

# POST-GRADUATE OPPORTUNITIES CAREERS IN THE MEAT INDUSTRY

writer **PETER WHITE** // photographer **ARABELLA SHEILD**

**SOPHIE RIDD** has taken every opportunity to increase her knowledge and gain work experience across the wider AFFCO meat processing operations.

In September, she began her new role as a production supervisor based at AFFCO's plant in Wairoa – just under two years after she first started with the company.

"My job is focused on ensuring that our yield, value and quality are all maximised within the sheep and beef processing departments," says Sophie. "I support the departmental supervisors and dabble in health and safety, compliance and HR. I learn a lot from my plant manager as well."

After taking Statistics, English, Agriculture, Sports Science and Geography in Year 13 at Feilding High School, Sophie went to Massey University. She completed her Bachelor of Agricultural Science degree in 2022.

In her final year, Sophie was awarded a Prime Minister's Scholarship trip to Chile to study agriculture for a month. She then joined AFFCO'S Future Leaders Graduate Programme.

"I applied for the programme heading towards the end of my degree. It was a pretty cool opportunity as I was exposed to various roles right across the business. It gives you a good chance to work out exactly where you want to end up in the company."

"In my first year, I spent time in supply chains, and sales and marketing at head office, and I didn't realise how much of an impact that would have when I got back to the plant.

"I also spent six months at one of our dual species (sheep and beef) meat works down in Christchurch, learning the different aspects of processing red meat. In the second year, I went back to that plant and ran a night shift overseeing our beef processing side as part of the programme."

Sophie says the red meat industry is huge and there are so many opportunities for school leavers.

"You don't necessarily need a farming background – just a good work ethic and to take a first step."

Sophie is proud to be one of the group of females in management succeeding in what has traditionally been a male-dominated industry.

"I was really fortunate at the Christchurch plant to have a female production manager who had a wealth of knowledge. It was really cool to learn from a female in such an influential leadership position. It is not that common but the industry is changing.

"Really, it is all about if you have got the interest and passion for it, then as a female you may as well go for it."

Thanks to a generous MIA Postgraduate Scholarship issued by the Meat Industry Association, Sophie was able to complete a Master of Business, Global Management and Marketing part-time through Lincoln University during her grad programme.

"It links in well with my career in the red meat industry. I was really fortunate to get the MIA scholarship this year as it came with financial support, mentorship and industry-related educational days.

"I got to attend the MIA conference this year which was a great networking opportunity with not just other scholarship recipients but important and influential people in the industry."

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Meat Industry Association

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**SOPHIE RIDD**



## KEY FACTS



- **SOPHIE RIDD** IS A PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR BASED AT **AFFCO'S** PLANT IN **WAIROA**.
- SHE HAS A **BACHELOR OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE** DEGREE FROM **MASSEY UNIVERSITY**.
- **SOPHIE** WAS PART OF **AFFCO'S** FUTURE LEADERS GRADUATE PROGRAMME AND WAS SELECTED FOR A **MIA** POSTGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP ISSUED BY THE **MEAT INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION**.

## ONLINE



For more information on the **Meat Industry Association (MIA) Scholarship programme**, visit [www.mia.co.nz](http://www.mia.co.nz)

For more information on **career opportunities** with **AFFCO**, visit [www.affco.co.nz/careers](http://www.affco.co.nz/careers)