



Agriculture Zone Summary report – March 2013

This report has been compiled by the *I'm a Scientist, Get me out of Here, Australia* team as a summary of zone activities and outcomes. It contains moderator observations and analysis of web statistics for the March 2013 Agriculture Zone.

Agriculture was one of the most thought provoking zones this season, with questions in both the Ask section and Live Chats providing the platform for students to ask each of the five scientists in the zone any science related question on their minds. With Rebecca the animal welfare researcher, Harjeet the agricultural biotechnologist, Brent the plant scientist, Dominique the undergraduate, and Kim the Chief Scientist at ABARES, one would think that they had all areas covered, but the fast paced Live Chats fired some interesting questions that challenged their scientific knowledge, opinion and typing speeds.

Statistics

Zone page	Pageviews
Total Zone	7,117
Zone homepage	1,248
ASK page	374
CHAT page	718
VOTE page	358
List of questions	250
Rebecca Doyle	249
Kim Ritman	194
Harjeet Khanna	245
Dominique Cotterill	284
Brent Kaiser	235

Table 1: Pageviews of the *I'm a Scientist* Agriculture zone

Number of . . .	Agriculture Zone	Average (per zone)	Whole event
Registered students	224	250	751
Questions asked	430	728	2,138
Questions approved	167	267	800
Answers given	461	634	1,902
Comments	28	148	444
Votes	207	306	919
Live chats	13	16	49
Lines of live chat	3,602	4,703	14,110
Schools	8	7	19

Table 2: Key engagement statistics from the *I'm a Scientist* Agriculture zone, compared to the average per zone and whole March 2013 event.



Graph 1: Pageviews of the *I'm a Scientist* Agriculture zone from March 1–29 2013 – including the week prior to, and after the two-week event.

Popular topics and words

Students expressed an awareness of the challenges we face as a society in areas such as agricultural sustainability with questions about food safety and animal welfare high on the list. Questions such as [“Do we currently grow enough food for the whole human race? If only we could share. Are there any future plans for feeding the human race?”](#) is only one example of the concern displayed. Students were interested in the scientists own opinions, with the most popular question in the Agriculture zone, in terms of pageviews during the event, being [“What is your current stance on Genetically Modified Crops and what recent discoveries have you seen?”](#).

Students were also interested in what it’s like to pursue a career in science [“Science is one of my best subjects and I was wondering what it’s like to study it in university”](#) and the sense of fulfilment scientists get from their work [“do you enjoy your work? and why?”](#) and [“if you couldn’t be a scientist what would you be”](#).



Diagram 1: A word cloud of the 50 most popular words used by students within the ASK section of the *I’m a Scientist* Agriculture zone. The more prominent the word, the more frequently it was used by students.



Diagram 2: A word cloud of the 150 most popular words used by students and scientists during the Live Chats in the *I’m a Scientist* Agriculture zone. The more prominent the word, the more frequently it was used.

Looking at the most popular words used within student's questions (diagram 1) and during live chats (diagram 2) we can see that agriculture as a term features high in their conversational vocabulary with the scientists. The interest in animals, farming and the importance of science for their future is echoed in the pictorial representations of the conversations that took place, above.

Scientist winner: Dominique Cotterill

Dominique is studying towards her Agricultural Science degree at the University of Tasmania and plans to use her prize money to "create something to teach kids a bit about growing food (and plants because plants are very cool)". We look forward to hearing more about Dominique's schools outreach very soon.



Student winner: katies

Student *katies* was nominated by the scientists in the Agriculture zone for posing some very good questions in both the live chats and the ASK section of the *I'm a Scientist* website. *katies'* questions included "[is there a way to continue farming large masses of crops without using harsh chemicals?](#)" and "is agriculture being affected by global warming in a large way?".

Event sponsors

Thank you to our partners for supporting *I'm a Scientist, Get Me Out of Here!* in Australia:

- Major partners TechNYou for supporting the pilot in June 2011, both the May and August/September 2012 events, and this March 2013 event.
- Zone supporters the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARES) and the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporations (CRDC) for sponsoring the March 2013 Agriculture Zone.

Final thanks to the scientists

The success of the *I'm a Scientist* event is thanks to the scientists who volunteer their time to chat to students online and answer their science questions. A thanks also to the scientist's associated organisations for supporting them in taking part.