



MEDIA RELEASE

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Interns bridging the gap

Finishing university and not quite knowing what to do next is a common challenge. But for at least two University of Adelaide Bachelor of Agricultural Science students, their next year will provide an insight into the careers available in applied agricultural research.

Rochelle Wheaton and Jamie Fortune are Hart Field Site Group and SARDI's latest intern recruits. For the next 12 months, they will work with the research organisations to learn more about the agriculture industry, the importance of research and the variety of careers available to agricultural science graduates. This is the first year the internship has been offered by Hart and the third year it has been offered by SARDI, which receives joint funding from GRDC and SAGIT.

Rochelle, who is from a family farm at Streaky Bay, says working with Hart is a good position to gain experience and networking opportunities and to be exposed to research in a more practical way.

"I remember always being interested in agriculture and jumping in the ute with dad at every chance I could get. I initially tried architecture at university but realised it was silly doing something I didn't love, so switched to the agricultural science degree," she said.

"This will open up a broad range of areas and is a stepping stone to see where I would like to go in a career in research."

Rochelle worked part-time for a private research company while completing her degree. She will begin with Hart in the first week of March based at Clare.

Jamie is eager to learn more about the diversity of roles available in applied research when he starts his internship with SARDI at the end of February.

Despite exposure to agricultural research and development through his father's career, Jamie also thought he would try a different career path after school, commencing study in economics and finance. He soon realised he preferred science and transferred to the agricultural science degree.

"It's funny how things turn out like that," he said. "In 2015, I did my honours around antioxidants in durum with Jason Able at the University of Adelaide. I was finishing up when I saw the SARDI internship which I applied for before going overseas.

"I'm really excited. I was looking forward to continuing my career in agriculture research and development but I wasn't sure which part. This is an excellent opportunity to try a variety of new things while developing a better understanding of the industry as a whole."

Hart research and extension manager Sarah Noack said there had been strong interest in the position.

"There was excellent interest in the position with numerous high-quality applications, confirming the need for this kind of project to bridge the gap in training from university to industry," she said.

SARDI research chief, sustainable systems, Dr Kathy Ophel-Keller said the program has attracted high-quality students.

“We are really excited to give the students an opportunity to be exposed to applied grains research as a career pathway,” she said.

SAGIT chairman Michael Treloar acknowledged the need for internship programs such as those offered by SARDI and Hart to help students transition into the workforce.

“These are great opportunities for students to be exposed to a range of careers and pathways and we are pleased Rochelle and Jamie have taken on this exciting challenge,” he said.

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