

# COMBATTING THE MAJOR ISSUES

## CLIMATE CHANGE ANALYST

writer **PETER WHITE** // photographer **DEAN NORRIE**

**FRANCESCA HARRIS-WIGHT** is proud to be part of a vital sector. Recent climate events have shown just how important it is to address climate change.

The 24-year-old works as an analyst at the Climate Change Commission, which provides independent advice to government on climate issues based on research and analysis of different factors.

Francesca has been in the role since August last year, after completing her Master of Agricultural Science.

"We also look at the bigger picture to make sure we understand the impacts of our advice on certain communities or households and the economy. I work in the land and waste team and am mostly involved in the agricultural side of things," says Francesca.

"Every day looks quite different to me. I can be talking to a number of different people, such as industry bodies like DairyNZ or Beef + Lamb NZ, or talking to businesses and non-governmental organisations about climate issues and policy impact on farmers and rural communities.

"I could also be reviewing some research around new on-farm mitigation technology or agricultural publications. It varies a lot. It is just a really cool place to work."

Francesca says she is constantly learning new things in her role and is surrounded by people who are experts in their field.

Even though she grew up in Christchurch, she was always interested in agriculture. Her grandparents ran a high-country sheep and beef farm, and when she was studying at university, Francesca decided she wanted to get into a mix of the climate, environment and agriculture sectors.

Before joining the Climate Change Commission, she completed her master's degree with help from a DairyNZ post-graduate scholarship. The scholarship funded her \$30,000 per annum, plus tuition fees, for two years. She was based in the DairyNZ offices in Lincoln.

"After finishing my degree at the University of Otago, I was looking for jobs and saw the opportunity for the DairyNZ post-graduate scholarship. I contacted

them and they accepted me. They asked me if I wanted to work on a dairy farm to get some first-hand experience, so I did that for a few months in Methven. I think getting that practical experience was the best thing I ever did for my role now.

"My master's was on modelling climate impact on a Northland dairy farm out until the end of the century and also looking at climate adaptation for farmers.

"That sparked a lot of my interest in climate change and those events up north a month or so ago just ring home how relevant it is."

Francesca attended Burnside High School. In Year 13, she took Chemistry, Physics, Biology, English and Calculus. Her advice to students leaving school who may be interested in climate change and the environment is to get involved as much as you can.

"If you are thinking this is something you are passionate about, then see what courses different universities or polytechs offer and go for it. Just explore anything that you think drives you."



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FRANCESCA HARRIS-WIGHT

### KEY FACTS



- FRANCESCA HARRIS-WIGHT HAS A **MASTER OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE**. SHE COMPLETED HER **POST-GRADUATE QUALIFICATION** WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF A **DAIRYNZ POST-GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP**.
- SHE WORKS AS AN **ANALYST** AT THE **CLIMATE CHANGE COMMISSION** AND WAS SUPPORTED BY **DAIRYNZ** THROUGH HER STUDIES.
- FRANCESCA STUDIED **CHEMISTRY, PHYSICS, BIOLOGY, ENGLISH AND CALCULUS** IN YEAR 13.



For more information on the work of the **Climate Change Commission**, visit [www.climatecommission.govt.nz](http://www.climatecommission.govt.nz)

For more information on career options within the **dairy sector**, visit [www.godairy.co.nz](http://www.godairy.co.nz)