



# DIVERSE WORKFORCE ADDS VALUE TO SUGARCANE RD&A

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly established an annual International Day to recognize the critical role women and girls play in science and technology by establishing the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

Celebrated on February 11th each year, the day promotes the role of women and girls in science, encouraging full and equal access to and participation in science for women and girls.

Given the very strong role that women play at SRA – and the broader research, development and adoption industry – SRA thought it fitting that we hear from some

of the women within the industry about their words of encouragement for anyone considering a role within the sector.

As at June 2019, 43 percent of SRA's workforce is female, which encompasses a range of roles including Executive Managers, senior scientists, support staff, and technicians.

**MS HANNAH RUSSELL**  
SOUTHERN REGION ADOPTION  
OFFICER GRADUATE:

Working in the sugarcane industry offers a diverse range of opportunity and a sense of belonging. For me, it has offered a career that I feel passionate about – a career where I feel that I can make a difference. Don't hesitate to make that step forward.

**MS CAROL NORRIS**  
ADOPTION OFFICER, HARVESTING:

I love the genuine, honest connections that working in sugar brings to my life. Our industry growers, contractors, millers, researchers, advisory groups and industry bodies are all ultimately driven by their individual passion for sugar and have so value much to offer. So my advice would be to listen, ask questions, view all challenges as opportunities and ensure that every interaction is a positive learning experience for all involved.

**DR ANNELIE MARQUARDT**  
POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW,  
NORTHERN CROPS / AGRICULTURE  
AND FOOD; CSIRO:

The opportunities are endless in this industry, and STEM disciplines provide substantial contributions. When starting out, having a good mentor is one of the best ways to gain confidence in your area.

**MS JANINE POWELL**  
PARTNER, AgEcon  
(WORKING ON SRA/DAF PROJECT  
PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS  
THROUGH ENERGY INNOVATION  
IN THE AUSTRALIAN SUGAR  
INDUSTRY):

I find the STEM discipline in agriculture incredibly rewarding. Analysing and extending information about innovative technologies and management practices reminds me constantly of how progressive our farmers are. While agriculture is still male dominated I've found that everyone respects those with experience and knowledge.

**MS BELINDA BILLING**  
ADOPTION OFFICER:

Working in agriculture I get to be a part of an industry that encompasses our past, present and future, in a capacity that focuses on making that future a better place for everyone. Working with farmers is always interesting and I enjoy the fact that I am constantly learning and being challenged to apply science to real world situations. In any one day I can be monitoring a rainforest creek, working on farm trial and back to the office to write a report or magazine article. Not many industries can offer such great diversity!

**DR DANIELLE SKOCAJ**  
SENIOR RESEARCHER,  
NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT:

What I enjoy most about working in the sugar industry is:

- Stimulation – I am responsible for formulating research programs that help address industry issues and concerns.
- Making a difference – I am focused on delivering practical outcomes for end-users to help ensure their business remains productive, profitable and sustainable.
- The people – I meet and work with people from different backgrounds and sectors of the industry.
- Variety – every day is different and there is a great balance of indoor and outdoor activities.

Never back away from a challenge! Even if you don't find the answer you were hoping for, you will gain new knowledge and skills along the way.

Never pass in an opportunity to get your hands dirty! Look, listen, ask questions and get hands on experience to better understand industry issues and concerns. This will allow you to better translate the science into practical, meaningful outcomes.

**MS KATE WATHEN-DUNN**  
SENIOR TECHNICIAN, SRA:

A career in science and agriculture is a fantastic way to follow your curiosity while making a positive contribution to the industry. It's a great job, full of variety, and with lots of opportunities. My advice would be to develop excellent communication skills, so you can build rapport at all levels and so your science can be shared, understood and applied.

**DR HEIDI DU CLOU**  
SENIOR CHEMIST, SRA:

There are many facets to the sugar industry, and a diverse array of people who all contribute to it. I love that I am involved in interdisciplinary research and that I can learn from and work alongside experts in these different areas. It's great that I am equally respected for my expertise too. What's most rewarding is knowing our research contributes toward the future sustainability of an industry that is committed to improving processes and practices to help conserve the Great Barrier Reef and the environment.

**DR JO STRINGER**  
BIOMETRICIAN, SRA:

Being a Bundaberg girl and growing up with friends whose families were farmers or worked in the mills for Tofts/Massey Fergusson – working in sugar seemed like the logical thing for me when I finished uni. Nearly 34 years later I am still loving it! Working in agriculture offers such diversity and in one day I can work with growers, millers, advisors and researchers. What amazes me is the passion and drive of those you work with. A career in agriculture is very rewarding. ■