

Food technologists describe their careers at GrowingNZ Teachers' Days Out



In November/December 2019, NZIFST participated in a series of Teachers' Days Out organised by GrowingNZ. Teachers toured several local businesses involved in the food and fibre sectors, and heard from young professionals working in those sectors.

The Day Out was an interactive professional development day for teachers to connect with, and gain knowledge and understanding of, the food and fibre sectors. The purpose was to raise awareness and positive perceptions about career opportunities and pathways in the sectors, and enable teachers to confidently support students to pursue training or tertiary studies and careers in those sectors. The events were attended by Agribusiness, Ag/Hort and STEM teachers, careers advisors and transition educators.

Four young professionals from the food processing industry joined other young professionals working in the food and fibre sectors, to share their stories and experiences of work. Amanda Thompson from Fonterra Palmerston North spoke at the Feilding event; Ngan Dinh from Freeze Dried Foods did the Napier event; Sam Eames from Synlait was at the Ashburton event; Eileen Han from Mataura Valley Milk spoke in Mataura.



Amanda Thompson (second from right) at the Feilding event



Ngan Dinh (centre) speaking at the Napier event

They were asked to describe what inspired them to want to work in the food processing industry, the tertiary study they did, their current role, what a typical day at work involves, what they enjoy, and don't enjoy, about their job, future work opportunities, and what they'd say to someone thinking about a career in our industry.



Sam Eames (second from left) did the Ashburton event



Eileen Han (second from right) at the Maitara event

Feedback from the teachers was very positive; for many, hearing from the young professionals was the highlight of the day, and provided them with valuable information they can share with their students. Feedback included:

- "The best part of the day was hearing the various pathways young people currently working in the NZ agriculture sector have taken to get there. The variation from degrees in Chemical and Process Engineering to Philosophy, English to Fine Arts was quite extraordinary. But all pushed that the main attributes to success in the sector were hard work and an ability to think and problem solve."
- "Hearing from young people and what experiences were most useful in school"
- "Hearing the knowledge, pathways and day in the life of young professionals"
- "The different career pathways of all the speakers - it really helps with my career planning"
- "The best thing was talking with different people involved in various roles to hear how they've gotten there, or what advice they'd give"
- "Seeing the passion people have for their careers"
- "I valued the young people's advice about promoting the industry to students"

Our thanks to Amanda, Ngan, Sam and Eileen, and their employers, for supporting this initiative, and helping the Institute promote careers in the food processing industry.

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Careers Co-ordinator