

Press Release

15 May 2025

Growing Future Farmers and Skills Group, Ignite, Partner to Provide Diversified Career Pathways for Young Farmers

Skills Group – Ignite and Growing Future Farmers (GFF) have developed a new training programme to meet the learning and development needs of young sheep and beef farmers. Pending NZQA approval, the first cohort is set to begin as early as July 2025, with the Level 4 programme offering a next-step pathway that builds on the success of GFF's hands-on model and NZQA Level 2 and 3 qualifications.

It has been co-designed and developed with extensive industry consultation to give young farmers the opportunity to deepen their skills while continuing to work on-farm, helping to strengthen the pipeline of talent and capability within the sector.

GFF CEO Wendy Paul says the new programme is a natural extension of GFF's founding purpose.

“From day one, GFF has been about creating real career opportunities for young people in farming. This new programme allows us to extend that journey by offering progression while keeping the real-world, on-farm learning that’s central to our model.”

Skills Group – Ignite Director of Vocational Training and Higher Education Mark Worsop says the innovative blended learning programme, combining provider-based and work-based learning is designed to equip young farmers with the necessary skills to take on leadership roles in the agricultural industry.

“With this new programme, graduates will be able to take on increased responsibility says Mark.

The GFF programme is a two-year initiative where students gain practical, hands-on experience working directly on farms. Students, typically aged between 16 and 21 years old, are matched with experienced farm trainers.

“The new Level 4 programme will ensure that graduates are prepared to meet the demands of an ever-evolving agricultural sector by developing management and leadership skills. The programme offers an exciting opportunity for GFF Level 2 and Level 3 graduates to further develop their skills and transition into beef and sheep farm leadership roles,” Mark says.

Graduates of this qualification will be equipped to do a range of things, from coordinating agribusiness activities using appropriate technology to benchmarking a farm's physical performance and implementing and monitoring a farm environmental plan.

The Level 4 programme is delivered through a blended learning approach. Trainees will benefit from online tuition and academic support provided by expert tutors from Skills Group – Ignite. In addition, they will receive the same level of high-quality pastoral care and in-person support that GFF currently provides.

“This holistic approach ensures that trainees are well-supported academically and personally, as they progress through their studies,” Mark says.

“The fully workplace integrated learning approach benefits both trainees and employers, ensuring that the learning experience is meaningful and tailored to the realities of farm operations,” Mark says.

“The GFF team are passionate about the quality of training and support available to future farm trainees and students. They’ve developed a unique delivery model that not only meets the training and support needs of learners but is also built upon employer partnerships with a real commitment to the learner journey and their professional development,” Mark says.

GFF CEO Wendy Paul says the partnership with Skills Group- Ignite reflects a shared vision and a commitment to long-term impact.

“We’re really pleased to be partnering in a way that aligns so strongly with our strategic direction and purpose. This collaboration brings new perspectives, diverse capabilities, and helps strengthen the GFF model — ensuring it remains viable, high quality, and centred on student success. At its core, it’s about delivering life-changing experiences for the next generation of farmers and securing a strong future for the sector,” says Wendy.

ENDS

For further information, please contact:

GFF Media Contact:

Lee Cowan on lee@avaloncommunications.co.nz or 021930836

Ignite/Skills Media Contact

Christine Meads

M: 027 294 0823

E: christine.meads@scgnz.org

About Growing Future Farmers

GFF is a charity that provides the opportunity for motivated young people to enter the sheep, beef and deer industry with the confidence of supported training and development, and that provides an industry respected, employer led career pathway that will enable motivated young people to progress in their career.

<https://www.growingfuturefarmers.co.nz/about>

GFF provides NZQA approved on farm programmes underpinned by proven methods and are future focused

About Skills Group – Ignite

Skills Group is New Zealand’s largest private training establishment, delivering hands-on, real-world education to over 18,000 learners across New Zealand and the world. From school leavers to CEOs, Skills Group supports lifelong learning through practical, industry-aligned training programmes that help people grow their careers, businesses, and communities. For more information about Skills Group – Ignite go to <https://skills-ignite.org/>