

Agricultural student with five scholarships says success is a balancing act



DAVID UNWIN/FAIRFAX NZ

Farming is in the blood for Sam Pike.

A top agricultural student hailing from Bulls believes the busier you are the more time you have.

Sam Pike has received five scholarships, balancing his academic commitments with his role as a volunteer firefighter, young farmer, technology blog writer and internship with consultancy firm AgFirst.

The 2014 Feilding High School dux developed his passion for agriculture growing up on a Rangitikei farm and it seemed natural to pursue a career in the industry.

"My passion has always been for agriculture. It is definitely in the blood. My love of farming runs deep and a career in agriculture is my ultimate goal."

Pike doesn't know exactly where he'll end up in the industry, but an internship with AgFirst has attracted him to consultancy.

Working alongside environmental consultant Erica van Reenen, the experience has given him a deeper insight into the challenges and legislative requirements farmers face. He was involved in putting together One Plan land use consents, nutrient budgets and farm environment plans.

"I realised it involved so much more than telling farmers how to grow grass. I am particularly passionate about helping farmers incorporate modern technology into their systems.

"I really enjoyed the face-to-face interactions with both farmers and key industry players and got a real satisfaction out of knowing I was helping farmers to improve their businesses."

The third-year Massey University student has developed an extensive CV for an undergraduate, which includes writing blogs for AgriOne, a global knowledge centre for farm business management. This involves profiling the latest apps and digital tools and making them more digestible for farmers.

The highlight of this role was visiting Beef + Lamb New Zealand headquarters in Wellington to see the company's latest projects.



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He's juggled these with his position in the Young Farmer's club and Horticultural Society where he recently organised a trip to Nelson to meet several growers across different industries.

He's a regular swimmer, training every morning and is a rural firefighter in Rangitikei.

All these extracurricular activities help him to manage his time, Pike said.

"Many of the skills learnt from both my jobs and social activities are transferable to aspects of my degree."

But he's not drawing a line in the sand anytime soon. Pike intends to do his honours after he graduates this year.

The changing face of farming and its increasing reliance on science and technology meant tertiary education was playing a greater role than ever before, he said.

"What fascinates me the most is seeing our products transform from raw materials in the paddock right through to being marketed as premium products internationally.

"I hope to be instrumental in the ground-breaking advances that lay ahead for the rural sector."

He believed agriculture would need to be more productive, efficient and environmentally sustainable in the future.

- Stuff