

Jan Cathcart Scholarship 2021

Q & A with Emily Fasham



What is your background with the rice industry?

I'm from a mixed irrigation farm near Wakool NSW, and rice has always been a very important crop in our area and one my family is passionate about growing. We've been committed to producing as much rice as possible every year since my grandfather first started growing rice over 50 years ago. He has only missed 2 seasons within the last 10 years due to the extremely low water allocations. Seeing our area struggle with water allocations and not being able to grow the crop they love has been devastating, which is why I'm so passionate about helping to develop the industry further in the future.

What made you decide to apply for the Jan Cathcart Scholarship?

When deciding to study agriculture, I knew I wanted to be a part of the rice industry when I finished university. My parents and grandparents received an email about applications for the Scholarship while I was completing my VCE studies, and I knew I had to apply for it. The outline of the Scholarship program gave me the impression that I would learn about the whole industry from a new perspective and gain invaluable experience, which it has already provided.

How has winning the Scholarship assisted your studies and future career plans?

The Jan Cathcart Scholarship offers so many opportunities for personal growth and exploration of different career pathways to assist university students decide on what sort of career they want to pursue. It has also helped me gain practical skills that coincide with the theory I have been learning in my degree, which will enable me to be more prepared for my future career.

What have you learned from work experience about which part of the rice industry you'd like to work in the future?

Winning this Scholarship has assured me that the rice industry is the area of agriculture in which I would like to pursue a future. Learning about the rice industry from my work experience in Brandon QLD has made me realise how passionate I am about working in the industry in the Riverina. I loved discovering how different rice growing is up in the north and the contribution it is making to SunRice. However it made me realise how much I want to contribute to the development of rice growing in the Riverina - in terms of new techniques of management and new rice varieties.

What else have you gained from the Scholarship?

I have been lucky enough to have two past winners reach out to me and I learnt about the experiences and opportunities they had from the Scholarship. They have encouraged me to seek as much work experience as possible, and to make sure I spend time getting to know all the various aspects of the industry. The AgriFuture's Rural Women's Award Gala Dinner in Canberra was also a highlight. Hearing about the wide range of innovations that rural women are implementing in agriculture was extremely motivating and has inspired me to make a difference in the rice industry.

What would you say to women considering applying for the Scholarship?

This Scholarship provides so many opportunities for young women to understand the rice industry on a greater level, while also providing skills for personal growth and networking. The application process itself is very rewarding as the interviews are great practice for future jobs, even if you are unsuccessful. I cannot recommend this Scholarship highly enough due to the financial assistance and career development opportunities it offers.