

Position Description

Date: October 2026

Ref: 2095

Position | Tūranga: Internship – Creating Value from Kombucha By-Products

Responsible to Tō kaiwhakahaere:	Science Team Leader, Mike Weeks, Senior Scientist, Renyu Zhang, Research Engineer, Paul Middlewood, Senior Lecturer, Lokesh Kumar, Lecturer, Shaoyang Wang, and Founder and Head Brewer, Tamara Kirwan
Group Tari:	Smart Foods and Bioproducts
Function Wāhanga:	Food Technology & Processing
Team Tīma:	Food Technology & Processing
Location Wāhi:	Tuhiraki, Lincoln
Employment Type Momo Mahi:	Fixed Term – 12 weeks
Korn Ferry Grade Taumata Korn Ferry:	12

Organisational context

The Bioeconomy Science Institute Maiangi Taiao is New Zealand's newest public research organisation, formed through the merger of AgResearch, Plant & Food Research, Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research, Scion, and the New Zealand Food Innovation Network. Our purpose is to drive innovation and commercial outcomes in the bioeconomy, using research and technology to support enduring economic growth and resilience, a healthy environment and beneficial social outcomes for New Zealand. We pursue opportunities to lift innovation, commercial outcomes, and adoption of advanced technology to drive economic growth across New Zealand. Through world-leading science, we drive innovation across agriculture, horticulture, forestry, aquaculture, biotechnology, and manufacturing. We protect and enhance ecosystems, strengthen biosecurity and climate resilience, and develop cutting-edge bio-based products and technologies.

We honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and embed te ao Māori throughout our transformation journey. As we come together, we are committed to learning and growing together through inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsiveness ways of working. All roles contribute, in ways relevant to their work, to giving effect to our Te Tiriti commitments through partnership, participation, protection and equity.

Role purpose | Te Take o te Tūranga

This internship investigates opportunities to create value from SCOBY, a biological by-product generated through kombucha production.

Working in partnership with an industry partner, Lincoln University and the Bioeconomy Science Institute, the successful candidate will investigate two SCOBY streams generated during kombucha production. The project will combine factory-based learning, literature review, sample preparation and laboratory characterisation to understand the composition, properties, microbial quality, and drying and milling behaviour of these materials. The findings will help assess potential value-added applications and identify priorities for future research and product development.

Sitting at the intersection of sustainability, science, innovation and Māori enterprise, this project will contribute to a growing partnership between the Bioeconomy Science Institute Maiangi Taiao, Lincoln University and industry. Bringing together mātauranga Māori, manufacturing knowledge and scientific investigation, the project will explore how SCOBY can remain in beneficial use rather than become an underutilised biological resource. This will support more circular and sustainable bioeconomy outcomes while helping identify future research and development opportunities.

Accountabilities | Ngā whakaritenga

Research and Investigation

- Learn how kombucha is manufactured and how different SCOBY streams are produced and handled.
- Review scientific and industry literature on SCOBY and explore potential value-added applications.
- Collect representative SCOBY samples, and prepare wet, dried and milled materials for laboratory analysis.
- Compare the nutritional, physicochemical, structural, functional and microbial characteristics of the two SCOBY streams.
- Assess their processing behaviour and preliminary suitability for selected value-added applications.
- Integrate scientific findings with mātauranga Māori and knowledge shared by industry partners.

Industry Engagement

- Build an understanding of the partner organisation's operations and business context.
- Engage professionally with employees from the industry partner, Lincoln University and the Bioeconomy Science Institute.
- Communicate scientific concepts in clear and accessible language appropriate to different audiences.

Analysis and Reporting

- Collate and analyse information from multiple sources.
- Identify themes, opportunities, knowledge gaps and future research pathways.
- Prepare a written report summarising findings and recommendations.
- Deliver a final presentation to project stakeholders.

Team Contribution

- Work collaboratively with scientists, academic employees, industry partners and fellow students.
- Participate in project meetings and discussions.
- Contribute positively to a safe, inclusive and collaborative working environment.

About you | Ō Pūmanawa

You may be studying food science, biological sciences, environmental science, biotechnology, chemistry, sustainability, Māori studies, business, innovation, or another related discipline.

What matters most is your curiosity, willingness to learn, and interest in connecting science, sustainability and real-world application.

You will likely:

- Enjoy investigating new ideas and emerging opportunities.
- Be comfortable gathering information from a range of sources and making sense of it.
- Have strong written and verbal communication skills.
- Be interested in sustainability, circular economy thinking and innovation.
- Be able to engage confidently with people from different backgrounds and disciplines.
- Have an appreciation of, or willingness to learn about, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Te Ao Māori and Te Reo Māori.
- Be organised, self-motivated and able to work independently while contributing to a team environment.
- Be willing and able to travel between Lincoln University and Mauriora Kombucha's Christchurch facility during the internship.
- Enjoy working in a collaborative environment alongside researchers, industry partners and fellow students.

A current driver's licence would be advantageous.

Health, Safety, And Wellbeing | Hauora, Haumaru Me Te Oranga

- Contribute to a positive health, safety and wellbeing culture by taking reasonable care for their own health, safety and wellbeing and that of others; complying with legislative requirements, organisational policies and standard operating procedures; reporting hazards, incidents, near misses, and safety observations; and promoting psychological wellbeing through open communication and the early recognition of stress, fatigue, and mental health concerns.

Organisational objectives | Ngā Whāinga Tōpūtanga Katoa

- Actively develops and applies the cultural capability relevant to their role and contributes to giving effect to the organisation's Te Tiriti o Waitangi Framework
- Ensures that all information created or received during your work is managed as per the Institute's Information Management policy. This includes naming, storing, classifying, and ensuring it is available to other employees.
- Actively participates in the Bioeconomy Science Institute Maiangi Taiao performance process, including setting objectives and having a robust development plan. Proactively and constructively contributes to performance conversations and personal development.
- Takes responsibility to understand and apply Institute policy, processes, systems, and procedures daily.
- Commits to accurate and timely information sharing and recordkeeping as per set organisational standards.
- The accountabilities set out above are not exhaustive. Therefore, it may be necessary for you to undertake other reasonable accountabilities as required, which are within your abilities.