

Subject misconceptions challenged, leading to fulfilling career in the Primary Industries

22-year-old George Hyaiason was an “urbanised kid and full-on townie”, who grew up in Auckland and had no direct connection to the rural sector.

Written by Catherine Bryant, 12th December 2023

Raised in a family, where his father worked in IT logistics and his mother in school administration, throughout secondary school he found himself contemplating various career paths, from architecture to chiropractic.

At the age of 10, the family relocated to Tauranga, where Hyaiason attended Bethlehem College. In his final year, he found himself wavering and unsure of

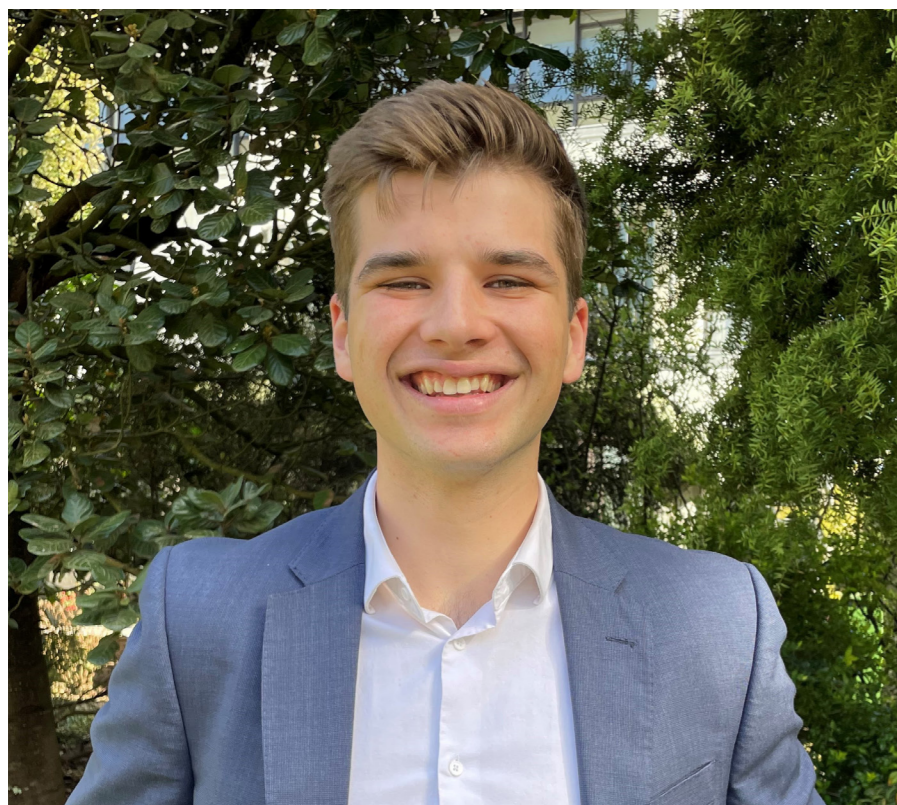
what he truly wanted to pursue after high school and it was his Agricultural and Horticultural Science teacher, Helen McKoy, who played a crucial role in steering him towards his decision, to pursue a degree in Horticultural Science at Massey University in Palmerston North.

On completion of his degree Hyaiason turned his passion and expertise into a

Farm Sustainability Consultant role at Ballance Agri-Nutrients, showcasing a smooth shift from academia to impactful professional work.

Hyaiason highly enjoyed his Agricultural and Horticultural Science class at Bethlehem College, finding great value in its hands-on approach, however despite this he held reservations about considering it as a potential career. These uncertainties stemmed from a misconception that the course was only for those who wanted to “muck around” and compounding this, many of his peers were choosing career paths in law, medicine, or accounting. Subjects that were generally perceived as being more prestigious academic pathways to take.

Mrs McKoy gave Hyaiason the insight to challenge this stereotype, emphasising that the field offers a diverse range of exciting, challenging, and intellectually stimulating careers. Under her guidance, Hyaiason began to see the vast potential and opportunities within the industry. Its real-world practical application gave him a clearer vision of possible career paths, unlike other broader fields, where the end goal seemed to be less apparent.



George Hyaiason, Farm Sustainability Consultant - Ballance Agri-Nutrients



George Hyaiason, and Owl Farm Manager, Jo Sheridan discussing Ballance's MitAgator App, which support farmers and growers with the latest science and scenario modelling

“From day one of my Agricultural and Horticultural Science degree, I knew from the get-go all the different jobs I could do. Unlike highly competitive fields where students vie for one or two top positions, I knew I would have plentiful opportunities presenting themselves as soon as I entered the workforce.”

During Hyaiason’s academic journey, which included pursuing his degree in Horticultural Science, he actively participated in the Massey Horticulture Society, eventually assuming the role of president for the last year. His personal goal was to promote the horticultural community as a welcoming, and vibrant club, organising social events such as wine tastings and apple pie night. The society also facilitated valuable connections, through inviting guest speakers, enabling students to engage with industry leaders, and potentially gain jobs or internships.

“Initially, our focus was on connecting individuals within the horticultural industry. However, as time went on, we attracted members from a range of different fields, who not only joined the club but also became integral members of the committee. Our collaborations extended beyond horticulture,

intertwining with university business and enterprise clubs.”

After graduating, Hyaiason took a somewhat unconventional path, working as a trapper and pest controller in the Tararua ranges. He thoroughly enjoyed this role, learning the tools of the trade, such as machine operation, gun handling and gaining valuable life-skills from working in the bush. The following year, a friend working at Ballance Agri-Nutrients presented an opportunity as a Farm Sustainability Consultant, a position he secured amidst competition from a number of applicants.

Hyaiason specialises in environmental policy and sustainable farm management practices. His role involves developing freshwater farm plans for farmers, a crucial aspect in the wake of new government regulations. The consultants at Ballance play a pivotal role in guiding farmers through the challenges and ensuring compliance with evolving environmental standards.

“I find great satisfaction in contributing positively to these farms. While they often already have a good plan in place, we can support a farmer’s environmental journey and future proof

their businesses. This is especially important in the often-unclear realm of environmental sustainability, given the multitude of challenges they face.”

Hyaiason highlights the importance of engaging a Farm Sustainability Consultant as a valuable means to document a farm’s journey, bridge any gaps, and receive support and guidance toward specific environmental goals. As consultants, they are aware of the value of their time and always prioritise the best interests of the farmers.

Hyaiason commends Ballance for its commitment to upskilling and providing ample professional development opportunities for its employees. The company’s trust in its employees allows Hyaiason the freedom to manage his own schedule while ensuring the delivery of quality work.

While long-term, Hyaiason plans a prospective move to Canada, his commitment to the agriculture and horticulture industry remains steadfast. Excited about the challenges and growth potential within the sector, he envisions contributing to the development of our world-leading food and fibre industry in the future.

“Amidst the growing demand from markets and consumers for reduced emissions, coupled with a need for increased product quality and value, the challenges in our industry are exciting. Rather than being in a stagnant environment, we find ourselves in a dynamic landscape that encourages constant evolution and growth”.

George Hyaiason’s journey from having uncertain aspirations to a Farm Sustainability Consultant is a story that should encourage other students to explore the exciting possibilities within the agricultural and horticultural science field, emphasising that the path to a fulfilling and impactful career may not always follow a conventional route.