

## ***Leading farmers from around the world to visit New Zealand for 2023 Rabobank Global Farmers Master Class***

Twenty-eight farmers from five continents and 12 different countries will soon spend 10 days in New Zealand taking part in the latest Rabobank Global Farmers Master Class (GFMC) – a state-of-the-art agri learning programme established in 2012 to bring together leading farmers from around the world to address global food security.

The 2023 Rabobank GFMC will kick off in Hamilton on November 27 and finish in Queenstown on December 6. The master class's content-dense programme will feature presentations from top agricultural thinkers and business experts, interactive workshops and case studies, as well as visits to a range of flagship agribusiness operations in both the North and South Islands.

Farmers from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Ireland, Kenya, the Netherlands, Peru, the United States and Zimbabwe will shortly touch down in New Zealand for the Master Class where they will be joined by five New Zealand-based farmer participants – Gisborne-based horticulture, sheep and beef farmer Tam Jex-Blake, Bay of Plenty-based dairy farmer Rory Bragg, North Otago-based sheep and beef farmer Grant McNaughton, South Taranaki-based dairy and beef farmer Mark Stevenson and Northern Southland-based livestock and cropping farmer Michael Wilkins.

The participating farmers have been handpicked based on selection criteria which targeted innovative, environmentally-progressive and passionate decision makers willing to share ideas, learn from others and invest in a sustainable future for agriculture.

This will be the sixth Rabobank Global Farmers Master Class staged around the world and the second to be held in Aotearoa, with New Zealand having co-hosted the event alongside Australia in 2016. Other GFMC events have been held in the Netherlands, Brazil and Zaire.

Rabobank New Zealand General Manager for Country Banking Bruce Weir said it was incredibly exciting to have the event returning to New Zealand this year.

“The feedback I’ve had from New Zealand clients who have attended previous GFMC has been really positive and they all got a lot out of the experience,” he said.

“So when the New Zealand business was asked earlier this year if we were interested in hosting the next event, I was quick to flag our interest, and was really rapt when New Zealand was confirmed as the location for the 2023 event.

“Not only does the GFMC provide a chance for the New Zealand business to host some fantastic farmers and growers from right across the globe, but it also gives us an opportunity to highlight some of our country’s outstanding agricultural operations and to demonstrate why New Zealand is a global leader in farming best practices.”

Mr Weir said the programme would nudge attendees out of their comfort zone and provide them with a platform to work on their strategic planning.

“It’s a platform for rural entrepreneurs to become even better, to increase their strategic planning, management and farming skills and develop their innovative power to produce more with less,” he said.

“It’s also a great forum to make global connections with like-minded farmers, and I know that many of our Master Class participants from our previous years events still stay in touch and bounce ideas off each other when they’re after another perspective.”

Mr Weir said he would join participants for the early stages of the programme in the Waikato, as well as for the event’s closing dinner in Queenstown.

“The farmers travelling here for the event are involved in a huge number of different agricultural sectors, including several that are very familiar to us here in New Zealand – like dairy, sheep and beef – and a few that aren’t – like floriculture, banana and cocoa production,” he said.

“And I’m really looking forward to learning a bit more about these farmers’ businesses and some of the challenges and opportunities they are facing in their own countries.”

The event programme will see participants spend four days in the North Island and six days in the South where they will visit several agribusiness operations including Livestock Improvement Corporation (LIC) in the Waikato, Canterbury-based mixed farming operation Quartz Hill station and Forest Lodge cherry orchard in Central Otago.

Speakers lined up to address the group over the course of the 10-day programme include Rabobank Global Head of Rural and Food and Agri, Lara Yocarini; Managing Director, Strategy and Optimisation at Fonterra Co-operative Group Limited, Emma Parsons; Deputy Secretary Trade and Economic, Vangelis Vitalis; Rabobank Global Strategist, Michael Every and General Manager for Markets and Sustainability at The New Zealand Merino Company, Dave Maslen.

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### **Rabobank New Zealand**

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