

## **Ruth McCabe, 2022 Nuffield International Scholar, USA**

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Ruth McCabe, from State Center in Iowa, is a Conservation Agronomist and receives a 2022 Nuffield International Scholarship supported by a collaboration of organisations from Iowa in the United States.

Ruth has a Bachelor of Science in Applied Plant Science, a Master of Science in Crop Production and Physiology, and is a Certified Professional Agronomist and Certified Crop Advisor.

Ruth is a Conservation Agronomist under Heartland Cooperative's Director of Environmental Resources. Heartland Agricultural Cooperative has 6,000 farmer members, 700 employees and 75 locations in Iowa, Nebraska and Texas and provides services including agronomy, grain storage and marketing, feed production and farm financing. Ruth is developing their conservation agronomy program, working with 40 growers across 15,000 acres in Iowa.

As part of her scholarship, Ruth will study voluntary stakeholder adoption of conservation agronomy practices and how existing infrastructure and support programs impact the perception of conservation.

"I am interested in the effect that private agricultural retail companies can have on grower adoption of conservation practices and wish to find sustainable and profitable ways to incorporate these practices, which are often labelled as expensive or contrary to a farm business bottom line," she says.

"A growing trend is for agricultural retailers to "partner" with agricultural NGOs or conservation organisations to hire and place conservation agronomists. This can help lower the initial "investment cost" of creating a conservation agronomy program, but it also appears to limit the level of trust between general sales agronomists and conservation agronomists."

"My research could provide additional insight into drivers of conservation farming adoption and the direct support that retailers can offer growers".

Ruth plans to visit Canada and South America, where there are high rates of no-till adoption and growing popularity of cover crops, and Australia and New Zealand, that use rotational grazing and regenerative agriculture practices.

Ruth is active in her industry and community as a member of the State Team for Women, Land & Legacy. She also has active memberships with Pheasants Forever, the Soil & Water Conservation Society and Practical Farmers of Iowa, and is looking forward to the outcomes of the scholarship.

"The opportunity to have a direct hand in this level of conservation agronomy program development has long been a professional goal of mine, and I see myself leading and expanding current initiatives in the agricultural retail sector, always with a strong farmer focus".

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### **About the Nuffield International Scholarship supported by Iowa**

This scholarship is a collaboration of organisations based in Iowa. For further information regarding Nuffield Scholars in the USA, contact Ed Kee, President, at 302-222-0282, [kee@udel.edu](mailto:kee@udel.edu)