



**Media information, 13 March 2019**

## **New farm training opportunities for local college students**

A new initiative between Masterton Trust Lands Trust (MTLT) and Wairarapa College will provide more farm training and career opportunities for college students in the region.

The initiative will see greater industry involvement in the Wairarapa College farm which is located on MTLT-owned land adjacent to the college campus. MTLT has provided the land to Wairarapa College for the past 64 years to enable practical, hands-on learning for agricultural students.

An advisory panel involving local industry experts has recently been established to provide advice and expertise to the college for its agricultural programme and courses.

MTLT Deputy Chair Karl Taucher says the Trust is looking forward to working more closely with the college and local farming industry to ensure the teaching and skills developed on the farm are in line with what the rural sector needs.

“This new approach will make the most of this significant community asset as a training base for local students and potentially the starting point in their farming career.

“Working with local industry will not only ensure we’re supporting local students to be work ready with the most relevant and useful skills, it will also help open doors to jobs within our region,” he says.

Wairarapa College head of agriculture Dan Grace says the initiative is the latest step in the college’s efforts to develop the range of training options available to the increasing number of students enrolling in agricultural courses. Over 330 students are enrolled in agriculture courses at the college this year.

“The panel will provide us with a diverse range of people who can provide input into our curriculum and ideas for how we can further develop the farm and the work we do with students on it.”

Recent initiatives have seen olive trees planted on the farm with a plan to extract oil in the future and a beekeeping course introduced into the agriculture programme.

Mr Grace says the new approach aims to encourage more students to consider agriculture as a viable and meaningful career, and help meet the local industry’s need for well-trained employees.

“Agriculture is one of the main industries in Wairarapa and we need skilled people to be employed in that sector. Our goal is it to have more young people who want to work in rural industries and to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to do that, as well as provide a stepping stone to further education.”

Prominent local farmer, BakerAg shareholder and advisory panel member Sully Alsop says he welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the college farm.

“As an old boy of Wairarapa College, it’s great to be able to go back to where I did agricultural classes to share the experience and skills that I’ve gained during my farming career, and help in training the next generation of local farmers.”

Mr Alsop says the advisory panel will provide the college with a wider perspective on agriculture to include in their plans for the farm.

“It will also help expose the students to the range of jobs that are in the rural sector along with insights into what rural employers are looking for in an employee.”

Other advisory panel members include Ravensdown Senior Advisor Greig McLeod, Harewood Estate owner Paul Adamson and Ben Priestley from Kahu Honey. College representatives include Mr Grace, principal Shelley Power and college board member Hamish Taylor. The panel also includes MTLT general manager Andrew Croskery along with Mr Taucher.

Mr Taucher says the initiative reflected the Trust’s commitment to working with the local community to support learning opportunities and economic development in Masterton and the wider Wairarapa region.

#### **Ends**

***Photo caption:*** Wairarapa College Farm advisory panel members (left to right): Dan Grace (Wairarapa College), Ben Priestley (Kahu Honey), Sully Alsop (BakerAg shareholder and local farmer), Greig McLeod (Ravensdown), Shelley Power (Wairarapa College), Andrew Croskery (MTLT) and Paul Adamson (Harewood Estate). The panel also includes Karl Taucher (MTLT) and Hamish Taylor (Wairarapa College).

#### **For more information please contact:**

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