



# A confident future on the horizon for Eliza



**A NEW-FOUND CONFIDENCE** has been one of the major benefits for NSW student Eliza Star as one of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation's Horizon scholars.

Eliza grew up on a mixed-enterprise farm near the town of Carrathool, in NSW, and says the lack of female role models in the male-dominated field of agriculture initially put her off a career in the industry. But Year 10 work experience with a well-respected female agronomist helped to persuade her otherwise and in 2013 she is studying the second year of a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at Charles Sturt University.

Being awarded a Horizon Scholarship, sponsored by the RIRDC Rice Program, has given her a boost financially and in terms of her own personal development. She receives a bursary of \$5000 a year through the scholarship and participates in development events with other young agricultural enthusiasts.

"I have been involved in many activities stemming directly from the scholarship, including participating

in various workshops and conferences," she said. At the annual Horizon workshop held in Canberra she joined other scholars to discuss industry issues and how the scholars might become leaders.

"We even went on the ABC's *Country Hour* to build up our profile and public speaking ability," she said. "I have attended various Ricegrowers' Association of Australia (RGA) meetings and events ranging from SunRice and RGA annual general meetings, to grower discussion groups and social events."

When in need of advice Eliza has a list of mentors organised through the Horizon program she can call upon, including two from the RGA. "I have received a lot of help from my mentors – they help organise tasks and help me to go beyond my boundaries. Just having contact with people so heavily involved in the industry gives you inspiration and that extra drive."

The program also helps to coordinate work placements, which provide valuable industry exposure and also count towards university requirements. For Eliza, this is expected to include some time working with rice researchers.

Although she is leaning towards agronomy, Eliza says there are so many places her agricultural degree could take her – teaching, agronomy, spatial analysis, animal nutrition, agribusiness and the list goes on.

She says the support gained through the Horizon program has given her greater confidence in herself and challenged her to expand her boundaries. It has helped her to develop new skills such as public speaking, and to consider the image of agriculture that, as young leaders in the industry, the Horizon scholars present to the public.

"It's the best thing I have ever been involved in and the program allows you to get involved in such great things. I encourage anyone who is about to start their studies to give the program a shot." ●

The Horizon Scholarship is open to students entering their first year of university and studying a degree related to agriculture, such as agricultural science, rural science, livestock/animal science, veterinary science or agribusiness.

Applications close on 1 February 2013 and scholarship recipients are announced in late March 2013. Application forms can be downloaded from the RIRDC website – or by contacting RIRDC on 02 6271 4100.

Sponsors of the Horizon Scholarship are Woolworths, Quality Silage Systems, the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Australian Egg Corporation, Australian Pork Limited, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation, the Grains Research and Development Corporation, the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation, Horticulture Australia Limited, Meat and Livestock Australia, the Sugar Research and Development Corporation and the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

