

Nuffield scholar goes on international mission

Jamie First

Emma Germano fell into her family's cauliflower business after having an argument with her father.

Now, at 29, the Germano Produce development manager said she couldn't think of doing anything else.

"I really love it. I wish I got paid more and didn't have the financial pressures I have, but if you take that away, it's the best job in the world," she said.

"Originally dad and I were doing the same thing and overlapping sales, so I told him either he has to do it or I have to do it, and he just said 'fine, you do it'.

"I honestly thought it would be a month's worth of tidying the office."

Three years later and Emma has been awarded a 2014 Nuffield farming scholarship, which allows her to study an agricultural topic of her choice.

Splitting her time between her parents' 113 hectare property in Mirboo North and her Melbourne home, she was one of 21 Australians to receive the \$30,000 bursary.

"My topic is going to be based on export of Australian primary produce and looking for niche opportunities.

"As part of that, I want to look at how governments or support agencies in different countries help the industry, focusing on Asia and the Middle East, in particular, because that's where the emerging markets are."

Spending her grant on travel, the young entrepreneur said she wanted to visit Singapore, South Korea, China, Japan, Indonesia and Dubai, as well as South Africa, South America and New Zealand.

"I want to look at where the market is and what the market wants ... and then find out who the biggest competition is.

"I don't think you really learn that unless you actually see it."

Emma said she hoped by the end of her research year she would be able to export her own produce.

"I want to get as much information as is available and then try and consolidate it so I can use it as a business plan and then duplicate it for other farmers ... to give back to the industry."

She said it was important for her to study what was happening abroad to improve vegetable growers' prospects.

“It’s absolutely unbelievable that food goes to waste when we’ve got a world population of seven billion.

“It seems really wrong that we walk over stuff because the domestic market is just too small and can’t handle it.

“Surely someone somewhere will eat the produce and surely someone will be willing to pay for it.”

Grateful to receive the scholarship, Emma said Nuffield has shown her different ways of doing business and given her exposure to experts in the field not readily available to most farmers.

“People don’t know how many opportunities there are to see the world through agriculture,” she said.

To follow Emma’s journey, visit her blog at emmagermano.com.

Submissions for next year’s scholarships close on Monday, June 30. To apply, head to nuffield.com.au.