as a farm assistant in Methven. As part of this programme, he completes weekly training modules alongside the other graduates.

“Every Tuesday we do a three-hour module, that might be on-farm or in a classroom. We get to meet professionals within the dairy sector such as vets, scientists, farm managers and owners,” says Sam.

The modules are designed to challenge the graduates in areas such as personal and financial development, New Zealand dairy industry fundamentals, pasture management essentials and environmental compliance.

“What I have enjoyed the most are the networking opportunities with professionals within the industry, and also the ability to apply the technical knowledge from university in a practical situation on-farm.

“I grew up on a lifestyle block in a rural area and many of my extended family are on farms, so I have been lucky enough to be involved working on farms throughout my childhood. However, the graduate programme has assisted with the seamless transition from university to working on-farm.”

Sam gained a Bachelor of Agricultural Science with First Class Honours from Lincoln University. His honour’s project modelled the production, environmental and economic outcomes, of two Canterbury dairy farm systems using Overseer and Farmax.

“It was awesome. I modelled one farm system that was representative of a current Canterbury farm system, and the other a future Canterbury farm system with the adoption of nitrogen loss mitigation strategies.”

Sam grew up on the Taieri Plains, just south of Dunedin, and attended Taieri College in Mosgiel. In Year 13, he took Agriculture, Maths, Biology, Chemistry and English.



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He knew from a young age he wanted a career in the agriculture sector but until he went to Lincoln, he was not sure what area he would specialise in.

“I did not think I would go farming when I finished university. I thoroughly enjoyed gaining in-depth knowledge in farm systems, plant, animal and soil science, but I also enjoyed the practical side of working on-farm.

“So, I thought I am going to go dairy farming, because I believe with the in-depth knowledge I gained at university – and the practical skills I have learnt and am developing – I have what it takes to grow within the sector.”

Sam says there are opportunities throughout the dairy industry for school leavers.

“If you have a good attitude, work ethic, and want to challenge yourself, the dairy industry will allow you to achieve your goals.”

KEY FACTS



- SAM O’NEILL IS ONE OF SEVEN ON THE GRASSROOTS DAIRY GRADUATE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME.**
- HE GAINED A BACHELOR OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE WITH FIRST CLASS HONOURS FROM LINCOLN UNIVERSITY.**
- SAM ATTENDED TAIERI COLLEGE IN MOSGIEL. IN YEAR 13, HE TOOK AGRICULTURE, MATHS, BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY AND ENGLISH.**

ONLINE



For more information on **career opportunities** within the **dairy industry**, visit **www.godairy.co.nz** and for more information on the **Grassroots Dairy Graduate Management Programme**, visit **www.dairygrads.co.nz**