

AGRICULTURE AWARDS

MPI SCHOLARSHIPS

writer **SARA CARBERY** // photographer **PETER McDERMOTT**

FFION WHITE was one of six tertiary students to receive an On Farm Support Science Scholarship last year, awarded by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) to help increase the number of on-farm advisers supporting farmers and growers.

Valued at \$5,000, the scholarship was a major help financially, says Ffion, but it also helped her make valuable connections within the industry.

"I had an amazing MPI mentor who invited me to various industry events and field days, which was helpful to get my name out there and get involved. This was especially important when it came to looking for job opportunities.

"The scholarship itself is also quite an honour, which can help you to stand out when applying for roles, especially graduate roles where so many people apply."

Ffion (22) completed a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at Massey University last year and is now working as a sales intern with Ballance Agri-Nutrients.

After spending two months at Ballance's head office, she is working alongside Ballance nutrient specialists in the field before going solo.

"Nothing beats being able to shadow other people before you go out into the real world and do it for yourself.

"My role is all about helping farmers improve their soil, grow better quality feed and become more efficient – which is really the foundation of the whole agricultural cycle. It ties directly into everything I'm passionate about and that's what motivates me every day."

Growing up in Bulls, where her dad manages a large sheep and beef operation and her mum is a vet technician, Ffion was naturally drawn to an agricultural degree.

"I'm really passionate about future-proofing New Zealand's agriculture industry and working alongside farmers to achieve that. Studying agricultural science felt like the right step to gain the knowledge I'd need.

"Plus, I think the people in this industry are some of the coolest around – if I can relate to them and help make their lives easier, that's a win for me."



As part of her degree, Ffion spent two summers working in the industry. In her first year, she interned as an environmental consultant with Atihau Whanganui Incorporation in Ohakune and in her second year, she worked on a sheep and beef station in Hawke's Bay. In her final year, she worked as an intern consultant with AgFirst.

"That real-world experience was invaluable and it also helped a lot with my university work and when applying for jobs."

In Year 13 at Feilding High School, Ffion studied Agriculture, Biology, Chemistry, Geography and Statistics.

"One of the great things about agriculture is that you don't need a specific background or to have studied certain subjects at school. If you're passionate about the industry, you can absolutely pursue this path without ticking any particular boxes beforehand.

"However, Feilding High School did have a really good agriculture programme, so this was a bonus going into the degree."

While she loved her time at university, Ffion says a degree is only one way to get into an on-farm advisory role. "I know of a few people that have gotten into my line of work with experience working on a farm or in agribusiness."

Her advice to school leavers? It's okay not to have a clear plan.

"Just keep following what you're passionate about – things will fall into place. Take every opportunity you can. Get involved, get to know people and build relationships."

And when it comes to applying for scholarships, back yourself and apply.

"You've got nothing to lose. There are so many opportunities out there for people studying agriculture."



Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



KEY FACTS



- **FFION WHITE** WAS ONE OF SIX TERTIARY STUDENTS TO RECEIVE AN **ON FARM SUPPORT SCIENCE SCHOLARSHIP** LAST YEAR, AWARDED BY THE **MINISTRY FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES**.
- SHE COMPLETED A **BACHELOR OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE** AT **MASSEY UNIVERSITY** AND WORKS AS A **SALES INTERN** WITH **BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS**.
- **FFION** STUDIED **AGRICULTURE, BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY, GEOGRAPHY AND STATISTICS** IN YEAR 13 AT **FEILDING HIGH SCHOOL**.

ONLINE



For more information on the **Ministry for Primary Industries' On Farm Support science scholarships**, visit www.mpi.govt.nz/on-farm-support-science-scholarships