UNIVERSITY of Western Australia (UWA) graduate Kimberley Adams has received the Young Professionals in Agriculture Forum top honours for 2014.

Ms Adams, an agronomist with Landmark in Northam, received the award this week for her research focused on stubble retention and the impact of soil water repellence in sandy soils.

UWA graduate Nikki Dumbrell, of WANTFA, and UWA graduate Georgia Pugh were also recognised for their work, placing second and third respectively.

Ms Dumbrell’s work focused on carbon farming and Ms Pugh’s on beef carcase quality.

Department of Agriculture and Food Grains Industry executive director Mark Sweetingham said the judges were impressed by the high standard of presentations made by the finalists.

“The future of the agriculture and food sector is with our young people and it is pleasing to see the passion these six here today have displayed for the industry and research they are undertaking,” Dr Sweetingham said.

“The success of the WA agricultural sector is dependent on attracting people such as those who spoke here today, who are innovative and progressive, and possess impressive communication skills.

“The Young Professionals in Agriculture Awards recognise talented individuals who have the potential to lead and underpin the future success of our industry.”

Ms Adams presented her work on stubble retention and the impact of soil water repellence in sandy soils. Sandy soils are at risk of erosion, and consequently the adoption of no-tillage cropping methods with full or partial stubble retention has become the industry standard. Ms Adams research explored the potential of stubble retention in exacerbating soil water repellence, by increasing soil organic matter and waxes.

Ms Adams will represent Western Australia in the national forum later in the year. Other finalists included Liam Ryan, development officer with the Department of Agriculture and Food, who was awarded best presentation, Thinza Vindevoghel and Hannipoula Olsen.

The presentations were judged by experienced agricultural researchers, including DAFWA Livestock Industries Innovation director Bruce Mullan, senior lecturer Department of Environment and Agriculture Curtin University Sarita Bennett, and fellow of the Australian Institute of Agriculture Keith Croker.

Dr Sweetingham said the Young Professionals in Agriculture forum was a wonderful event organised by the Western Australian Division of Ag Institute Australia.

It is one of many activities supported by DAFWA aimed at attracting promising young professionals to the sector by promoting diverse careers.