

# CAREERS IN HORTICULTURE

**A presentation to Year 13 students by Eamon Balle, from Pukekohe's Balle Bros Fresh Produce, inspired agronomist JAMIE WELLS to pursue a career in the horticulture industry.**

Jamie wanted to learn more about potato production after the talk and was offered a tour of the operation to gain a better understanding of how the company works. This was the catalyst Jamie needed to start as a junior agronomist/trial assistant with the company after he left school – and he hasn't looked back since.

In May, Jamie won the Pukekohe Young Grower of the Year competition. He and six others were tested on various challenges within the industry related to field and office work.

"It included practical assessments such as tractor driving and irrigation set-up – plus theoretical material such as auditing, pest disease identification, fertiliser analysis, business marketing strategy, a financial module and a speech presentation," says Jamie.

He works mostly in the Franklin District with potatoes, onions, carrots, spring onions, cereals and brassica crops, and assists with planting administration, auditing, quality control analysis and seed, chemical and fertiliser ordering.

"An agronomist is almost like a crop doctor. We do nutrition management, pest disease and weed analysis, in terms of the crops we are scouting. It is like being a consultant who looks after crops and checks the growth from seed to harvest.

"Pretty much every week I am out on farms, just walking through different crops, seeing how they are looking and if there are any ailments that are starting to show up within the paddock. Then I may recommend nutritional, or herbicide, or agrichemical products to the farmers, who will then apply that to their crop. I will check again a week later to see how it has come out."

Rather than going away to Massey University to study full-time, Jamie studied via correspondence while learning the business – similar to an apprenticeship. He graduated with a Bachelor of Agriscience (majoring in Horticulture) and has also completed intermediate and advanced sustainable nutrient management courses via correspondence. Horticulture, IT and Economics are the subjects he took in Year 13 at Pukekohe High School that have helped him the most.

If he had his time again, Jamie would add core science subjects – Biology and Chemistry – which he says would definitely help anyone moving into the industry. Jamie recommends school leavers who like the outdoors – and don't mind hard work – to consider a career in the potato/horticulture industry.

"Everyone comes from completely different backgrounds in this industry. If you are willing to learn – and be open-minded to anything – you can go far. There are opportunities for new people to come into the sector, whether that is in vegetables, fruit, viticulture or indoor cropping.

"To anyone interested, I recommend contacting either Horticulture New Zealand or Potatoes New Zealand, who can direct you to growers or to other areas of the sector where they are looking for new employees.."



**Potatoes**  
NEW ZEALAND

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JAMIE WELLS



## KEY FACTS



- **JAMIE WELLS** IS AN **AGRONOMIST** WITH **BALLE BROS FRESH PRODUCE** IN **PUKEKOHE**.
- HE WORKS MOSTLY WITH **POTATOES, ONIONS, CARROTS, SPRING ONIONS, CEREALS** AND **BRASSICA CROPS**, AND ASSISTS WITH **PLANTING ADMINISTRATION, AUDITING, QC ANALYSIS** AND **SEED, CHEMICAL AND FERTILISER ORDERING**.
- **JAMIE** STUDIED FOR A **BACHELOR OF AGRISCIENCE (MAJORING IN HORTICULTURE)** VIA **CORRESPONDENCE** AND HAS COMPLETED **INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED SUSTAINABLE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT COURSES**.

## ONLINE



For more information on career opportunities in horticulture, visit [www.hortnz.co.nz/people-jobs-and-labour](http://www.hortnz.co.nz/people-jobs-and-labour)

If you're interested specifically in the potato industry, visit [www.potatoesnz.co.nz](http://www.potatoesnz.co.nz)

And for more details on studying at Massey University, visit [www.massey.ac.nz](http://www.massey.ac.nz)