PASSIONATE ABOUT FARMING

GRASSROOTS GRADUATE PROGRAMME

writer **PETER WHITE** // *photographer* **JOANNE McCLOY**

"Working with animals and being outdoors every day is amazing. Not many people have a job where they get the best of both worlds – the practical side, the theory side and meet some amazing people in the industry. You can't go wrong, really," says MARIA PERRIAM.

The 22-year-old is one of seven graduates on the Grassroots Dairy Graduate Management programme that connects recent graduates with high-performing farmers in the Canterbury region.

The highly regarded programme is designed to develop and retain university graduates in the agricultural industry.

Maria completed a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at Lincoln University and now works just outside Methven on an 850-cow dairy farm.

She attends weekly training modules and networks with the other graduates on the programme.

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

"They have been very good so far. We have had people in the industry who are passionate about what they do, like recently we had a vet come in who was able to relate to us," says Maria.

"We are all at different stages of how confident we are around certain aspects, so having these modules allows us to have free reign in asking questions and making sense of why we do certain things on farm. It is a really good pathway to grow and to understand different systems."

The programme gives graduates that extra bit of guidance coming out of university and going into their first full-time job.

"It is so good to have people to ring if you need support. The networking is amazing, from farmers to former graduates, which is a great way to keep moving forward in the industry."

Maria grew up in rural Southland. She started rousing in the woolsheds from the age of 14 but it was not until Year 13 at Menzies College – where she took Chemistry, Biology, English, Statistics and Art – that she found a passion for dairy farming when she went relief milking for a neighbour.

"Before then I really had no idea where I wanted to go. It was when I talked to my biology teacher and he asked me 'What do you love?' and we realised that was farming. I decided that's what I wanted to do and I looked into Lincoln and that's where I went."

The agricultural industry offers wide ranging opportunities for school leavers in so many different sectors. Maria says it is a good time to get into the industry.

"The dairy sector at the moment is really booming and there is a lot going on there. The older farming generation are looking for younger people to come in on farm and bring in fresh ideas as well.

"That is really positive to see and in the rural business space there are always people taking on grads. It is a very competitive environment so just be open to anything in the industry, rather than limiting yourself to one sector."

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>
> **MARIA PERRIAM**

KEY FACTS

- **MARIA PERRIAM** IS **ONE OF SEVEN GRADUATES** ON THE **GRASSROOTS DAIRY GRADUATE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME**.
- SHE HAS A **BACHELOR OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE** FROM **LINCOLN UNIVERSITY**.
- **MARIA** TOOK **CHEMISTRY, BIOLOGY, ENGLISH, STATISTICS** AND **ART** IN **YEAR 13** AT **MENZIES COLLEGE** IN **WYNDHAM**, SOUTHLAND.

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***