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BScHons (Genetics) and MSc (Genetics)**

MY STORY

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS CAREER PATH?

My career path was quite random as **I started my undergrad in Molecular Biology and not in Agriculture**. For my postgrad studies I decided I wanted to go into the Genetics Field. I got into Genetics Honours and did my **Honour's project in the Plant Breeding Lab**. **Once I started my project, I knew this was the field for me**. I loved using my molecular knowledge in conjunction with all the plant breeding knowledge I was acquiring to achieve a successful project, so much so I decided to do my Masters at the Plant Breeding Lab as well.

WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE FOR YOU?

A typical day for me depending what time of year it is. The plant breeding lab has a pre-breeding program running, hence we are pretty busy the beginning of the year due to planting and the end of the year due to harvesting. In between, I am keeping busy with the **molecular characterization of selected nurseries and field assessments of the nurseries**. I am also involved with assisting postgraduate students within the lab, the glasshouse or the field and assist with undergraduate practicals and tutorials.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST?

I enjoy all aspects of my job as different times of the year requires me to do different duties. Throughout the year, I enjoy my interactions with the students, as I like to help and guide wherever I can. I enjoy my time in the lab as well because it is pretty satisfying when at the end of the day you get the results you wanted. I like planting and harvest season because even though it is physically straining, once the season is over, it is so satisfying knowing we had another successful season behind us.

DO I FIT THE PROFILE?

A person that is passionate about this field, enthusiast, willing to learn and to work hard, will enjoy this career.

SOME ADVICE

If you have a liking to agriculture/plants and want to know more or everything then this is probably a good career path for you. However, there are many sections within agriculture which might not even require you to be in a field if you want to be in a lab or vice versa, so make a decision based on what interests you and then take it from there. **Most of the time you only ever really get to know your field of study once you actually get to university anyway.**

SKILLS, TALENTS AND QUALITIES

Within my environment it would be advantageous to be hard working, punctual, precise, to have laboratory skills and to be knowledgeable on plant breeding.

CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge I had to overcome was when I had to **decide my career path forward**. Ironically, I wanted to be a teacher, I didn't quite get there. I eventually decided to go into the Genetics field where I found my true passion in plant breeding. Looking back now, I am glad because I am very happy where I am today. Along the way, I also had some financial challenges which was alleviated by Stellenbosch University.

What is the FUTURE of the field in terms of new and expanding opportunities?

Agriculture is such a vast field. Due to this many scientists in different fields are consistently innovating and finding new ways to update old methods to be more effective and efficient. Opportunities within agriculture include CRISPR/genetic editing, the use of drones for phenotypic assessments and Data Sciences.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS TO DATE?

My career is a ripe 3 years and counting but the 3 highlights so far is definitely finishing my Master's Thesis, being hired on a permanent basis and my published article.