



**Media information**

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## **Agri-leadership programme produces 50th graduate**

The programme developing women's skills and confidence to govern and lead agricultural organisations and communities has produced its fiftieth graduate.

Last week 14 women completed the Agri-Women's Development Trust's (AWDT) Escalator programme, bringing its total number of graduates to 53 since it began in 2010.

Created as a result of AWDT's extensive research into the role of New Zealand women in agriculture and low participation rates at leadership and governance levels, the 10-month programme includes five Wellington-based modules, individualised distance learning, coaching and mentoring that is supported by the trust and industry organisations.

This year's programme attracted women from Bay of Plenty to Southland who are involved in the dairy, honey, sheep and beef, animal health, agri-business and banking sectors.

At a ceremony held in Wellington last week, the 2014 graduates were joined by more than 100 industry leaders, including 17 members of the Escalator Alumni who travelled from throughout New Zealand and Melbourne to further their own leadership development and support the graduates.

"Escalator continues to attract women from across the agricultural spectrum – from grassroots farmers who are heavily involved in their businesses and communities to women in corporate roles," AWDT executive director Lindy Nelson said. "This kind of mix has high value through knowledge exchange and widening of very diverse networks, then later on through involvement with a very strong alumni group.

Seven members of the alumni, including two from this year, are now assisting the AWDT develop and deliver its programmes around New Zealand. "It's exciting to see one of our original goals - developing women to train and support other women – now being achieved," Mrs Nelson said.

Four of this year's Escalator graduates had earlier completed the trust's two-day First Steps programme. "The clear pathway provided through different programmes is proving highly-beneficial

for women who may at first be unsure of where to begin with their development and who have realised how much they have to offer when given the chance to build their skills and confidence.

“We’re also excited to be supporting the work of industry organisations such as the Dairy Women’s Network by building the leadership capability of their people, including four Escalator women this year.”

Speaking to the graduates last week, Escalator Alumni chair Julia Jones said, “Being part of the alumni is a responsibility - not a badge of entitlement. Your actions will represent the AWDT, its partners, women who went before you and those yet to come.”

She encouraged industry heads to take the opportunity to apply some different thinking - “with us, not because we are women because we are capable and will add great value to the future of agriculture.”

Since its establishment in 2010, AWDT has delivered leadership, governance and business training and support to almost 700 people throughout New Zealand, with support from industry partners including ANZ, Beef + Lamb NZ, Dairy NZ, FMG, Agmardt, LIC and CRS Software.

This year annual participation in AWDT programmes and workshops has more than tripled with several new offerings established to meet the needs of industry organisations and their members.

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