

**Press Release**

31 October 2022

**Oxford Farming Conference reveals 2023 Breaking Barriers Scholars**

The Oxford Farming Conference (OFC), in partnership with McDonald’s UK and Ireland, is delighted to announce the recipients of the Breaking Barriers Scholarship, which is supporting five individuals aged under 30 years old, who identify as Black or Person of Colour (BPOC), to attend the Conference in January as part of the 2023 Scholars programme.

More than doubling in intake, the 2023 cohort sees representation from educational institutions Harper Adams University, The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) and Hartpury University, as well as industry.

The successful candidates, who were able to demonstrate a passion for the sector, ambition to advance their skills, and desire to embrace valuable networking opportunities include:

* Ahsan Ahmad Awan, a Masters Student at the RAU, currently conducting research on migrant farming communities in the UK.
* Wonga Matubatuba, a final year student studying BSc in Agriculture at Hartpury University.
* Faith Mohammed, a Masters Student studying Agricultural Science and Production Systems at Harper Adams University.
* Kandarp Joshi studying a BSc. Hons in Business and Management at Brunel University.
* Hakeem-Abdul Ojo, working as a procurement analyst based in London, having completed a MSc International Agribusiness and Food Chain Management at Harper Adams University.

The scholarship, now entering its third year, looks to support diversity and inclusion within the agricultural industry by offering candidates the opportunity to attend the Oxford Farming Conference as well as participate in a pre-event programme with mentoring, bespoke events and materials such as books, to support their future career journey. They also benefit from the Scholars Programme more broadly, which includes a 2-day in-person training forum in November 2022, a series of tailored online webinars and a one-off celebratory event to mark a ten-year partnership between McDonald’s UK and Ireland and OFC.

Commenting on the landmark Breaking Barriers Programme, OFC Director and facilitator Navaratnam Partheeban said:

*“Having an agricultural sector that attracts and retains a rich mix of people is vital if we are to futureproof our changing industry, but as it stands, it is the least diverse in the UK. Estimates of numbers of BPOC people in British agriculture vary between 0.8-1.2%, and despite perceptions that it is interest standing in the way, the reality is that there are several obstacles inhibiting progress, which we, as an industry, must work to dissolve.*

“*The Breaking Barriers Scholars represent a group of young people with the potential to thrive in the sector, and it is a privilege to provide them with networks, resources and opportunities exclusive to the programme that otherwise, they may not have access to.”*

The group recently met up in London for a ‘get to know each other’ day and to discuss their aspirations for both the programme and their future careers. They will also participate in a two-day trip to Essex between 21st-22nd November, visiting Tiptree, the well-known preserve manufacturer, and a large dairy farm, offering the group practical insight into the British agricultural and food sector. As part of the field trip to Essex, they will also be visiting a series of regenerative system farms, seeing arable, cattle and turkey enterprises and learning about the farm animal veterinary sector.

The Oxford Farming Conference takes place from 5 to 7 January 2023, following the theme “Farming a New Future”. The full programme and tickets can be found at [www.ofc.org.uk](http://www.ofc.org.uk)

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**Issued by Jane Craigie Marketing. For further details or interviews, please contact****marketing@ofc.org.uk****or Rebecca on 07792 467730**

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**Notes to Editors:**

* For more information on the Oxford Farming Conference (OFC):

**Website:** [www.ofc.org.uk](http://www.ofc.org.uk/)

**Twitter:**[@oxfordfarming](http://www.twitter.com/oxfordfarming)

**YouTube:** [OxfordFarmingConference](https://www.youtube.com/oxfordfarmingconference%22%20/t%20%22_blank%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

* The [Council](https://www.ofc.org.uk/council) is made up of 10 voluntary directors. The OFC 2023 Chair is Emily Norton.
* OFC is held annually in January over three days and includes a vibrant programme of speakers, panel sessions, politics sessions and easy networking.
* The 77th conference will take place from the 4 to 6 January 2023 in Oxford and online. A programme of fringes will also be available, online, in December 2022.
* OFC has established a reputation for strong debate and exceptional speakers.
* OFC is a charity that invests in the agricultural education and knowledge-sharing. It attracts over 650 delegates every year, including many people from the wider food chain, retail, NGOs, scientific organisations, media, policy-making bodies and governments from around the world.
* With HRH Princess Royal as its patron, OFC is a charity with a remit to educate and transfer knowledge in the agricultural sector. As part of its charitable undertakings, the OFC sponsors young people to attend the conference, to travel overseas and it seeks to develop emerging leaders.