

NUTRITION AND AGRICULTURE MERCING TWO INTEREST AREAS

writer **PETER WHITE** // photo **NICOLA WILHELMSSEN**

Combining fulltime university study with an innovative role at Silver Fern Farms has paid dividends for ELLA ZWAGERMAN.

Ella grew up on the family dairy farm in Southland and attended Southland Girls' High School. In Year 13, she took Chemistry, Biology, Statistics, PE, Health and English.

After leaving school, she went to the University of Otago and studied for a degree with a double major in pharmacology and toxicology and human nutrition, but soon realised she wanted to change course.

"I had a gap in my timetable and a broken leg from water skiing, so I took an interest paper in food science," says Ella.

"Pretty much after my first lecture I knew exactly what I wanted to do. I realised this is my passion so decided to change my entire degree.

"Now I am about to finish my Bachelor of Applied Science in consumer food science and nutrition.

"I consider myself really lucky to have found a degree that I was able to combine food nutrition and agriculture into one."

Ella did not realise how much she valued being a part of the agriculture industry until she got to university. She decided she wanted to pursue something that enabled her to work within the primary industry when she left university.

For the last year, Ella has been working for Silver Fern Farms as an innovation intern/junior food technologist.

"I help develop new products and assess the quality of current products in the New Zealand retail market, like the chilled and frozen burger ranges. At the moment I am working on a flavour extension to the chilled range."

Ella is grateful to have been awarded one of the Meat Industry Association (MIA) undergraduate scholarships, which is worth \$5000 for each year of study.

"I thought it would be great to be financially supported, and that money is so important, but I didn't realise the true value behind the scholarship.

"It is worth so much more than the actual dollars. MIA have also mentored me and helped me get my first internship, which led to my second internship

at Silver Fern Farms, now my job. It is amazing where opportunities can take you."

Combining fulltime study and her role with Silver Fern Farms requires lots of organisation.

"I juggle the two, sometimes well and sometimes I have to make sacrifices. But when I have the opportunity to pursue a job that gives me experience within the food industry and the red-meat sector, it is pretty easy to make some sacrifices here and there."

Ella's advice to school leavers is that it is okay to not know what you want to do. Not everything is going to come easy and you aren't going to get everything on the first go, whether that's a job or scholarship,

so back yourself but bounce back when things don't work out the way you expected them to.

She also says to always remember everything happens for a reason, so do what makes you happy and stay true to yourself.

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ELLA ZWAGERMAN

KEY FACTS



- **ELLA ZWAGERMAN** WORKS FOR **SILVER FERNS FARMS** AS AN **INNOVATION INTERN/JUNIOR FOOD TECHNOLOGIST**.
- SHE IS COMPLETING A **BACHELOR OF APPLIED SCIENCE** MAJORING IN **CONSUMER FOOD SCIENCE AND NUTRITION** AT THE **UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO**.
- **ELLA** HAS BEEN SUPPORTED IN HER STUDIES BY A **MEAT INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP**, WHICH IS WORTH \$5000 FOR EACH YEAR OF STUDY.



For more information on career opportunities within the red-meat sector, visit www.meatyourcareer.co.nz

2023 MIA scholarship applications open mid-October with a closing deadline of 28 November 2022, please visit www.mia.co.nz/join-the-industry/mia-scholarships/meat-industry-scholarship