

**Press release**

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For immediate release

**Finalists announced for AgriScot Business Skills Award 2025**

**The competition recognises agriculture’s outstanding individuals from across the UK.**

Three finalists have been announced for the prestigious AgriScot Business Skills Award 2025. Rachel Baillie from South Lanarkshire, David Massie from Aberdeenshire and Erin McGuire from Caithness, were chosen after their success in the regional heats.

Now in its 15th year and with a record number of applications, the Award recognises outstanding agricultural professionals between 18 and 25 years old. Kindly sponsored by Virgin Money and organised by SRUC, the competition offers participants the chance to win £1000 alongside access to career and financial mentoring and networks.

All three finalists are pursuing agricultural studies with David and Erin enrolled at SRUC Craibstone near Aberdeen, and Rachel in her fourth year at Harper Adams University in Newport. David and Rachel credited their agricultural interest to growing up on family livestock farms. Meanwhile Erin, who does not come from a farming background, found her passion five years ago after buying a flock of Cheviot ewes.

“There's a job for everyone in the agricultural industry”, said David, who recently started a work placement at leading poultry enterprise, Duncan Farms. He said his long-term goal is to return to his family farm and “drive the business forward”.

After completing her placement year with SAC consulting, Rachel is committed to a career in agricultural consultancy. She hopes her work experience will prove advantageous in the award process.

Also interested in a consultancy career, Erin said the judging feedback she received throughout the AgriScot Business Skills competition has been hugely beneficial for her future.

The finalists impressed the judges with their responses to this year’s theme: “How should farm businesses adapt to take advantage of future opportunities?”

Stephen Buchan of Virgin Money, one of this year’s judges, said the calibre of 2025 candidates “genuinely exceeded all expectations”. He said: "For us, this competition is about giving young people a platform to express their ideas, build confidence, and prepare for leadership roles in the industry - and it’s clear that the future of agriculture is in very capable hands.

“This initiative plays a vital role in encouraging young people entering the agricultural industry to develop essential business and financial skills - challenging them in areas that are often overlooked, but critically important. As a bank, we’re committed to supporting the next generation, and part of that is providing mentorship for the finalists, helping them grow in confidence and capability.”

Competition coordinator and former Business Skills Award winner Heather Kerr from SRUC explained what set the finalists apart: "We’re looking for candidates who not only have a broad understanding of running a farming enterprise, but who also demonstrate a strong grasp of the economics behind production and can apply that financial knowledge to real-world business management.”

She added: “Beyond the prize money, the real value lies in the networking - from meeting farmers and bank representatives early on, to engaging with a wide range of industry professionals at the final.

“This year we’ve had a record number of entries - the highest in the competition’s history - and we’re excited to keep building on that momentum to ensure even more students and professionals can benefit from being involved."

The Business Skills Award final will take place at AgriScot on Wednesday 19 November.

[ENDS]

**Notes to editors:**

* Biographies of each finalist are available here.