

The Southern Cotton traineeship program is an inspiring and hands-on experience allowing young people to gain valuable work experience and insight into the Australian agricultural industry. Each year Southern Cotton aims to appoint two new local trainees.

A vital component of the program is the mentoring each trainee receives from the senior staff at Southern Cotton, including general manager Kate O'Callaghan who sees this as a great opportunity to share knowledge with the next generation.

"I am committed to mentoring and developing the next generation of agricultural professionals," Kate said. "My goal is for young people to realise their potential both personally and professionally. I constantly work on sharing my knowledge and skills with the Southern Cotton team – especially our trainees."

The initiative reflects Southern Cotton's goal to promote goodwill within the local community, and forms a big part of their investment into the future of the cotton industry.

Sophie Washington joined the Southern Cotton team as a trainee weighbridge operator during her 'gap year' in 2014. As a result of her experience with Southern Cotton, Sophie changed her university course to incorporate human resources and is considering rejoining the agricultural industry upon completion of her studies.



Current Seed Logistics Manager, Madison Coelli, thrived throughout her traineeship at Southern Cotton and stayed on in her role at the end of her first year at the gin. Madison now enjoys the dynamic work life at Southern Cotton and appreciates the opportunity to gain exposure to the agricultural industry.

"Before starting at Southern Cotton I had never considered the agricultural industry – in fact, I had no idea what path I wanted to follow," Madison said. "Being mentored by Kate really

inspired me to commit to the cotton industry full time and stay beyond my traineeship."

"I was also thrilled to be awarded the Trainee of the Year Award at the 2016 Leeton Outstanding Business Awards," she added.

Madison's current position includes educating the wider community on the benefits of growing cotton, by personally conducting daily tours of the gin and speaking about the industry at community events. Her involvement in the Leeton SunRice Festival Ambassador Competition in 2016 also helped Southern Cotton form a long-term partnership with local youth group SteppinOut4Youth.

"My time at Southern Cotton and all that I have learned throughout this experience has really helped to shape the person that I am. I'm proud to be a 'woman in agriculture' and be part of this vital industry!"

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, Katie Halden, smiling. She is wearing a bright pink and orange high-visibility vest over a light-colored shirt. She is leaning against a metal railing in front of a large industrial machine, likely a cotton gin. The background shows a field of cotton plants under a clear blue sky.

'I have thoroughly enjoyed my traineeship and learned so much about the cotton industry and ginning processes. Southern Cotton is the perfect combination of a small business, award winning organisation and local employer.'

– Katie Halden, 2016 Trainee

