

Job: Research Institute Manager

What do you do?

I work for the New Zealand Institute of Plant and Food Research managing 120 scientists and technical staff working out how to grow food more sustainably. I work closely with farmers and growers to make sure that our science is useful to them.



What is your average day like?

There is no such thing as a typical day in my job. Sometimes it's about long term planning of science investment, sometimes it's presenting results to farmers, other times it's about resolving people management issues. But all the time there are great people to meet, heaps of emails to answer, and endless interesting new avenues for research...

Dr Roger Williams



CV

- Director of Research Development, the Foundation for Arable Research, New Zealand.
- Head of Science, Royal Horticultural Society.
- Assistant Director, research and development, Home-Grown Cereals Authority.
- Post-doctoral scientist, Rothamsted Research Institute.
- Plant Pathologist, Horticulture Research International.
- PhD studentship, University of Sheffield.
- Applied Biology BSc, University of Hertfordshire.

What are the perks of doing a PhD?

You get to spend a few years focused on a single, interesting topic and you become an expert in the process. This is a remarkable opportunity and one to be savoured.

When did you become interested in plant pathology?

I first became interested in plant pathology because of the enthusiasm of a dynamic and interesting lecturer: Dr Avice Hall, when I was an undergraduate student. Before her lectures I hadn't really considered plant pathology at all.



Why is plant pathology important?

Food is a basic human need. Hungry people are miserable and dangerous. But growing food is an intense competition with a bunch of other organisms that have a different agenda.

Amongst these there is a range of interesting characters that cause plant diseases, robbing yield and quality and thereby making the world a more miserable and dangerous place.