

# **New Blood**

**Attracting the best young people  
to agriculture**

**“The farm is still the best workplace in the world!”**

**A Royal Agricultural Society of England report prepared by  
Alan Spedding**

**June 2009**

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## Foreword from Hugh Oliver Bellasis, Chairman, Royal Agricultural Society of England

The Royal Agricultural Society of England is uniquely placed to 'look into the middle distance', as a senior Council member once put it. We can put to one side the short term issues about farm support payments, about dealing with the current financial crisis and what often seems like a myriad other immediate pressures and can bring together some evaluation of the longer term needs for the prosperity of our industry. We can also use the best experience available in any area to make the most 'scientific' diagnosis and begin to recommend the best way forward. It is our challenge to do this in innovative ways.

How to attract the best young people to our industry is one such challenge. We can increase food production in this country over the next few years and produce some of the renewable energy we are going to need. We can do this whilst continuing to care for the environment and preserving our precious landscapes and wildlife. We can encourage more people to spend time (and money!) enjoying and learning about the countryside and what it has to offer. But it will be a big "ask" and we will need the best people managing our crops and our livestock to achieve all this against what we have learned in the last few months is an uncertain financial future.

There are two further challenges that add complexity to the task ahead. The first is the need to cope with climate change and the second, perhaps the most important of all, is to make certain that agriculture and its related industries attract the best potential entrants out of a decreasing pool of young people. We will not succeed unless we have the best people to face up to these challenges in an imaginative and businesslike way.

This Society asked Alan Spedding to take an independent look at how agriculture can attract the best young people. This report presents the results of his desk research and a trawl of the views of a wide cross section of the industry. The list of contributors includes a whole range from academics, farmers and people working for farming organisations and businesses allied to farming through to educationalists and careers advisers. The result is a holistic and remarkably unanimous collection of views. He has also made some predictions about how many new entrants the industry needs and looked at good practice both within and outside the industry at home and abroad for leads about how to go forward.

Central to it all is the need for farming to continue to improve its image and, in doing so paint a realistic and more detailed picture than we have in the past about an industry which is nowadays highly technical, complex and challenging. We need to engage even more effectively with schools to get young people to understand instinctively what the countryside does and what part they might be able to play in its future. We need to foster entrepreneurial skills alongside technical training. We love the land and take its many attractions and challenges as a given. We need to understand that others do not have our feel for it – so we need to get out there and explain what it means to us.

We now need to sit down with others who have a stake in our industry and carefully work out how to proceed from here to grow the many good things which are going on and decide what the most cost-effective activities will be.

## Introduction

Producing more food as well as some of our fuel and continuing to improve our landscapes, soils and wildlife are a huge challenge for the agricultural industry. We will have to achieve these goals for increasingly discriminating consumers in volatile world markets and against a background of often unpredictable climate change and, at the time of writing, additional uncertainties arising out of the world financial crisis.

This investigation has assembled some facts and figures about how many new entrants the industry needs. It has also collected views from within and outside the industry to find out how farming can become more attractive to people who will have the imagination and energy we need to meet these challenges and looked at some examples of effective initiatives at home and abroad which point the way forward.

The project started with a series of short papers which were invited from people representing different viewpoints through the summer of 2008. To get more views and reactions these were posted on the Society website as they were received, were sent to Society members with their weekly e-news, Agri-bulletin, and also went to subscribers to the Arthur Rank Centre's RuSource project. These contributions are given in Section 2 of the report.

A seminar was held on November 26<sup>th</sup> 2008 to discuss conclusions from the discussion so far, to identify some points which might have been missed and to discuss what needs to happen and how we can make it happen. The conclusions from the seminar are given in Section 3 together with some reactions received afterwards and a series of cameos summarising the activities of land-based colleges kindly coordinated by Vic Croxon of Landex.

These activities highlighted the need for some desk research to investigate the numbers and types of new entrants the industry needs and to look for examples of good practice within and outside the industry. Thanks are due to David Swales and Chris Catchpole of Lantra and Vic Croxon for their help in putting this information together. Section 1 presents this information and draws together the main points from the following two sections.

The project has been coordinated by Bill Graham and Janet Hickinbottom of FACE and thanks are due to them particularly for their help with networking and for their patience and support and to Denis Chamberlain of RASE who helped the project expand from its initially modest objectives and added cohesion and clarity to what had turned out to be a mass of numbers and ideas. Thanks also to the wide range of contributors who took time to put their views into words.

Alan Spedding<sup>1</sup>, June 25, 2009

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Spedding, BSc, BA, ARAgS is Honorary Editor of the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England. He produces RuSource a weekly e-briefing for agricultural professionals and the Members' Agri-bulletin for RASE. He was the Society's Communications Development Manager between 1991 and 2002 and Chairman of Council of the British Institute of Agricultural Consultants between 1999 and 2001.

## Summary and recommendations

This investigation has collected views and information from within and outside the industry to find out how farming can become more attractive to young people who will have the imagination and energy which the industry needs to meet its future challenges.

There is a world-wide consensus that agriculture is struggling with an outdated image. The industry does not effectively sell itself to the broader community, and more specifically to parents, career counsellors and students. "The farm is still the best workplace in the world" as one commentator in New Zealand has written and we need to get that message across.

Our next generation of farming people will choose agriculture in competition with other industries which nowadays are better resourced to put their case. We must get our act together to promote an image of farming which brings out the wide variety of opportunities and challenges which there are and by offering good pay and housing, flexible work patterns and careers and continuous professional development. A large number of initiatives are doing great work and making an impact on various aspects of the problem but there is little co-ordination between them. So the industry needs a collaborative strategy to achieve these goals. The solutions we come up with will need "innovative approaches to partnership, employment and investment and a new understanding of what's important to up-and-coming farmers" including a work-life balance. It's not just a matter of catching up with other industries in attracting the best young people but getting ahead of them.

Predicting the numbers of people the industry will require is difficult but it looks like farming will want in excess of 6,000 new entrants a year for the next 10 years of which perhaps 1,000 will be for salaried management roles. The available statistics indicate that only between 50% and 70% of the recruits needed by employers are coming out of further and higher education. So there is a shortfall in numbers coming forward. But the 6,000 new entrants we need is fewer than 1% of the pool of young people which will be available to enter the UK industry every year between now and 2020.

A recent IGD survey<sup>2</sup> has shown that the general public support British farmers strongly. It says that the industry needs to be 'louder than ever before about... (its) special values'. But we are also perceived as weak in public relations and communication skills. We must convince likely recruits that farming is complex, technical, challenging and satisfying. Our current efforts do not compare well with image building for careers in the Army, Health, Teaching, Science and Engineering and the Motor Retail Business for instance. Many of these groups are better resourced than we ever could be so we need to make up for this by putting our efforts where there will be most impact.

NFU made a start through its Why Young People Matter to Farming campaign launched in 2007 but agriculture in its broadest sense is unlikely to make a major impact as an industry unless all sectors – farming, agricultural engineering, agricultural science and all the support sectors up-stream and down-stream from the farm, come together to promote their career potential. Recent media attention in TV programmes like 'Country file' and "Jimmy's Farming Heroes" allied with the more widespread attention which is being given to issues of food security show that, if the industry as a whole can get its act together, we will be pushing at an open door.

## Recommendations

This report is not intended as an end point, but rather as the step in a process. The following recommendations focus on improving the opportunities for young people entering our industry. They are a platform for further discussion, collaboration and action at all levels.

### Farming industry

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<sup>2</sup> Joanne Denny Finch, IGD, Oxford Farming Conference (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009) <http://www.ofc.org.uk/>

- Organisations and businesses in the farming and related industries must work together to raise awareness, offer high quality information and provide work related opportunities as an explicit part of their strategic role.
- Provide one respected educational channel for information about the industry and to ensure that information is up to date, accurate and concise.
- Offer a major Careers Convention which brings together employers from farming, agricultural machinery, agrochemicals, advisory and extension, research and marketing. The event should highlight the science, IT, environmental and business opportunities within the sector.
- Work with careers advisors to improve the quality and accessibility of information available.
- Use the new land-based diploma to provide a bridgehead into schools and colleges promoting agriculture and related industries as a top career destination.
- Develop an ambassador scheme underpinned by training to offer work related opportunities and facilities to take farming and related sectors to schools.

### **The Education Sector**

- Schools and the wider learning sector should be made more aware of the potential of the agricultural, food and environment sectors as a competitive career destination.
- Educationalists and career specialists must be encouraged to present a positive image of the industry and to present high-quality, relevant advice on qualifications and careers. The views of young people should inform the direction of future plans.
- Develop a website designed to be the first port of call for young people interested in agriculture and related sectors. It must give a clear picture of the industry and the opportunities in it, with links to further education, job placements and sources of further information.
- Ask the audience - undertake a consultation process with young people to find out what turns them on (or off) a career in farming or related industries. Make that survey information available throughout the school and college sector.
- Provide support for relevant qualifications including the Environmental & Land-based Diploma
- Ensure that the message is taken to urban as well as rural schools, dispelling the myth that the only entry into farming and related sectors is through inherited wealth!
- Encourage late entrants and career switchers to all levels of practical farming and related industrial sectors.

### **Leadership**

- Leadership is critical - industry leaders and educationalists should co-operate to champion and promote this agenda in order to stimulate debate and implement action. All should work together to identify and disseminate best practice.
- Form an alliance to develop and advocate a coherent strategy drawing on this report's findings.
- Host a conference of initiatives working in the area to exchange experiences and consider more collaboration – including an international perspective.
- Develop a database of case studies about successful projects, careers fairs, farm placements, content of courses, what can be learned from other activities and organisations including overseas experience.
- Review and encourage progress being made in setting up a professional body for agriculture which could foster the development of lifelong learning and professional development to allow recruits to record and authenticate their experience as it builds. Explore how there might be collaboration between employers to identify a genuine career structure within the industry.
- Consider the potential for recruiting older people bearing in mind the increasing mobility and flexibility of work nowadays.

### **Funding**

- Funders of all types, including government should refine or develop long term funding models that encourage sustained activity.

**Central Government**

- Central Government and its agencies should recognise the importance of attracting and training the next generation of farmers and employees in the agricultural industry as a key element of the skills agenda.
- Current discussions led by Defra around the skills agenda should take the challenge on board and capture the need for pro-active promotion of skills training to potential entrants.

## **Section 1 – Analysis**

## The vision for future agriculture

Farmers need to double world food production by 2050, without causing damage to the environment and they probably also need to produce some extra crops to replace fossil fuels. They will have to achieve all this for increasingly discriminating consumers in volatile world markets and against a background of unpredictable climate change. UK farmers will probably be less affected by climate change than those in many other countries so we may need to expand production more than elsewhere and grow more than our share of the world's future food demand.

It's a 'big ask' so we must attract the very brightest, dynamic and go-ahead people to have any chance of meeting these challenges. We need to find the best people by marketing agriculture as a career to them from an early age and do this by giving a fuller picture than we have in the past about what we do, the variety of skills needed and the financial and other rewards which can be expected.

The conclusion of this research is that the future industry should be run by people who are progressive, entrepreneurial and have outstanding business management skills. They must be supported by a highly skilled operational workforce. To attract them we will need to offer better pay and housing and encourage them into lifelong learning and continuous professional development. We will often have to accommodate their requirements for new patterns of work, for instance by offering flexible work hours. They will expect enjoyable and satisfying jobs and possibilities for career development within single businesses or by moving on to other farms or to businesses outside the industry.

It will be important to get across the point that not just farmers' children become farmers. As one contributor to the discussions which started this report wrote "Our industry needs injections of blood from outside to keep it healthy".

We need to attract these people in competition with other industries which are way ahead of us in their marketing efforts.

# How many people will be needed and how many are coming into the industry?

## How many are needed?

The number of people the industry will need in future depends on how changes now ongoing will eventually pan out and these are impossible to predict with any precision. The current recession adds to the complexity. However it is possible to get a broad feel of the numbers required from published information about the size of the industry and about how it is changing.

Changing farm size is one of the main forces affecting employment opportunities. The number of large farms is increasing as holdings merge. But the number of small farms is increasing too as a result of rural in-migration. Some of this land actually gets rented out to larger holdings fuelling the increase in the size of working farm units.<sup>3</sup> The number of medium-sized farms is falling quite dramatically as is illustrated by the fall in the number of full time farmers in Table 1 below. The rise in the number of salaried managers also shows how bigger farm businesses are producing more career development opportunities. You don't necessarily need to have capital invested to have an important job in the industry.

Migrant workers are an important part of the agricultural workforce but can be regarded more or less as a separate group, most of them will be included in the 'Seasonal and casual' category in Table 1, though employers are said to suggest that these figures undercount actual numbers.<sup>4</sup> Backing this up one piece of research has estimated that they make up as much as 47% of total agricultural employment.<sup>5</sup> Also there are anecdotal reports of more permanent migrant workers currently working in the sector as dairy stockmen for instance but there seems to be no good information about their numbers.<sup>6</sup> Impacts of the recession and numbers of migrant workers returning home will also affect these figures but will not have much impact on the groups we are interested in for new entrants which will exclude seasonal and casual workers.

**Table 1 Labour force in agriculture, UK (thousands)<sup>7</sup>**

	Average 1996-98	2008
Regular whole time workers	101	66
Regular part-time workers	55	45
Seasonal or casual	77	62
Salaried managers	9	15
Farmers, partners, directors and spouses	<b>2003</b>	<b>2008</b>
Whole time	160	146
Part time	190	197

Although overall employment in agriculture is expected to decline there will be a significant 'replacement demand' for those retiring or leaving the sector. Lantra figures extracted from the UKCES (UK Commission for Employment and Skills) Evidence Report 2 (December 2008) '*Working Futures 2007-2017*' are shown in Table 2 below and indicate a need for 60,000 new entrants for agriculture over the next 10 years, so around 6,000 per year. Agriculture is defined here as arable farming, livestock production, horticulture, hunting and game propagation.

<sup>3</sup> Ilbery, B., Ingram, J., Kirwan, J., Maye, D., and Prince, Nick, 2009, *Structural change and new entrants in UK agriculture: examining the role of county farms and the Fresh Start initiative in Cornwall*, J Royal Ag Soc England Vol 170, in preparation

<sup>4</sup> David Swales, Lantra, personal communication

<sup>5</sup> Scott, S., McCormick, A., and Zaloznik, M., 2008, *Staff Shortages and immigration in agriculture*, web published by the Migration Advisory Committee (accessed 14 May 2009) at: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/workingwithus/mac/scott2008>

<sup>6</sup> David Swales, Lantra, personal communication

<sup>7</sup> Agriculture in the UK, Defra 2009, (accessed 8<sup>th</sup> June 2009) <https://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/auk/default.asp>

**Table 2 UK Changing Composition of Employment by Occupation – Agriculture**

National Statistics Office Standard Occupational Classification 2000			
	2007	2017	Total Requirement 2007-2017
<b>Employment Levels (000s)</b>			
1. Managers and Senior Officials	42	38	14
2. Professional Occupations	5	4	1
3. Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	9	9	3
4. Administrative, Clerical and Secretarial Occupations	11	8	1
5. Skilled Trades Occupations	134	104	25
6. Personal Service Occupations	35	32	10
7. Sales and Customer Service Occupations	3	3	0
8. Transport and Machine Operatives	28	18	-1
9. Elementary Occupations	116	85	7
Total	383	300	60

Lantra/IER Working Futures 2007-2017

The figures use the National Statistics Office Standard Occupational Classification which differ from the classifications used by Defra in Table 1. For agriculture most of the jobs are classified as 'Skilled Trades Occupations' and 'Elementary Occupations' (unskilled) followed by 'Managers and Senior Officials' (which will include farm owners and paid managers), 'Personal Service Occupations' and 'Transport and machine operatives'.

These are about the best figures available but Lantra's view<sup>8</sup> is that they may be on the low side - the UKCES analysis may put too much weight of the recent tough few years agriculture has faced and too little on the industry's better current prospects. We might conclude, therefore, that the industry needs 'at least' 6,000 new entrants a year over the next ten years or so.

The classification used in Table 2 hides the fall in full time farmers shown in Table 1 because part time farmers, whose numbers are increasing are included in the same category ('Managers and senior officials). Also, perhaps more important in terms of future careers, the increase in salaried managers, already referred to, has also been lost in the same category. It may well be that up to 1,000 of the 6,000+ new entrants needed per year for the next 10 years could be for salaried managers.

For comparison the engineering industry reckons it needs 33,000 new employees a year.<sup>9</sup>

### **How many are coming into the industry out of tertiary education?**

Reliable statistics are difficult to come by but estimates by Landex and Lantra indicate that there is a substantial shortfall in supply compared to expected employer demand. Based on an analysis of learner enrolments in Further and Higher Education they conclude that the system will only supply in the order of 50-70% of new recruits needed by employers<sup>10</sup>

The figures are difficult to interpret because students may enrol in more than one course, they may not complete courses or not go into the industry once they have completed the course. On the other hand individuals may come into the industry after further study or a period working elsewhere. People may also join the industry after a non-agricultural education and then re-train. Lantra are planning more research to clarify some of these issues.

<sup>8</sup> Personal communication with David Swales, Research Manager, Lantra

<sup>9</sup> SEMTA (UK Sector Skills Council for science, engineering and manufacturing technologies) engineering skills balance sheet - [www.semta.org.uk/public\\_bodies/research/engineering\\_balance\\_sheets.aspx](http://www.semta.org.uk/public_bodies/research/engineering_balance_sheets.aspx) (Accessed March 20<sup>th</sup> 2009)

<sup>10</sup> David Swales, Lantra and Vic Croxson, Landex, personal communication

Surveys of employers confirm these estimates by showing that there are very high levels of skills shortage vacancies in the sector (31% of all vacancies in England for instance)<sup>11</sup>

## How many young people will there be to recruit from?

There is a perception, mentioned elsewhere in the report, that “demographics are against us” - that the increasing average age of the UK population will reduce the number of young people available for agriculture resulting in a smaller pool for the industry to draw on. However Table 3 shows that a sizeable pool of potential recruits will remain for the foreseeable future. The age ranges shown are those which are mainly interested in in this study together with the projected number of over 65s for comparison.

**Table 3 Projected UK populations by age<sup>12</sup>**

Age range	2006		2011		2017		2020	
	No 000s	% total	No 000s	% total	No 000s	% total	No 000s	% total
10-14	3751	6.19	3499	5.58	3626	5.54	3860	5.78
15-19	3996	6.60	3827	6.10	3503	5.35	3522	5.28
20-24	4024	6.64	4353	6.95	4113	6.29	3970	5.95
Over 65	9687	15.59	10494	16.72	12059	18.43	12680	19.00
<b>Total</b>	60587		62761		65421		66754	

The table shows that the overall UK population is projected to rise by just over 6 million by 2020 and that about half of this increase will be among those over 65 years old.

The pattern for young people is more complicated with the 10-14 age group reducing in number until 2011 and increasing thereafter. Numbers of 14-19s are projected to fall until 2017 after which they should recover and the numbers in the 20-24 age group should rise till 2011 and then fall to 2020.

As a percentage of the overall population the 10-14s should fall to 2017 and rise to 2020, the 15-19s should fall until 2020 and the 20-24 year olds rise till 2011 and fall thereafter.

Despite these fluctuations the table shows plenty of potential recruits for agriculture. Looking at the 15-19s there are never less than 3.5 million and, assuming their numbers are fairly evenly distributed within this 5-year age range, one fifth of this, 700,000 would be available to be attracted towards agriculture or to go into tertiary education for a land-based qualification between now and 2020. As shown above we need to recruit 6,000 plus of these a year or fewer than 1% of those available.

## How many people are needed by the industries supplying farmers?

The machinery sector (see P48 below) reports few problems finding recruits. Land based industries are less affected than most by the recession and there is a pool of skills available, for example from the automotive industry. There is also a natural progression of careers from dealerships to manufacturing. Nevertheless the sector is aware that this situation could change as the economy settles out after the recession - there have been difficulties recruiting for dealerships in the not too distant past.

The rest of the agricultural supply trade represented by the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC) directly employs almost 84,000 people in 300 member companies (see P50 below). The age profile of the sector mirrors that of agriculture and the AIC says there ‘is a dearth of young blood.’ They have not made estimates of the numbers they need in future but using similar arithmetic to that above they may need over 1,000 young recruits a year for direct employment.

<sup>11</sup> National Employer Skills Survey 2007, in Lantra Skills Assessment 2009

<sup>12</sup> Calculated and selected data from population projections by the Office for National Statistics (accessed 6<sup>th</sup> June 2009): [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_population/NPP-2006/NPP06\\_NSONline.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/NPP-2006/NPP06_NSONline.pdf)

## What's happening? Some examples...

There are many imaginative initiatives in the UK of which a selection is given below. Further details of these appear later amongst the invited articles and responses. There is a need for these and others to be recorded on a database and available on a website to keep those involved informed and to avoid repeated 're-invention of the wheel' and to ensure the most practical schemes get wider use.

1. Fresh Start, established in 2004, is working with potential industry new entrants and helping established farmers to think about how they can develop their businesses, including their exit strategy. It is also actively seeking ways to encourage and support family succession and to develop strategies within farm businesses for continuity in which new entrants can develop through joint ventures to build equity. At the time of writing there were 17 Fresh Start Academies operating across the country involved in business skills training, mentoring and identifying business opportunities using a matchmaking network. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/working/new-entrants/publications.htm>
2. FACE has been active in raising the awareness in schools of careers in the sector through a wide variety of activities. These include: professional development for careers advisers; case studies of the world of work; and linking curriculum subjects to work related learning. Most recently FACE has taken a lead in signposting resources to support the Environmental & Land-based Diploma and developing a training module for providers wishing to work with schools on workplace learning. <http://www.face-online.org.uk/>
3. The Land-based Colleges are working hard to promote agriculture as a career and a series of cameos provided by a number of colleges about the work they are doing are given in later in the report. Many are now deeply involved with the new Environmental & Land-based Diploma for 14-19 year olds. Among the activities they provide taster and BTEC courses, lecturers visit schools, they attend school careers events, hold events for head teachers and careers advisors, farm visits and one college has over 500 14-16 year olds from 36 schools coming in for one day a week. <http://www.landex.org.uk/>
4. Lantra, the industry Sector Skills Council is also working hard. Their *Skills for Our Nation* campaign has been highlighting the importance of the sector to the country and the rewarding career opportunities it offers. For example its *Online Competence Framework* accredits people's skills and can guide their future development. Its *Agricultural Apprenticeship Frameworks* continue to be popular along with programmes like *LandSkills and Women and Work*.

They are also concentrating on influencers - for example to provide an accurate information base, which includes:

- Provision of labour market information for the new Adult Advancement Careers Service in England (due to start 2010/11)
- Careers website currently being re-developed to include the functionality of the *Skills Manager* programme which includes progression routes. It will also include separate sections to three target groups (career practitioners, young people and career changers/adults). Sub-contracting to write/check the Jobs4U job profiles, used by Connexions (see below).
- Provision of fact sheets and booklets

Lantra also now have a *Recruitment, Image and Careers strategy* (reference – not available at time of writing). <http://www.lantra.co.uk/>

5. NFU *Why Farming Matters* campaign (<http://www.whyfarmingmatters.co.uk/>) aims "to give everyone a much clearer idea of the current and potential contribution farming provides to the economy, to the quality and security of our food supplies, to the beauty and diversity of our countryside, to combating climate change and to the rural economy."

*Young People Matter to Farming* is part of the campaign Paul Temple, recently retired NFU Vice President says "If you've never considered a land-based career before, it's perhaps time that you did... A life on the land in the 21st Century isn't just about wellies and muddy hands - it's about adapting technology, selling to your strengths, listening to the customer and being the best you possibly can. Farmers are getting older and we're on the look out for young people to take agriculture and horticulture on to greater success." An attractive booklet *A Life on the Land* backs up the campaign (<http://www.whyfarmingmatters.co.uk/x313.xml>).

6. Leadership and management development courses like those organised by the Worshipful Company of Farmers and the Institute of Agricultural Management and Nuffield Scholarships provide important mid-career development opportunities.
7. The Pig Industry Skills Development Strategy with its new suite of easily accessible qualifications and its professional register provides a template for the rest of the industry to develop its professionalism.
8. The AEA's Landbased Technician Accreditation Scheme provides tiered progression through the industry giving a clearly defined career path for those working in the land-based engineering sector and could also be a model for other sectors.
9. There are various hubs and groupings like the Business Development Groups run by the Land-Agents Smiths Gore which need to be included in any collaborative activity which results from this report. Smiths Gore also work with landlords and tenants in groups.
10. A farmer-led group at Kirkley Hall College in Northumberland is establishing a specialist upland centre for red meat production, pastoral conservation and environmental care in tune with the needs of food production, tourism and wildlife.
11. On the schools side Connexions is an example of an initiative which provides careers advice and guidance in imaginative ways including placement days for advisers and teachers, work experience schemes for pupils and apprenticeship schemes with clear progression routes.
12. Activities like LEAF's Open Farm Sunday and Essex Food, Farms and Countryside Schools Day need to be expanded.
13. The 'Grow' initiative - horticultural industries have come together to market the industry as a potential career of choice, initially to young people. Organisations have put a sum of money in to pay for research and development of a website and school packs/materials: <http://www.growcareers.info/>
14. The situation is not the same everywhere. There has been an upsurge in committed professional and free thinking young people joining the British Institute of Agricultural Consultants. They want to be part of a developing, wide ranging and professional industry that is based on land occupation and are prepared to take an entrepreneurial attitude to achieve this. On the other hand the agricultural supply industry reports great difficulty in finding graduates with agriculturally related degrees. They think our poor image is part of the problem.

## Searching the web

A Google search on farming - or agricultural-careers comes up with a wide selection of websites of variable quality. There is a need for more co-ordination about this particularly looked at from the point of view of someone browsing to decide their future direction (rather than looking for a particular job). There is nothing much that gives a detailed and up to date picture of what agriculture is about. Some examples are:

- Defra Careers in farming – information and links only: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/working/careers/>
- Recruitment consultancies eg De Lacy Executive; <http://www.jobs-in-agriculture.co.uk/>
- Careers services from land based colleges eg Royal Agricultural College at: <http://www.rac.ac.uk/?id=3123>
- Lantra website section for young people and parents

Chris Catchpole, Development Manager - Careers & Employability, Lantra has pointed out that different sectors of the industry tend to have slightly different approaches and work in isolation, for example Land-based Engineering's *Careertrack* programme ( <http://www.careertrack.info/>) (run by BAGMA the trade association representing agricultural and garden machinery dealers in the UK). The result is that many organisations do some really good work but there is duplication and little co-ordination or consistency and some sources contradict each other sending out confusing messages to the potential audience.

There is a need for organisations to come together to create a strategic direction and an action plan accordingly, so as to pool resources, co-ordinate current and future activity and provide consistent messages.

# The international experience

This section summarises the results of a web-based review. It gives some examples of world wide perceptions of the problems of attracting new blood to agriculture and some of the solutions which are being recommended and brought into being.

## Summary and conclusions

Many of the analyses resonate with the conclusions drawn elsewhere in this report for the UK situation. There is a world-wide consensus about the problem and where the solutions lie but less in terms of active and effective projects making a difference.

Agriculture everywhere is struggling with an outdated image. We need to get young people to understand how the industry is in continuous change, how sophisticated and wide ranging it now is and show how career progression is possible. "The farm is still the best workplace in the world," a commentator from New Zealand has said. Solutions are "tied to innovative approaches to partnership, employment and investment and a new understanding of what's important to up-and-coming farmers" including a work-life balance. A serious brain drain is under way. Too many young people, parents, educators and policy-makers still see agriculture as a career of last resort. The industry does not effectively and positively sell itself to the broader community, and more specifically to parents, career counsellors and students.

Among other points which may have lessons for the UK:

- Tertiary education needs to be structured so that students have the flexibility to change their jobs as their careers evolve.
- Providing mentoring and facilitating social networks for young farmers may be important too.
- An industry development body was suggested for Australian horticulture to be a catalyst for change. It needs to be entrepreneurial and visionary. Is there a need for an overarching role to co-ordinate recruitment in the UK?
- There need to be as many people as possible involved in lifting the image of farming.
- In some areas making agriculture more profitable is seen as an integral part of attracting what one commentator calls "the shining stars".

Almost everywhere there are schemes which tackle parts of the problem of recruiting good new people but this review has found no evidence of more holistic scheme that bring together all the threads of image, public relations, education, career structure and in-job support and training. For example in the USA and Jamaica there is Government legislation to encourage incomers with finance and other support. There is reduction of taxes for young farmers in France together with priorities for young farmers to purchase neighbouring land and Single Farm Payment top-ups – also a campaign to jazz up farming's image. New Zealand's cooperative model enables young dairy workers to progress to management roles or build up equity in dairy businesses. Also a South Australian meat industry project is working on attracting and retaining workers by developing clearer career pathways. Other support is targeted at bottlenecks where support is most likely to be cost-effective. Ireland gives priority to new entrants for new milk quota. Scotland offers interest rate relief on development loans for young farmers. The 'One Wales' programme gives business advice, succession planning and joint ventures and plans to make financial support available from 2010. Northern Ireland has an interest rate subsidy on business loans.

## Recognising the problems

### Canada

An article by CBC News reported interviews of young farmers about the problem of keeping the number of Canadian farmers from shrinking further<sup>13</sup>. The article concluded that the "agriculture industry is struggling with an outdated image of the farmer that is making it difficult to attract young

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<sup>13</sup> CBC news, The Canadian Press, January 19, 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/consumer/story/2009/01/19/young-farmers.html> (accessed 1st May 2009).

people.” And that “In trying to attract young people, we have to set a positive example and make it sexy” and “Consumers really have that kind of American gothic idea of a straw hanging out of the mouth ... They don’t understand how sophisticated farm operations have become and the type of work that (farmers) do in terms of environmental programs, food safety programs and the incredible contribution that agriculture makes to this economy”, the article continues. One solution, the article suggests is for tertiary education to be structured so that students have the flexibility to change their jobs as their careers evolve.

An article on the Nova Scotia agricultural information website, Extension Central, ‘*Retaining and Recruiting the Next Generation of Farmers in Cape Breton*’ by Amy Melmock,<sup>14</sup> an Innovation and Development Consultant, refers particularly to the Cape Breton area of Atlantic Canada but, again has wider relevance <http://www.landex.org.uk/nce>. It argues that “the solution to youth involvement in agriculture is tied to innovative approaches to partnership, employment and investment and a new understanding of what’s important to up-and-coming farmers.” One big obstacle is seen to be finding mentoring for people who want to stay in agriculture.

### **New Zealand**

Kevin Bryant, Chief Executive of the New Zealand Agriculture Industry Training Organisation finds it “remarkable that at a time of economic doom and gloom, with business activity in many sectors in serious decline, New Zealand’s number one industry – agriculture – still struggles to attract young and talented New Zealanders”<sup>15</sup>. The agriculture industry is filling only about 65% of its advertised vacancies. The dairy sector alone is eager to recruit a further 2000 to 3000 people. The message is still not getting through despite profile through TV advertising and the internet and the commitment and vision of some of the country’s most successful business leaders. “For those that love the freedom of the outdoors, the farm is still the best workplace in the world.” he says but most New Zealanders “cannot get past fence posts and gumboots to see the lucrative and rewarding careers to be had in management, IT, research, consultancy, marketing and retail across the agriculture sector.”

“To be successful, we need plenty of our best and brightest to work in our number one industry (but) too many parents, educators and policy-makers still see agriculture as a career of last resort, a job for dummies. The truth is that talented young farmers and agribusiness workers are extremely well rewarded. New Zealand agriculture’s cooperative business model enables young dairy workers, for example, to progress to farm management roles or build up equity and gain a real stake in farm ownership. We have a world-class training system where students are paid to learn and can gain nationally recognised qualifications on the job,” he says.

### **Australia**

Research in Australia entitled “*Attracting the shining stars to agriculture*”<sup>16</sup> finds that agricultural education does not attract the brightest students and argues that “the profession may do well to consider where it wishes to position traditional agricultural education providers in meeting future sector requirements.”

A vision for a strategy to attract young people to Australian horticulture<sup>17</sup> is to have a strong cohort of bright young people, finding fulfilling careers, studying applicable courses at all levels, meeting employer needs and contributing to the ongoing growth and vitality of the industry. The key message is that the horticultural industry does not effectively and positively sell itself generally to the broader community, and more specifically to parents, career counsellors and students. A whole-of-horticulture

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<sup>14</sup> ‘*Retaining and Recruiting the Next Generation of Farmers in Cape Breton*’, [http://www.extensioncentral.com/index2.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_view&gid=275&Itemid=31](http://www.extensioncentral.com/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=275&Itemid=31) (accessed 1st May 2009).

<sup>15</sup> *Great agriculture jobs go begging*, Rural News, 27/1/2009 <http://www.ruralnews.co.nz/Default.asp?task=article&subtask=show&item=16942&pageno=1> (accessed 1st May 2009).

<sup>16</sup> “*Attracting the shining stars to agriculture*,. Falvey, L. Institute of Land and Food Resources, University of Melbourne, 2000 <http://www.cababstractsplus.org/abstracts/Abstract.aspx?AcNo=19981802109> (accessed 1st May 2009)

<sup>17</sup> “*Strategy to attract young people to horticulture*”. G Stone, J. Coutts, M. Casey, A. Coutts, International Society for Horticultural Science, [http://www.actahort.org/members/showpdf?booknrarnr=672\\_43](http://www.actahort.org/members/showpdf?booknrarnr=672_43) (accessed 1st May 2009)

promotional/public relations campaign is needed to achieve this purpose. An industry development body is needed to be a catalyst for change. It needs to be entrepreneurial and visionary.

Australia's pastoral industry also finds that competition for good people is fierce<sup>18</sup>. Employers face impediments in attracting people, such as the negative image and perception of agriculture, and the lack of understanding of opportunities, achievements and change in the industry. These challenges highlight the need for all to take responsibility for lifting the image of agriculture in the regions and in the cities, to lift people management skills so that pastoral managers become an 'employer of choice', and to work together to attract people to a region. This report also highlights the need to retain the 'good people' once you've got them.

## USA

In the USA there has been a lot of concern about recruiting young people to agriculture but mainly at state and lower geographical levels. For example in Illinois, Earl B Russell<sup>19</sup> points out that whilst youth development has been declared an "imperative" for the USA to remain economically viable enrolments in Colleges of Agriculture nationally have suffered in recent years. Pressures on farm families and the rural economy have made youth in 4-H (equivalent to Young Farmers Clubs) and FFA (Future Farmers of America - linking business and education) programs wonder about the viability of careers in agriculture. A serious "brain drain" away from agriculture is under way. He argues that "The historic commitment of Colleges of Agriculture to structure their teaching and research around major farm commodities now needs to be redirected to focus on the development of youth as the major human resource required for a viable agricultural industry in the coming years." He quotes a National Research Council's report, "*Understanding Agriculture: New Directions for Education*" which urges each state to examine the feasibility of establishing a centre to give leadership to expanded youth education programs in and about agriculture at its land grant College of Agriculture.

In North Central Pennsylvania the newspaper, Endeavor News<sup>20</sup> worries that the average age of local farmers has risen by 12 years over the past 15 years and that fewer and fewer young people are following their parents' and grandparents' footsteps. The solution it argues is to interest more people in agriculture and that the best way to do this is through education. A local dairy farmer is quoted as saying that to some extent it is understandable - there are easier jobs to choose and young people have seen how poor the economics are. Nevertheless, "when you work so hard for so many years to establish what you have, there's a real satisfaction to it." The need is to support innovations and educational programmes which make farming more profitable and the extension service was promoting value added food, organic production and marketing initiatives. Active vocational agriculture education programs in schools have also encouraged young people to consider farming or related fields as an occupation.

## Some solutions

### USA

In the USA the Department of Labor<sup>21</sup> has produced a comprehensive career guide to agriculture, forestry and fishing. However most initiatives seem to be devolved to States or to lower levels of government. For instance New York State Assembly has recently enacted the "*New York farmer Recruitment and Retention Act of 2009*"<sup>22</sup> which "directs the board of regents and the education department to investigate and study undergraduate agricultural programs with the goal of identifying

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<sup>18</sup> "Attracting and Retaining Young People in the Pastoral Industry", John A Taylor, Rangelands Australia, c/o School of Natural and Rural Systems Management, University of Queensland, 2006. <http://www.rangelands-australia.com.au/docs/AttractingandRetainingYoungPeople.pdf> (accessed 1st May 2009)

<sup>19</sup> "Attracting Youth to Agriculture" (1993) - Earl B. Russell, Associate Professor and Coordinator of Graduate Programs, Agricultural Education, University of Illinois-Urbana- Champaign: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1993winter/a2.php> (accessed 1st May 2009)

<sup>20</sup> Endeavor News, January 2008, [http://www.endeavornews.com/news/2008/0126/front\\_page/003.html](http://www.endeavornews.com/news/2008/0126/front_page/003.html) (accessed 9th June 2009)

<sup>21</sup> Department of Labor Career guide to agriculture, forestry and fishing: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/cg/cgs001.htm> (accessed 1st May 2009)

<sup>22</sup> New York State Assembly, <http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=A05205> (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009)

programs which encourage entry into agricultural production; establishes agriculture producer scholarships for students who agree to be agriculture producers in the state for a certain period of time after graduation; establishes a loan forgiveness program; directs the board of regents and the education department to establish and implement an outreach program to encourage elementary and secondary school students to enter the agricultural field; directs the commissioner of agriculture and markets to report to the governor and the legislature on reducing taxation on land used in agricultural production and appropriates funds.”

### **France**

In France different regions have different policies for recent entrants. They include reduction in tax and social security payments, priorities to purchase neighbouring land, and Single Farm Payment top up<sup>23</sup>. Even so French farmers say they are unable to fill thousands of positions each year<sup>24</sup>. In an effort to attract new recruits, the French government launched a campaign to jazz up farming's image. “Farming offers fashionable careers” at Paris Agriculture Fair in March which included “tomorrow I’ll be a farmer” banners. FNSEA, the French farmers’ union, has come out with a series of very short television commercials to promote the industry featuring a sheep with a Mohican haircut and a cow with a ghetto blaster wearing sunglasses. Farmers interviewed for the article were worried that the campaign would attract newcomers who do not understand that farming is hard work!

### **New Zealand**

New Zealand agriculture’s cooperative business model enables young dairy workers, for example, to progress to farm management roles or build up equity and gain a real stake in farm ownership. Dairy NZ’s “Go Dairy campaign” at <http://www.godairy.info/> features a bright and attractive website promoting careers in dairying.

### **Australia**

The Food, Tourism & Hospitality Industry Skills Advisory Council in South Australia runs a “Meat Industry Attraction and Retention”<sup>25</sup> project which identifies key workforce issues that require systemic change and has developed a range of resources to support employers and employees including attracting and retaining workers particularly by developing clearer career pathways.

### **Jamaica**

The Jamaican Ministry of Agriculture recently announced a programme designed to attract young people to agriculture<sup>26</sup>. The Young Farmers Programme is designed to provide young people with the necessary resources to become successful farmers and will “accommodate young persons, who have a passion for agriculture and a willingness to embrace new technologies needed to drive production and productivity.” The assistance provided will include: identifying suitable lands for farming; developing business plans; and making available limited access to financial resources.

The Minister declared that there is an urgent need to change the perception of agriculture in Jamaican society and make it a modern day experience capable of providing for the needs of the country. He said that it is important for young people to take up the challenge, if the country is to remain competitive in the global economy.

### **Ireland**

Ireland has recently announced<sup>27</sup> that 25% of new milk quota will go to new entrants:

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<sup>23</sup> New entrants to farming in France (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009): [www.everysite.co.uk/sources/4000625/4001952/4036409/New\\_Entrants\\_to\\_Farming\\_in\\_France.doc?id=4036409](http://www.everysite.co.uk/sources/4000625/4001952/4036409/New_Entrants_to_Farming_in_France.doc?id=4036409)

<sup>24</sup> French Farmers get a makeover; (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009) <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=101329685> (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009)

<sup>25</sup> The Food, Tourism & Hospitality Industry Skills Advisory Council in South Australlia, “*Meat Industry Attraction and retention*”, (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009): <http://www.fthskillscouncil.com.au/workforce.asp#8>

<sup>26</sup> “The Young Farmers Programme” Jamaica Ministry of Agriculture, March 21, 2009 [http://www.jis.gov.jm/agriculture/html/20090321T010000500\\_18927\\_JIS\\_PROGRAMME\\_COMING\\_TO\\_PULL\\_YOUNG\\_PEOPLE\\_TO\\_AGRICULTURE.asp](http://www.jis.gov.jm/agriculture/html/20090321T010000500_18927_JIS_PROGRAMME_COMING_TO_PULL_YOUNG_PEOPLE_TO_AGRICULTURE.asp)

<sup>27</sup> Department Encourages New Entrants To Dairy Farming (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009): <http://www.tonykillean.ie/content/view/351/5/>

**Scotland**

The Scotland Rural Development Programme offers interest rate relief on commercial business development loans of up to £27,397 for young farmers between the ages of 16 and 40 who are setting up in business<sup>28</sup>.

**Wales**

The 'One Wales' programme offers business advice, succession planning and joint ventures for new entrants and to make financial support available from 2010.<sup>29</sup>

**Northern Ireland,**

Interest rate subsidies on business loans for young farmers are offered in Northern Ireland.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Setting up Young Farmers - Interest Rate Relief: (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009):

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Rural/SRDP/RuralPriorities/Options/Newentrantsmeasure>

<sup>29</sup> New Entrants are future of farming industry, says Elin Jones (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009) :

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/news/topic/environment/2008/2137336/?lang=en>

<sup>30</sup> New entrants scheme, (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009):

<http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/grants-and-funding/new-entrants-scheme.htm>

## Improving our image

There is strong support for British farmers among the general public according to the results of a survey about consumer perceptions described by Joanne Denny Finch of IGD (Institute of Grocery Distribution) at the 2009 Oxford Farming Conference<sup>31</sup>. The survey showed that the demand for more British food is strong and that farmers are considered to be hard-working, business oriented but not well paid. She said “farmers have an approval rating to die for - so now’s the time to be louder than ever before about your special values.”

David Yelland, an ex-editor of the Sun newspaper also spoke about farming’s image at the Oxford Farming Conference. “Farming should stop using the language of the victim rather than the victor,” he said. We have allowed archetypes to go unchallenged and allowed others to steal our value. The Army, teaching and the Royal Family are examples of institutions which have listened and changed what people think of them by finding an honest and straightforward way of speaking. Farming has the greatest store of words and imagery of them all. The task of getting our image across is achievable and it is in the interests of the country that we succeed.

The contributions to the discussion and the seminar (see later in the report for more details) confirm that agriculture is widely seen from outside as strong in problem-solving and the application of science and technology but weak in public relations and communication skills. We need to fix its public face and communicate an image that farming and its associated industries are complex, technical, challenging and satisfying. We need to get across better that farmers and their workers enjoy what they do - working outdoors, growing crops and looking after animals, caring for the environment and wildlife, using technology and often battling with the weather. We must get across the breadth of skills needed to produce for markets and create new markets, cope with an increasingly complex regulatory environment, master all the relevant scientific and technical knowledge, and make money.

We need to show how we meet society’s needs – for essential food, fuel, leisure, wildlife and landscape and we must foster intelligent and informed discussion which does not shy away from areas, like intensive farming, which may be more difficult for consumers to understand.

We need to get behind the NFU initiative to compile a list of personnel and organisations which can provide visiting “Ambassadors - experts and mentors for learners in schools and colleges”.

Other conclusions from the discussion and seminar:

1. We must counter the impact of limited issue pressure groups.
2. We need to encourage more school visits to farms and work to build longer term and deeper relationships between them.
3. The industry needs one respected channel to pass this information through and to ensure that information is up to date, accurate and concise. This could be a role for FACE (Farming and Countryside Education).
4. Messages need to be tailored to different groups – consumers, schoolchildren at different ages, students in tertiary education etc.

It may be that, as an industry we are pushing at an open door. Television programmes like ‘Country file’ show that the community at large is interested in a more complex picture of farming and the rest of country life than has previously been the norm amongst the media. Also the discussions currently going on in the media about food security (probably aided by increased food prices!) are increasing interest in agriculture. The impact of Open Farm Sunday (<http://www.farmsunday.org/>) also adds to the number of people taking an interest in our industry.

**Some websites** are listed below which give a sample of what is being done. It includes other ‘industries’ which often make a much better job of building their image than we do and so may be more attractive to new entrants. Often they have more money to spend on this but we need to do what we can to make a big impact with limited resources.

The Army website, for instance has an easy to find, simple well constructed, spectacular, entertaining and easy to use website: <http://www.armyjobs.mod.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx>

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<sup>31</sup> Oxford Farming Conference (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009) <http://www.ofc.org.uk/>

There are more sources about teaching but see for example the Training and Development Agency for Schools website – including “Talk to a teacher on Facebook”:  
<http://www.tda.gov.uk/Recruit/lifeasateacher.aspx>

On Health: <http://www.careersinhealth.org.uk/>

Semta (Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies):  
<http://www.semta.org.uk/default.aspx>

Science and engineering Careers Fair eg see <http://www.get.hobsons.co.uk/news/Job-hunting/1000>

The Institute of the Motor Industry - Autocity – retail motor industry – attractive, clear and concise – a good model for an agriculture careers website:  
[http://autocity.org.uk/zgeneralcontent/gtwp\\_linkspage.php](http://autocity.org.uk/zgeneralcontent/gtwp_linkspage.php)

FACE [www.face-online.org.uk](http://www.face-online.org.uk)

Also there is a good US website for kids about farming at <http://www.bls.gov/k12/nature03.htm>

Careers Wales – farm workers -  
[https://www.careerswales.com/joboutlooks/default.asp?conid=joboutlook\\_detail&id=115&type=](https://www.careerswales.com/joboutlooks/default.asp?conid=joboutlook_detail&id=115&type=)

Defra – Farming jobs and careers – links to Fresh Start, Lantra, Connexions, BTCV,  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/working/careers/index.htm>

## Focus – now is the time!

Several contributors to the discussion and the seminars pointed out that, because agriculture is on the cusp of important changes, now is the time for the industry to get its act together. The demography is working against us. With young people making up a decreasing proportion of the population there is going to be more and more competition between industries to attract the best of them.

There is also consensus that we need to make the most of our limited resources by focussing efforts where they will have most impact. There are many good initiatives going on, some of which have come to light in this project. There needs to be a more careful review of all these and a process of selection and prioritisation so that we can grow the projects that are already moving us in the right direction.

Getting funding and particularly long term funding is a problem for many worthwhile projects and funders of all types, including government, should be pressed to develop and refine long term funding models that encourage sustained activity.

There will be no quick fix, the process must be long term and well planned and driven by the industry itself.

There should be more focus on 11-14 year-olds – that is the stage at which they begin to think about what jobs they might want. After 14 years old information needs to get more specific in describing what opportunities there are.

The Land-based & Environmental Diploma will be available from September 2009. It is vital that the industry plays a key role in determining the content and the land-based colleges lead on the plans for delivery in schools and colleges.

Further and higher education is key to the provision of outstanding young people. Colleges and universities must continue to work in close coordination with the industry to develop and promote courses that will be relevant in this new and challenging era. We are talking about 'new blood' not just 'young blood'. There will be fewer young people entering work so colleges and universities should aim not only at young people, but also at providing training opportunities for those in work. We also need to prevent the drain of the best farming kids – not "new blood" but "in the blood".

RASE should consider arranging a high profile Careers Fair at Stoneleigh Park which would broadcast attractive messages about farming and its associated industries but would also bring together all with an interest to focus on the way forward.

**Section 2**  
**Perceptions and activities**  
**Invited articles and responses**

## **A view from outside**

Alan Spedding met **Sir Mike Tomlinson** who was Chief Inspector of Schools and is currently Chief Adviser of London Challenge which aims to raise the standard of secondary education in London. He was also instrumental in bringing the Year of Food and Farming into being. These notes summarise Sir Mike's views about how farming can attract the very best people to face the challenge of the future.

### **Farming is complex, technical, challenging and satisfying**

Agriculture is widely seen from outside as strong in problem-solving and the application of science and technology but weak in public relations and communication skills. It needs to fix its public face.

To attract recruits, the industry needs to get across a more comprehensive picture which covers its opportunities and problems in detail rather than simply focussing on the areas it is proud of. It needs to foster intelligent and informed discussion and not shy away from areas which are difficult to describe.

Intensive farming, in particular, needs explaining. For example, crop production can produce high yields using chemical fertilisers and pesticides without harming wildlife and polluting water but it needs careful handling of powerful products.... Most of our eggs and poultry meat come from housed systems which use precious grain very efficiently and work at high standards of hygiene and animal welfare... Outdoor poultry are difficult to manage, are costly to keep and also need careful management to ensure high standards of hygiene and welfare... and so on.

There is lots of scope for discussion among students about what constitutes good animal welfare here and how it all fits in the world's demand for food. It's a discussion which is a more subtle than the anthropomorphic simplicities put forward by many animal welfare organisations.

The industry needs one respected channel to pass this information through to ensure that information is up to date, accurate and concise. This could be a role for FACE (Farming and Countryside Education).

### **Meeting society's needs**

The industry must show how it meets society's needs – essential food, fuel, leisure, wildlife, landscape etc. People do not understand how technical farming is nowadays. Its people must be well qualified in knowledge and problem-solving skills to cope with important new challenges. Agriculture is not currently being put across like this.

Case studies are a good way of getting the complexities of real situations across.

Encourage school visits to farms and ongoing and deeper relationship between farms and schools. Some farms could almost become school farms.

Use the internet to get lots of information across and change and update it often.

Agriculture needs to counter limited-issue pressure groups better. They have an easier job seeming clear and decisive with only a few issues to talk about. Farming needs to cope with the challenge of being more holistic, bringing out more complex arguments and explain it all in the context of global issues.

Information needs to be targeted at three audiences, teachers, pupils, families (and friends) and each group needs to get information in different ways.

### **Understand new patterns of work**

Young people going into work nowadays are not looking for a single career and pension. It has been said that the average twenty year old will change jobs six times. Agriculture needs to be able to offer jobs which fit in with these realities, by giving shorter term opportunities and by encouraging people to progress by developing challenge in their jobs and through lifelong learning backed up by quality-assured records which can be recognised on their CVs.

Conditions of employment, especially of housing, are very important. Pay often needs to be better, more in keeping with the responsibilities given and the skills needed. Involvement in business decision making also helps.

More focus should be on 11-14 year-olds – that is the stage at which they begin to think about what jobs they might want. After 14 years old information needs to get more specific as they focus in on the details. It is important to get across the point that not just farmers' kids become farmers.

An Environmental & Land-based Diploma for 14 to 19 year olds will be available from September 2009. It is vital that the industry plays a key role in determining the content and the land-based colleges lead on the plans for delivery in schools and colleges.

## **A farmer's view**

**Guy Smith** is an Essex farmer and journalist and was awarded the Society's Outstanding Communicator Award in 2007. He has been a consistent and eloquent voice in putting forward a better image of farming and persuading his colleagues in the industry to do likewise. He is responsible for the Food, Farm and Countryside booklet project which provides positive literature to anyone in a position to hand it out to the non-farming public (300,000 have been distributed since 2006). He has also been involved with the FACE/NFU school packs that have gone out to 15,000 schools since their launch in autumn 2007 and the Essex Food and Farm Schools day which seeks to give 3000 primary school children a day out to learn about food and farming.

### **Guy Smith writes...**

There was a striking headline on a BBC web-site last summer. It went something like – "First low prices, then floods and now Foot and Mouth Disease. Is this the worst job in the world?" Of course the job in question was farming. My mental reaction was "Farming the worst job in the world? Don't be ridiculous."

I wouldn't deny for a minute that farming as a job is not without its frustrations and its difficulties. The two things that largely dictate our fortunes, farm gate prices and the weather are largely out of our hands. The other problem is that because over the last century we have got so clever and efficient at what we do then the corollary to that is that our industry is always losing farmers. In 1900 we were a profession of 400,000 and now some estimate we are well below 100,000 (although admittedly the figure is confused by part-time and hobby farmers). That means many of us work under the sword of Damocles thinking that this year may be our last.

Also there is the knowledge that many of our neighbours have thrown in the towel.

Nonetheless, farming remains a great job that many outside the industry would love to have. As farmers we often get too wrapped up in our lives. We forget to count our blessings. I am sure that for most of us a month working in an inner city school or on a production line would do much to remind ourselves how lucky we are.

Of course the propensity of farmers to moan about their lot is as old as the hills themselves. It is part of our stereotype. In one analysis this miserable reputation doesn't do us any harm. Communal whingeing can be a good way to share one's problems and cope with the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' that farming sometimes hurls in our direction. But in another analysis I think this nauseating tendency to self-pitying is deeply, deeply damaging to our industry. Not just because of the negative impact it has on ourselves but primarily it must do much to put off young blood from considering a career in agriculture.

When I see headlines like the one I mentioned at the outset of this piece or when I see farmers bemoaning their lot in the media I always think to myself: "What would the average seventeen to eighteen year old A level student make of this?" Would it encourage them to consider a career in agriculture? One suspects not. While it may be honest of farmers to flag up their troubles in public I would much rather be part of an industry known for its success stories rather than one that seems to be in permanent crisis.

If we present ourselves as a failing, basket-case, problematic industry then we should not be surprised that in twenty years time we are peopled accordingly. If on the other hand we want to be staffed by dynamic, go-ahead, positive, can-do people then we would do well to suggest that today and tomorrow

we are the sort of industry that can and will make dynamic, go-ahead, positive, can-do youngsters feel they have found their calling.

When I am sometimes asked why I went into farming I like to answer that I met a farmer who knew cheap family labour when he saw it. It's not really true but I recognise that farming is dominated by the tradition of family succession and I am one such example. Despite this, the simple fact is that our industry also needs injections of blood from outside to keep it healthy. My father always said that one reason why farming was so successful in the post-war period was that the shake up of the war had meant that many from non-farming backgrounds chose to come into the industry. Suddenly people with backgrounds in engineering or surveying were running farms. Even more disturbing, women from urban back-grounds, who had arrived on farms through the Women's Land Army, were having an impact on the management of farming. I am sure it was all very discomfoting for the existing incumbents but I am also sure it was a very beneficial influx of new thinking and new influences.

And so I come to the crux of this piece (thank the lord for that I hear you cry). As farmers we must always try to see ourselves as others see us and not just as we would like to be seen. There are a number of good reasons for this but probably most important is the realisation that the way we project ourselves is key to attracting the brightest young boys and girls who are considering now what their chosen profession might be.

Finally I will leave you with one last anecdote which also illustrates this point. A couple of years ago I wandered into a tent at a county show. One half was run by the young farmers and the other half by a well know farming organisation. The latter dominated their area with large posters illustrating how many farmers had been lost to the industry in the previous decade. It was a fair point but, by golly, was it in the wrong place. It made me think of a parallel scenario. The British army suffers casualties every year. These losses are very serious affairs and should be the concern of many of us and those that govern us. But the point is that when I see British army recruitment posters I never see mention of the casualty lists, all I see are images of the army being a rewarding, exciting profession that recruits the most able.

Although we don't realise it, British farming has its own recruiting sergeants – it is the farmers themselves. It really is time we took this job a bit more seriously and thought about the image we project to the next generation. Farming has its problems but probably no more than other industries. Why then do we allow ourselves to be portrayed as a problematic, failing, industry?

### **Response from Jayne Mann**

Good article about educating youngsters into farming. I have raised three daughters in a farming environment, one went to agricultural college for three years and after eight years struggled to get a good job. Now at 30 she runs a herd of 360 cows which was her life ambition. But it was a struggle. Young, fresh out of college people are very often given the most awful jobs to do on the farm, especially if they are female. I remember when I wanted to work on a farm 40 years ago, living in North London it meant two bus rides and three stations on the underground to get to a secondary school in Buckinghamshire which had a farm unit! These units were rare then, I know of one in Sussex, but are there many more? They are the true inspiration to many to go forward onto the land. 13-16 is the best age to inspire youngsters if they are not lucky enough to be born to the soil. I do agree with Guy Smith and more power to his elbow to voice his opinion. More must be done SOON.

### **Response from Veronica Retallack**

Whilst both Sir Mike Tomlinson and Guy Smith make very valid points, I believe there is a much bigger issue that needs to be addressed.

We do have a wealth of enthusiastic well educated young people leaving our land based colleges who would dearly love the opportunity to farm or be involved in a farming associated industry. Opportunities within farming itself are few and far between. Council farms historically a starting place for so many into farming are either being sold off or split to make bigger more viable operations for the

existing tenants as are Estate farms. There is no longer a natural progression route for new entrants.

I believe we need to encourage the powers that be to look at a pension scheme for farmers, and also look at planning regulations within the agricultural sector. People who have lived all their lives on the land can feel more isolated if they are forced to live in an urban environment.

Veronica Retallack is a training co-ordinator for a Vocational Training Scheme and lives on a beef and free range chicken farm in Cornwall.

### **Response from Helen Bagwell**

I know Guy Smith makes the point about attracting young people from outside farming, but I think by far the best thing first and foremost is to prevent the drain of the best of the farming kids - we have a lot to offer if we have a good brain and good training - not least because we know the realities of what we are letting ourselves in for and have the drive and determination that is 'in the blood' so to speak!

Helen Bagwell says she is farmer's child frustrated that she cannot get into farming and married to another.

### **Response from Paul Edwards**

#### **A Comment from the Outside**

One thing that I think may be putting young people off from coming into the industry is that the messages going out about farming are all so negative. They all seem to be about farming being in crisis with low incomes and no future. Young people need to be told and shown that there is a good, healthy, and profitable outdoor life with a long-term future to be had in farming. Most young people are concerned about the environment. They also need to be told that farming can be environmentally beneficial and how this can be done. People with scruples about livestock farming need to be exposed to all the non-livestock possibilities in the industry. Growing organic vegetables is a high-growth sector with good price premiums.

Farming has shown itself to be a modern, forward-looking industry, looking at radical, new products for burgeoning markets. Cereals are or should be becoming the big thing with the worldwide shortage and expanding SE Asian markets wanting new and better foods. I was wondering, the other day, with the milder 'global warming' climate, if we should not be experimenting with rice growing on the Somerset levels!

Paul Edwards is a Community Projects Officer for the Community Council for Devon

### **Response from Kate Russell**

I think this is a massively important topic so am delighted that it is getting some publicity.

One thought which occurred to me whilst reading it - there is much talk these days of more involvement in schools from the private sector, with suggestions that charities, faith organisations and even private businesses could be involved in the running and management of schools. Could this be an opportunity for agriculture? A school run with an input from agricultural organisations could bring the farm into the classroom in many different ways; not just in geography, chemistry and biology but also in applied technology and IT, marketing, English literature and even art.

The point about reward and remuneration for jobs in agriculture is also well made. We simply cannot

expect to attract the top talent unless we can offer top packages. Housing is frequently an essential part of the package and many farmers have now realised that central heating and good bathrooms are essentials, not luxuries, but I have seen some dire examples in my time. We saw much the same in land agency a few years ago, but an ongoing shortage of suitable people has changed the way employers act at long last - economic reality forced it to happen and better packages are the result.

The comparison with the Forces recruitment strategy is a good one. Whilst agriculture might struggle to match their budget, we could certainly borrow some of their ideas. How about a poster with the slogan "A career in IT?" with a picture of a row of identical workstations in some dreary office block compared to a picture of the inside of one of the latest combine harvesters? We need radical thinking supported by the agricultural colleges, some of the larger employers and maybe even some professional PR advice.

Kate Russell is a Chartered Surveyor and works for JH Walter LLP based in Lincoln (her views are not necessarily those of her employers)

## **A viewpoint from David Leaver, Emeritus Professor of the Royal Agricultural College**

A dynamic and competitive agricultural industry is needed to face the future challenges of food security and the industry will have to operate within the constraints required to satisfy the growing demands of environmental stewardship. For this we shall require producers who are progressive, entrepreneurial and have outstanding business management skills, and they will need to be supported by a highly skilled operational workforce. But whilst there are many good examples of good young people coming into the industry and making their mark are there enough of them and do we have the organisation and infrastructure in place to sustain our industry in a competitive global market?

The Leitch Review<sup>32</sup> looking at the long-term skill requirements of the country highlighted the problem of low productivity of UK industries compared with other countries, and emphasised that future productivity will increasingly be driven by the skills level of the workforce. UK agriculture also has a problem as it was in the premier league for growth of productivity until the mid- 1980's, but since that time has lagged behind other countries such that we are now towards the bottom of the league<sup>33</sup>. It is not too surprising therefore that this loss of competitiveness has been associated with a decline in self-sufficiency in food that we can produce in this country of over 1% per year during the last decade. There is a range of factors which have disadvantaged UK agriculture during this period, but an important one is almost certainly the education and skills training of the workforce at all levels.

Tertiary education (further and higher education) holds the key to the future provision of outstanding young people. However we have been through a long period of decline in agricultural education provision with farm institutes and colleges switching to non-farming subjects, the loss of highly influential higher education (HE) colleges such as Wye College and Seale Hayne and loss of agriculture schools and departments within large universities.

However, the loss of provision in colleges and universities only reflects the decline in student demand. A recent 'Review of provision for land-based studies' carried out by the Higher Education Funding Council for England<sup>34</sup> showed that whilst total student numbers in 'land-based' studies were about 12,000, only about 4,000 of these were studying agriculturally-related subjects. This means that only about 1300 students are graduating each year with agriculturally-related degrees. Although this review was for England only, when it is set against the UK totals of 344,000 full- and part-time farmers, partners, directors and spouses plus 15,000 salaried managers and 107,000 full- and part-time workers in the industry, it provides a disappointing indication of the new-blood potential of the industry. This analysis of degree-level provision is however in line with the existing educational background of

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<sup>32</sup> Leitch Review of Skills (2006) Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills. <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk>

<sup>33</sup> Thirtle and Holding (2003) Productivity of UK agriculture. Causes and constraints. Chapter 4. <http://statistics.defra.gov.uk>

<sup>34</sup> Review of Provision for Land-based Studies (2007) Final report to HEFCE. [www.hefce.ac.uk](http://www.hefce.ac.uk)

those in the industry. The recent Defra review of 'Agriculture in the UK 2007'<sup>35</sup> shows that only 12% of farmers and managers have been through full-time agricultural training.

When young people are planning a career and looking at alternatives, the job market is no different from any other market place, and agriculture will only attract good young people if there is seen to be an attractive career available for them. This has been emphasised in the previous articles by Sir Mike Tomlinson and Guy Smith. The agricultural industry which has been under great pressure for the last decade has almost inevitably sent out negative messages that will have influenced potential students, parents and school career advisers as well as farmers' sons and daughters against future careers in agriculture. Nevertheless this is changing, and increasingly we are seeing an approach to marketing by the industry as Guy Smith advocated in his article, of taking on board the line from Robert Burns 'to see ourselves as others see us'.

For many young people agriculture is seen as being not particularly well paid, involving hard physical work and unsocial hours. These negative images are no longer a true reflection of many farm situations, and the best counter to such criticisms is to demonstrate what really happens on progressive farms, and promote strongly the positives of being involved with agricultural work.

One career attraction, particularly for the 45% of young people who go through higher education is for their chosen path to be both respected and professionally recognised. It is hoped therefore that the present discussions taking place in the industry regarding professional recognition combined with a coordinated continuing professional development programme are not allowed to founder due to disinterest and lack of vision about the future.

If we genuinely wish to reverse the downward trend in agricultural productivity and competitiveness we need to both attract outstanding young people into the industry, as well as put greater emphasis on the need for continuing skills training for those already in the industry. It must be remembered that the vast majority of those who will be working in the industry over the next 30 years have already left formal education.

The recent publicity given to the global imbalance of food supply and demand will lead to food security being higher on the national agenda and agricultural productivity and competitiveness will become much higher priorities. This in itself will send out some of the positive messages about the future of the industry needed to attract young people to careers in agriculture.

To bring about change however, requires leadership from the industry, from educational providers and from government, and the need to improve agricultural productivity and competitiveness must be the driver for this change. We need to see:

- The industry marketing itself positively, promoting not only its future importance to the country's food supply and environmental stewardship, but also its requirement for highly motivated people with high levels of skill at all levels.
- Colleges and universities working in close coordination with the industry to develop and promote courses that will be relevant in this new and challenging era of the global marketplace and emphasising the importance of land-use to food and energy supplies. This should be aimed not only at young people, but also at providing training opportunities for those in work.
- Government providing the necessary impetus and incentives for educational institutions to follow this path. In addition, innovation and R&D are essential components of a progressive industry, and there is a need for a complete reappraisal by government of their policies for support of agricultural R&D.

## **A contribution to the discussion from Richard Clarke**

Richard Clarke is a graduate of Reading University. His career has included 20 years working as Farm Manager of a livestock and arable farm in Berkshire and a similar period in farm consultancy work. Richard is currently Chairman of Waldersey Farms Ltd, a large scale arable operation in East Anglia and Vice Chairman of the Institute of Agricultural Management.

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<sup>35</sup> Agriculture in the United Kingdom. <http://statistics.defra.gov.uk>

As a young boy I wanted to be a farmer. I lived with my grandparents in Suffolk where my grandfather was a farm worker. Even after we'd moved away, going back to stay with him during school holidays was all I wanted. Consequently, it felt like a natural progression for me to go from grammar school to Reading and read Agriculture. All those hours spent on a Suffolk farm made me ignore the warnings from my school careers master and others about how poor salaries were in farming.

Since university, I have been exceedingly fortunate in having a most satisfying, challenging and exciting career in the industry. And despite some difficult times I can say that I always looked forward to and enjoyed my work. In this I do not believe I am alone. Most farmers and farm workers I know relish their work and thrive on it. They truly enjoy what they do.

But why? Why precisely are there a whole load of farmers and farm workers out there who love their jobs and would never consider doing anything different? In my view it is the answer to this question which will provide the key to encouraging more young people into farming. This is the message we want to get across to those young people, this is the perception of farming and farmers we want them to have.

So here is the answer you will get from all these dedicated men and women in farming, all with their own variations but the theme is the same:

- Because farmers work outdoors, they grow crops and look after their animals. They produce the food we eat. They deal on a daily basis with the weather, with machinery, equipment and technology, grappling with new developments and all the problems and solutions these bring.
- Farming is a practical, hands on job with heaps of variety. It doesn't involve sitting in an office all day, no 9 to 5 urban grind. It's about watching and learning from year to year, tuning in to seasonal differences. And to be a decent farmer you have to have concerns for the environment, for animal welfare and for wildlife all uppermost in mind.

Such an answer, conveyed loudly and convincingly to young people, may begin to counter the negative image so often presented by the media and by farmers themselves. So the message is that working in agriculture is satisfying, rewarding, and enjoyable, has an identifiable career structure and has lots of plus factors against urban or industrial alternatives.

Traditionally farming was a low pay sector. Well things have moved on and we now have a much reduced work force utilising advanced equipment and facilities generating outputs per capita which compare favourably with industrial counterparts. Remuneration in farming is reflecting the skills and expertise of the workers. What's more, the normal forces of supply and demand are playing their part – the reality now is of an industry which may be limited in its production capabilities by the availability of skilled workers. The low pay myth needs to be laid to rest.

I believe public perception of farming may not be quite as poor as many in the industry feel and moreover I see signs of this perception changing. There is a large section of the population who understand rural and farming matters and who are sympathetic to and supportive of the farming sector. They and many, many others are becoming increasingly aware of the way major retailers have managed to keep food prices down for the British public by squeezing farmers and growers. All this has happened with the open support of a government which appears to value price more than provenance.

But our world is changing. Food supply has become a huge global issue, in but a few months we have seen the era of cheap food recede. For some in the world even the availability of basic commodities has become critical. Suddenly farming and issues of food production are being recognised as of vital importance. So timing on the issue of attracting new entrants is good, there is a window of opportunity to set the record straight and start to bring in the new blood on which the future of the farming depends.

Let us be clear that there is no "quick fix" to bringing bright and energetic young people in to the industry, the process must be long term, well planned and co-ordinated with strong and effective management.

The starting point is in schools, giving the youngest age groups a basic understanding of farming and food production and thereafter to build upon this. Current initiatives which are underway are excellent, to maximise effect and benefit they need "champions" locally who lead and promote as Guy Smith has done in Essex. Any activities which bring the general public on to farms all helps the understanding

process, farm open days are invariably a success (with or without help from the weather) and of course are well attended by parents with their children.

The farming industry is fortunate in having a highly competent resource in terms of Agricultural Colleges, Universities and Training Agencies which are well placed and capable to provide learning and skills for new entrants at all levels. The planned Environmental & Land-based Diploma for 14 to 19 year olds is in prospect an excellent introduction for those with a view to joining the industry.

To be successful the process needs to have farmer leadership and be driven by farmers to create, throughout the industry, a culture of learning and skills, the NFU is the body through its membership to provide the necessary structure. Funding will be required but the industry should not wait for government funding rather push on and show a belief in the future. I have no doubt given the importance of this project both public and charitable funds will be forthcoming to finance the costs involved.

Young people entering the industry at whatever level need to have a view of career progression, a difficult matter for an industry made up of many relatively small businesses. Ongoing learning and skills training is essential in order to utilise rapidly advancing technology and processes, to maintain quality and assurance and not least to maintain the financial efficiency of the business. Improving knowledge and skills means more profit!

The logical route to take this forward seems to be by way of farmer groups within an area who determine their requirements and priorities which will probably be "on farm" focus for training. If the structure is in place it is a small step to formalise the training to a record of learning and development. Sector Bodies from the Agricultural and Horticultural Development Boards should play a key role in the process, much of the training will be sector based, the Boards have the structure and are in a position to influence.

For those leaving Universities and Higher Education Colleges with aspirations to management positions there is currently something of a professional vacuum. Other professionals know their route is into their Professional Body but such an organisation does not exist in agriculture. The Institute of Agricultural Management with a number of like-minded bodies are seeking to remedy this by setting up a Professional Body for Agriculture with the objective of promoting excellence in agriculture and land based stewardship and business development through personal development. The vision of the PBA is the development of the professional image for the industry and promoting the integrity of British agriculture. Individual members would be expected to be far-sighted and demonstrate leadership within farming and associated agricultural industries. For avoidance of doubt let me emphasise this is intended as an inclusive organisation which while supporting formal qualifications is also aware some of our best farmers left school at an early age, perhaps this group is the best example of lifelong learning!

**To summarise:**

- There is a window of opportunity
- The Industry must be proactive and positive in communication must actively set out to create a new image
- Farming is a success story - being involved is satisfying and rewarding
- Recruitment requires a focus on schools, the teachers and the children from an early age
- To achieve objectives will require Leadership and Organisation
- Farmers should provide the Leadership
- Education and Training Bodies are in place to facilitate implementation
- Recognised Career structures and Continued Learning and Development should become the norm in the industry

## **Response from Peter Cleasby**

I think Richard Clarke's final point - the need for a professional body - is critical. The same conclusion dawned on me during my time at Defra running the Skills and Rural Enterprise Division, though the government was probably not the best body to drive the issue forward.

When I first started learning something about farming, I was surprised (to put it mildly) by the breadth and depth of skills needed to run a successful farm business. It's doubtful that many outsiders recognise the challenges posed by producing for markets (or creating new markets), coping with an increasingly complex regulatory environment, mastering and keeping up with all the relevant scientific and technical knowledge, and staying profitable. Any other profession faced with similar demands would long ago have had a professional institute with a royal charter. That sort of status at the top, together with the many other initiatives mentioned in this debate, will speak volumes to prospective entrants to what should be called a profession rather than a business.

I don't know enough about the Institute of Agricultural Management initiative Richard Clarke refers to know whether it has enough legs, but this sort of initiative has been talked about for years, with minimal results. In many ways RASE is well-placed, with its commitment to agricultural development and "science into practice", to act as the honest broker in bringing together the key players. But it really is time to bang heads together and act.

Peter Cleasby was a career civil servant, lately in MAFF/Defra; and now is a director of a Buckinghamshire-based consultancy.

## **Response from Anthony Hyde**

For far too long now the Food and Farming industries have publicly down played what has and is being achieved in both food production and environmental entrancement to our land. The concentration on the negative aspects and the traditional ways of farming and land occupation have created an air of resignation, which in turn has turned away excellent young (and new to the industry) people from joining in and leading us forward. We have lost a generation of people who could have taken the industries forward.

However, within BIAC (The British Institute of Agricultural Consultants) we have seen strong green shoots of recovery and over the last 3 years there has been an upsurge in committed professional and free thinking young people joining BIAC as full members. They want to be part of a developing, wide ranging and professional industry that is based on land occupation. They see the opportunities and are prepared to take an entrepreneurial attitude in growing their businesses and work for themselves or their employers.

BIAC has always stood for standards and raising awareness of professional, independent advice. We have established protocols and systems that not only demonstrate the transparent accountability practices for our members and their clients but also provide opportunities for ongoing professional development as consultants. The active BIAC members regularly attend in-house and shared training opportunities and the networking that exists within the Institute encourages work flow because people know and respect each other.

BIAC believes in working with others and sharing knowledge because there is nothing more wasteful than continually "reinventing the wheel". New and young people coming into the Rural Consultancy Sector want to be part of making a difference and want our industry to be an exciting environment in which they can practice their skills. BIAC in partnership with Lloyds TSB/Agriculture are running the first "Young Consultant of the Year" Competition in 2008 to provide an outlet for the skills and ideas of the under 35s.

The discussion point I would like to leave readers of the 'New Blood' discussion with is as follows:-

"The unprecedented contribution of security challenges to food, fuels, the environment and water

provide all land owners, occupiers and users with exciting challenges and significant opportunities. As an industry we need to collaborate much better and we need to encourage fresh minds to be part of what we do. We have the experience to provide the backing to all of this and in BIAAC there already exists an Institute that champions the relevant professional standards and provides a structure for advisors of all kinds to improve their competence”.

C A Hyde FRICS FBIAC ARAgS is Chief Executive of BIAAC, <http://www.biac.co.uk/>

## **A contribution to the discussion from Stephen Mansbridge**

Stephen Mansbridge is studying agriculture at Harper Adams University College.

Why Farming Matters; this is the title of a campaign run by the National Farmers Union, to create awareness of just how important agriculture is, to the wider community. The need for it comes as a report into the so-called “concrete children” and highlights the growing disconnection of people from the land.

This was the case for me, while growing up in a town, not having any knowledge of the world beyond the pre-packed frozen vegetables and the jungle of brick houses. It was not until I started secondary school and experienced life first hand on the school farm, that I realised just how diverse farming is. Gone are the days of 74 farm hands, labouring away during the heat of the day, to bring in the harvest on a 4000-acre arable estate. Replaced now by a highly skilled and motivated five-man team able to operate the latest in big farm tractors and combine harvesters, to efficiently bring in 6000 acres of mixed crops.

Of course, everyone must start at the bottom when introduced to a new industry. For me this provided a huge opportunity to learn a broad range of skills, from animal husbandry to tractor driving and all that is in between. Through joining the Young Farmers Club (YFC) I was able to socialise with a range of people my age. What would have been a normal day of school and homework before bed, suddenly became milking cows, school, feeding sows, homework and then out bowling before pizza.

One of the things I admire about the YFC is that it's run by the members, allowing you to be as involved as you like. One of their sayings is: “you get out of it what you put in” and few truer words have been said. These words encouraged me to get involved with running my club, showing livestock and more importantly, it gave me the confidence to stand on my own two feet and develop a career.

It occurred to me one day while baling hay, that farming was one of the few industries that motivates its young entrants. They encourage you to actively think outside the box and develop new methods to tackle problems, rather than rely on manufactured solutions. Constantly evolving technology is testament to an industry that is moving forward at a rapid pace. Whether it is new machinery, chemicals or production methods, most of the character building jobs of the old days, have been put out to grass. Many a day I have spent in farm workshops, trying to design or modify something to meet the farm's requirements. The average age of farmers is around 65 and most are stuck in their traditional ways. Maybe what is called for, are a bunch of creative and dynamic individuals, with unique ideas and talent, poached from outside the industry.

These entrants will be moving into a new era of farming, where the challenges have moved on from feeding Britain after the Great World Wars to feeding the World. As the East becomes increasingly westernised, pressure to produce more food increases on British farmers. At the same time public expectations of environmental protection and animal welfare issues are raised, with new red tape and directives continuously being formulated in Europe. In a World of food and oil shortages, it is often unclear which to prioritise, biofuel or food production.

The message that young people need to take an active role in running their local community, by having their say on important matters was echoed by politicians at the Young Farmers Club AGM in Blackpool. The event drew a crowd of over 5500 young members from across England and Wales. It gave them the opportunity to express their concerns and put forward questions, to some of the most influential figures in agriculture, as well as deciding how the club is to run for the upcoming year.

It has never ceased to amaze me just how many opportunities agriculture has to offer. After leaving school with GCSEs' and an NVQ I had already made up my mind to study the subject further, by doing

a National Diploma at the local Agricultural College. The course provided me with the opportunity to do a year's work placement on a real farm. This backed up the theoretical knowledge I had gained, through practical application, and allowed me to develop new ideas on the basic techniques taught. Now at university I am beginning to think about where I want to go in agriculture... maybe grain buying, animal nutrition, marketing, advisory services?

Are we doing enough to promote these opportunities to younger generations? The difficulty comes in the fact that the greatest proportion of people grow up in the urban setting, which, surprisingly does little to expose them to the wonders of the countryside. In fact there is little knowledge of agriculture, as rural science has in most cases been removed from the National Curriculum. This issue only promotes ignorance of food production and environmental conservation.

At the end of the day, what is there left to say about British agriculture? To me and I am sure many others, it offers the opportunity to do something worthwhile, which supports the community and the country. Some of the age old techniques may be classed as outdated and it's the huge leaps and bounds in technology that has pushed the boundaries of what mankind can do. After all, agriculture has shaped the landscape we all know and love today. The only hope is that the government recognises the hugely important role the industry plays, not just on a local scale but on the global scale; thus allowing this knowledge to be passed to the future generations, through education and support.

Stephen Mansbridge is studying at Harper Adams University College

## **Skills development in the pig industry – a template for the rest of farming? Richard Longthorp and Tess Howe**

Richard Longthorp is a member of the BPEX Ltd Board (BPEX Ltd is focused on enhancing the competitiveness, efficiency and profitability of pig levy payers in England). He is also Chairman of the Pig Industry Training Strategy Implementation Group. He produces free range pigs under the high welfare Freedom Foods scheme in Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, and farms 1,800 acres at Howden in East Yorkshire.

Tess Howe is the BPEX Ltd Skills Development Manager, responsible for delivering the Pig Industry Skills Development Strategy across England.

This article is summarised from '*Sustainability in the Pig Industry*' from the 2008 Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England.

The pig sector only gets minimal CAP support and has been under pressure over the last few years largely because of low prices for pig meat. Against this background the industry has worked together to develop and run a skills development strategy which could serve as an example of the way forward for other agricultural sectors.

The strategy aims '*to propagate and promote a culture that recognises the central role that investment in staff training and continual professional development (CPD) play in the improvement of business performance and competitiveness within the English pig industry...*'

Three objectives are contributing to the success of the strategy:

1. The development of a flexible, accessible skills and qualification structure.
2. The provision and promotion of an attractive environment for a progressive career in the pig industry.
3. The promotion of skills development as being central to business improvement.

As other articles in this discussion have shown skills development in agriculture has always suffered from low levels of uptake. Although the industry has dedicated training resources available through the land-based college network and private providers, there has never been a co-ordinated approach to skills development.

Traditionally, skills development programmes have focussed on the workforce, practical skills and the requirements of legislation, but it is vital that they also address business development, management,

leadership and sustainable development.

Cost can be one of the main factors affecting uptake and in an industry that is reducing staff numbers, releasing staff for training, even for a half day, can prove difficult.

Having gauged producer attitudes to training and qualifications, the National Pig Association and BPEX, in association with Lantra (the Sector Skills Council) and NPTC (National Proficiency Tests Council), generated a new suite of qualifications, the Pig Industry Certificates of Competence which has three stages:

Stage 1 – Certificate of Competence in Basic Stockmanship and Welfare (Pigs);

Stage 2 – Certificate of Competence in Pig Husbandry Skills;

Stage 3 – Certificate of Competence in Pig Unit Supervision and Operation

Each stage comprises a number of modules, ensuring the qualification is manageable and relevant to the individual. Qualification for the certificates can come from formal teaching or on-farm activities. Passing the qualification requires candidates to answer multiple-choice questions and undergo practical examination in their own place of work. This approach allows some of the barriers to assessment such as nervousness over literacy skills or unfamiliar surroundings to be broken down.

For each certificate, in-depth training manuals have been produced for both the trainee and trainer. Importantly the system allows experienced stockmen to gain formal qualifications for their existing skills and this has been key to instigating a thirst for further development in people often disillusioned with training.

Less formal methods of skills development are also used. Producer Clubs encourage the sharing of experiences and discussion of challenges. The use of workshops specifically for stockmen has also been successful, helping them to recognise their knowledge, feel less isolated and improve their confidence and productivity. In addition these activities provide updates on new technology and legislation in a friendly environment which ensures that everyone can understand and absorb the information.

The Pig Industry Professional Register (PIPR) is a key feature of the strategy. It provides a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) scheme which records and recognises skills and professional development, promotes a professional image of the industry, for individuals it provides a clear picture of what personal development is all about, it develops respect in the industry for those participating, and more directly it raises profitability and helps recruitment.

We believe that examples of current best practice like the Pig Industry Skills Development Strategy must be brought together and aligned with the emerging government skills strategies and retailer requirements to cover the whole industry. This will be no short-term fix; it will require a sustained effort by all parties and it may take several years for the industry to embrace all that is inherent within CPD fully. The development of a skilled and professional industry across the board will help it to build a reputation which attracts the best young people as potential recruits.

Encouragingly, the National Farmers Union has now firmly nailed its colours to the skills mast and the newly formed Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board is also investigating how it might most appropriately promote the skills agenda within its sector companies.

With agriculture arguably on the cusp of a new Golden Age and a greater appreciation by government and society that the availability of food should never be taken for granted, there can be no better time for the industry to embrace skills development and enjoy its benefits.

#### **Further information**

*From Sustainability to Sustained Ability – strategy for continuous professional development for the pig industry in England*

<http://smartstore.bpex.org.uk/articles/dodownload.asp?a=smartstore.bpex.org.uk.11.4.2008.8.38.25.pdf&i=295191>

BPEX Ltd: [www.bpex.org.uk](http://www.bpex.org.uk)

## **A point of view from the supply industry from Rosie Carne**

Rosie Carne, BSc MBPR FRAgS is Marketing Manager for Yara UK Limited & Vice President of Public Affairs for Yara International ASA. These are her personal views and not necessarily those of Yara.

It is the final line of challenges in Alan Spedding's introduction to the New Blood topic which I want to address: "We want to know whether we are doing enough to promote agriculture as a desirable career. Are we conveying an accurate image of modern agriculture? Does the message reach the audience it needs to? "

I work for an agricultural supply industry company - and I can see from the adverts in the farming press that we are not alone - currently trying to recruit commercial and technical people to join a well established blue-chip company. We have traditionally looked within the agricultural industry for agriculturally related subject graduates through advertising in the farming press, and for new graduates at universities.

As an example a current advert says:

*"We are looking for an enthusiastic, confident and committed person to join our sales team as a Trainee Area Manager. Training and mentoring will be provided. In due course, you will have responsibility for the sale of products in an area of the UK. You will be educated to degree level or equivalent, ideally within agriculture, with some UK agricultural background and/or exposure to the UK agriculture industry, have good inter-personal skills, sound financial awareness, good administrative skills, and be computer literate ideally in Microsoft products. Geographical mobility is essential, as is a valid driving license. A company car will be provided. We will offer a competitive salary & benefits package. Relocation assistance is available".*

The response in both calibre and number of applicants has been hugely disappointing.

It appears the answers to the above challenges could be: "No, no and no?"

### **Are we conveying an accurate image of modern agriculture?**

Previous contributors to this discussion have made very valid comments about the issue of poor communications meaning conventional farming is misunderstood by the non farming, non rural general public leading to misinformed pressure groups making things worse. Excellent schools information provided by Guy Smith's booklets, the NFU, FACE, and WFU publications, the proactive LEAF and other farmer run initiatives, and the city and school farms are all chipping away at these misconceptions. Some supermarkets are doing their bit. Recruitment does require focus on schools, the teachers (particularly the teachers) and the children from an early age. History has shown the value of people from non- farming backgrounds coming in to the industry. The media has never been more influential - if only John Humphrys had the same passion for the NFU he has for the Soil Association how better informed everyone would be! So yes we are trying to convey an accurate image of modern agriculture but to achieve success you need open and receptive ears. Do we need a role model for agriculture? Just think what a mainstream media communicator who championed the 97% of British farm practice could achieve.

There is no "quick-fix", but we are at a very important moment. We are an increasingly high-tech highly regulated industry with a window of opportunity to attract attention. Since about February, when the Government at last realised and was prepared to recognise the importance of UK produced food, farming is in the headlines for the right reasons. High energy prices and other global mega trends mean the likely end of cheap food and increasing interest in individuals and industry behaviour. Farming has a good story to tell. It does 'practice with science'. We mustn't allow the loony views that cows are greater polluters than aeroplanes to have credence. If fossil fuels are in short supply there is a case to accelerate the development of hydrogen for transport in order to devote more towards making nitrogen fertilizer- to feed our children and grandchildren in the world of 2050. You might say I would say that wouldn't I, but think about it...

### **We want to know whether we are doing enough to promote agriculture as a desirable career.**

Guy Smith made the point that British farming has its own recruiting sergeants - the farmers themselves. Well for very understandable reasons those recruiting sergeants have been actively not just taking leave from this role but canvassing against it. I remember hearing a well- known farming

correspondent back in the late 1990's say, "that encouraging your child to go in to farming was tantamount to child abuse"! I met the said farming correspondent at "Cereals 2008" with that 'abused child' who are now both enjoying the current fruits of a successful farming business. A recent applicant explained his degree was in geography, rather than agriculture, because four years ago his father persuaded him his employment chances would be greater. Luckily daddy isn't always right and luckily not all sons take any notice of what dad says...

But seriously, hereby we have the current recruitment problem. There has been no enthusiasm, confidence or commitment (see the words in my advert) to join the farming industry but with good reason. Since the mid 1990's farming industry incomes have gone down. All have had to cut costs and while farmers have tightened their belts and addressed their fixed costs, shareholders of plc's demanded plant closures, cost cutting and redundancies. We have had a decade of only essential recruitment. A decade with a declining graduate output (David Leaver says only 1300/annum), which by the time you take out the home- returning farmers leaves very few for the supply industry.

Filling the professional vacuum caused by agriculture not having a "Professional Body" would appeal to those moving successfully through the industry, but is its absence a barrier to recruitment? I wonder. I personally hope the Institute of Agricultural Management's vision of a Professional Body for Agriculture is realised but we do have the Fellowship of the Royal Agricultural Societies, do we need to reinvent the wheel when we could update the vehicle?

Recruitment also needs pride. How can we make a proud parent say, "My child is going to go in to farming, let alone the agricultural supply industry..."

You do only attract good people if you can offer an attractive career. I believe sectors of the agricultural supply industry can do that now but it is a recent phenomenon. Practical farming does have a bright future for the innovative and entrepreneurial operators- and other contributors have identified some necessary routes to open up access to farming. Wonderful projects like that at Kirkley Hall, mentioned by Mike Keeble below and other institutions provide training and leadership by example. Leadership and management courses like those organised by the Worshipful Company of Farmers provide mid career development opportunities. But labour on farm is declining and it seems we don't want to do the more mundane tasks now being filled by migrant labour. In a world where demand is outstripping supply, variable costs including input prices will continue to be high but the advice about their use to give maximum return from investment will become even more valuable to the user. This brings me to Alan's third point:

### **Does the message reach the audience it needs to?**

We have Awards recognising individuals and businesses and celebrating excellence but it is all very "in-house". Being part of a small industry, though it punches well above its weight, has disadvantages. It is largely speaking to itself. The agricultural industry has so many disparate groups, too often working on common themes but scared their particular 'lobby issue' will be lost in the general noise. Joined -up thinking as well as convergence of organisations would lead to a more efficient industry. The brand "UK farming plc" is what we all should be building, promoting and living up to, but let's get back to recruitment. To rephrase my advert:

*"We are looking to give the opportunity to an enthusiastic, confident and committed person to represent the company and have the privilege of working directly with the CEO's of a large number of British businesses, helping them add value and achieve success whilst meeting societies needs."* (For CEO read farmer).

That could be the description for a job in the supply industry. Perhaps we should look beyond advertising in the Farmers Weekly?

### **Contribution to the discussion from Dr Gordon McGlone, OBE**

This is a most interesting debate and as Chairman of Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based industries, I am delighted by the number of projects already underway by Lantra to address some of the issues raised.

With food security, fuel security and climate change dominating the summer's headlines and topping the agenda of the Japanese G8 summit of world leaders, the true importance of farming to world

economies has been brought to the fore. Climbing food and energy prices are also causing the public to appreciate just how the fate of UK agriculture and land use directly impacts on everyone.

In the midst of this, Lantra warned that the UK farmer could become extinct by 2035 unless current employment trends were reversed. The announcement heralded the start of Lantra's Skills for Our Nation campaign in June, which highlighted the importance of our sector to the country and the rewarding career opportunities it offers.

Our research has shown 38% of the sector's workforce to be aged over 45 and a forecasted 15,900 per annum shortfall in the number of new recruits to replace those leaving. The UK average age for someone employed is 40, but in agriculture this rises to 49 years, giving further cause for concern.

What the figure points to is the changing nature of employment in agriculture with fewer employers, more contractors and an increasing reliance on temporary workers. The systems Lantra develops need to support this changing workforce profile.

Alan Spedding correctly entitled this debate 'New Blood' rather than 'Young Blood'. The difference between the two is significant as the demographic projections for the UK over each of the next 15 years indicate that there will be fewer young people entering the workforce. That is not to say that agriculture should not seek to recruit some of these, but the industry must realise that skills shortages will not be met through young people alone.

Lantra also need to ensure that there is political support from the Government. Industry leaders from across the land-based sector were invited to our Skills for Our Nation launch event in the shadows of the Houses of Parliament to hear a keynote speech by the Minister for Skills, David Lammy MP. Agricultural representatives, along with Lantra spokespeople, had the opportunity to discuss important issues, including funding, with the Minister and some 30 other members of Parliament.

During a BBC Radio 4 Today interview that morning, I explained that while some job roles are lost due to our becoming a more highly skilled sector, there are lots of vacancies due to growth and retirements.

Effective use of the media is key to the success of promoting the sector. The publicity generated by the Skills for Our Nation campaign events was estimated to have an audience reach of 58.7 million and an advertising value equivalent of almost £1.8 million with articles still appearing over a month later. Coverage of the campaign is available on our website [www.lantra.co.uk/skillsforournation](http://www.lantra.co.uk/skillsforournation).

With a goal being to attract entrants and promote the raising of skills by those already in the sector, we eagerly awaited figures reflecting the effect of our campaign. Enquiries to our Connect telephone and email helpline increased 147% upon the previous two months, and 124% on the same period a year earlier. While not every enquiry leads to someone embarking upon a fresh career, this level of increased interest is an important first step.

Lantra CourseFinder, the online training and course search facility, recorded a 50% rise in the number of individual course searches to 4,034, and a 60% increase in telephone and email enquiries over the previous two-month period.

A learning point here might well be that the various organisations involved in promoting careers should agree core messages and perhaps pool our often meagre marketing budgets to achieve greater and continuing impact. This could be one of the outcomes of the Skills Forum now being promoted by the NFU.

Lantra has developed a system, the Online Competence Framework (OCF) which not only recognises and accredits people's skills, but also guides their future development so they can meet both current and future job requirements. This system applies regardless of level. The system will also provide a unifying technology for the proposed Professional Body for Agriculture.

When Europe sought a system capable of recognising and endorsing agricultural migrant workers' skills, it was the UK's occupational standards facilitated by Lantra and the technology behind OCF which inspired the "Agripass" solution put forward. "Agripass" is being championed in Brussels by the NFU.

OCF technology is also behind Lantra's National Student Database, successfully piloted in eight Landex (land-based) colleges across the UK and due to launch this September. Initial feedback showed students found benefits to having career information all in one place. It allowed them to search job roles and consider their options using an easily navigated online system. Students also liked the software's ability to maintain an endorsed CV, and thus provide a ready reference of their skills and qualifications.

Tutors found its information, advice and guidance extremely useful in helping students target their development and identify their strengths and weaknesses in relation to career goals. It also helped students understand the value of qualifications and work experience.

Enrolment figures gathered by Lantra provide encouraging evidence that commitment to agriculture is attracting more interest once again. The 1504 enrolments on agricultural degrees/higher degrees in 2006/07 are up 140% on 2005/06, and above the 2003/04 level of 1380 (based on HESA data), while further education enrolments in 2005/06 for England are calculated as 4109, up 28% on the previous academic year (based on Learning and Skills Council data). Agricultural apprenticeship frameworks, developed by Lantra in collaboration with farmers, continue to be popular.

It is anticipated that the arrival of England's new qualification, the Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies will boost young entrants to the sector. It can be taken alongside GCSE and A level subjects and is recognised by higher and further education admissions tutors.

Lantra, and the sector's employers, have been at the forefront of the Diploma's development and 51 consortia (partnerships of schools, colleges and employers) are approved to start delivering it come September 2009.

Work-related or 'applied' learning is a key feature of the Diploma and accounts for 50% of its principal (mandatory) learning. This ensures learners acquire and apply knowledge, skills and understanding through tasks that share many of the characteristics of real work, or are set within the workplace.

Businesses are encouraged to become involved in its delivery through a range of activities outlined on Lantra's website [www.diplomaelbs.co.uk](http://www.diplomaelbs.co.uk). Thus farmers have a great opportunity to influence and encourage the UK's future workforce to perhaps consider careers or undertake further study in the industry.

Lantra recognises also the importance of supporting the skills of all those already in work. They do, after all, comprise some 80% of the 2020 workforce. Across the nations, Lantra is managing rural development programmes to develop business skills and improve the competitiveness, efficiency and profitability of agriculture businesses.

For example in England, LandSkills is a European/Defra-funded rural development programme supporting a range of skills and knowledge transfer activities. Also the Women and Work programme funds training to enable women to develop and progress in their careers, thereby providing more female role models in industries, such as agriculture, where women are under-represented.

As the public are becoming increasingly conscious of environmental issues, recognising the importance of food security and are keen to learn more about where their food comes from and how it's produced, media coverage has reacted and is delivering a more informed and positive view of farming. At last there are signs that the UK farming industry can look forward to a stronger, more vibrant future.

For more information on any of the points raised please contact Lantra Connect on tel: 0845 707 8007 or email: [connect@lantra.co.uk](mailto:connect@lantra.co.uk).

## **Contribution from Michael Britten, Health, Safety and Skills Development Adviser, NFU**

The Environmental and Land-based Diploma requires a considerable amount of industry involvement in that learners will need to undertake part of their learning with employers.

The NFU, as part of its work with the Skills Forum, is compiling a list of personnel and organisations which can provide for example, in the case of the Diploma, visiting experts and mentors for the learners.

It is envisaged that this would be carried out under the banner provisionally entitled 'Ambassadors for Farming'. It is hoped that the activities of the Ambassadors will assist learners in making informed decisions about the sector as well as raise its profile among young people.

If you support the initiative and have some contact details please send them to Michael Britten at [michael.britten@nfu.org.uk](mailto:michael.britten@nfu.org.uk) so that they can be added to the list which will then be made available to schools, colleges and training providers.

## **Contribution from Rachel Harrison, Communications Co-coordinator and Jenny Stokes, Teacher Professional Placement Co-ordinator both of Connexions Coventry & Warwickshire**

Connexions provides careers advice and guidance to young people aged 13-19, and up to 24 for individuals with Special Educational Needs, in schools and colleges across England. Staffed by qualified advisers, the service provides young people with impartial advice on a whole range of careers and courses covering all industries. In addition to this, Connexions provides information and support to help young people access a range of additional support services to help them deal with any problems they may come up against.

### **How far do people in the Connexions service understand the farming industry?**

The knowledge base of Connexions personal Advisers is vast and keeping pace with changes in the world of work is crucial if they are to pass up-to-date knowledge on to young people.

The agriculture, food and farming sector, like many other industries, has undergone major changes in its working practice; and the skills and knowledge demanded of young people entering the sector, compared to 10 years ago, have changed considerably.

### **Improving industry knowledge**

In Coventry & Warwickshire, the Connexions service prides itself on its involvement with employers and runs a number of programmes and events with employers and organisations that support them, to help both teachers and advisers learn more about industry.

A series of Professional Development Placement Days, organised in partnership with the local Education Business Partnership, act as a key way to enhance knowledge. The placements involve advisers and teachers spending a day in industry where they meet experts working in a sector.

One of our successful placement days, running over a number of years, is the Dairy Event, organised by the Royal Agricultural British Dairy Farmers and Farming and Countryside Education. Educationalists from across Coventry, Warwickshire and the West Midlands are invited to attend this prestigious annual event. The day is a great opportunity for teaching staff and advisers to meet a wide range of experts involved in the industry and find out about the diverse range of opportunities on offer to young people leaving school or college. The programme includes an overview of the industry from a leading expert detailing the challenges facing the farming community and the skills demanded as it faces improving efficiency, globalisation and new technology. The day features 'A day in life talks' from a vet, hoof trimmer, animal feed nutritionalist, agricultural engineer and others, providing teachers and advisers with a real insight into the diverse range of career opportunities available. Delegates update their knowledge on the state of the industry and a guided tour allows them to meet employers, exhibitors, producers and retailers who work in, or support, the sector. The day shows the wealth of talent within the sector and the wide range of skills needed to sustain its future.

Feedback from attendees highlights a positive impact on understanding and that knowledge gained will be used to enhance work with young people by the ability to include real life and practical examples in lessons.

*“The day has been a huge eye opener for me. I didn’t realise how much technology was involved throughout the dairy food chain process. I can use lots of these examples to support my teaching.”*  
Secondary School Food Technology Teacher working in Coventry

*“To see and hear so many experts in one day has been brilliant. It will help me give better informed advice to young people leaving school”*  
Personal Adviser working in Leamington Spa

*“Learned lots today and made links that I can pass onto other staff in school.”*  
Careers Teacher working in Nuneaton

Response to the dairy event in 2007 was excellent with over 35 Connexions advisers and school based staff planning to attend as part of their professional development. It was a great disappointment that the event had to be cancelled due to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Whilst everyone accepted this was unavoidable it gave them a real example of how the farming industry can be affected by so many factors.

This year’s event, due to be held in September 2008, promises to be bigger and better, now known as the Dairy and Livestock Event it has expanded to include other livestock such as beef cattle, sheep and goats. This will be invaluable to both careers advisers and teachers who want to get up-to-date information on the developments right across the food and farming sector.

Another Professional Development Placement Day, Connexions has organised in partnership with Farming and Countryside Education, covers sustainable farming in the 21st century. The day gives teachers and advisers a real insight into today’s farming industry, why it is changing and how often topical issues can be linked to many areas of the curriculum. The day is held on a real working farm with industry experts showing how conventional farming methods are changing and explaining how organic and intensive methods are becoming more important in the way farms are managed.

*“The key to being able to spread the word to young people is continual updates in labour market information and employment trends. Events covering the farming industry are a useful way to update my knowledge.”*  
Personal Adviser working in an agricultural college

Close links with Lantra has led to even more adviser events in which staff update their knowledge of careers, entry and progression routes and changes in industry.

Websites are a key source of information for young people, their families and advisers. Coventry and Warwickshire, like other areas, has an online prospectus of all 14-19 learning opportunities showing the whole range of courses available across area, right from art & design to warehousing to agriculture and tourism.

*“We hope it will expand young peoples’ minds and allow them to see a wide range of course options across the area, not just what is on offer at their school or nearest college.”*  
Personal Adviser working in an inner city school in Coventry speaking about Route 14-19, [www.route14-19.co.uk](http://www.route14-19.co.uk) , the online prospectus for Coventry & Warwickshire

The recently launched World of Work website, [www.cwworldofwork.org.uk](http://www.cwworldofwork.org.uk) , includes information on future employment trends in all industries. It has been developed to ensure young people are kept informed about the changing world of work and to assist in the career decision making process.

The service also has its own online vacancy service for young people, providing a place where employers can advertise jobs vacancies and apprenticeships free of charge. Young people can access and apply for vacancies online or in person at local Connexions offices.

### **Advocates for the industry?**

Careers advisers are advocates for all industries. Advisers are impartial and provide information on all industries to help young people make more informed choices.

*“I give careers advice and guidance to students in year 10 and 11 and see a range of students with different levels of ability. Some have fixed ideas of what they want to do others have no idea. When I*

*see a student I discuss their options and suggest careers or courses they might like to consider. But the key to practice is being impartial and recognising the value all post 16 options.”  
School based Personal Adviser working in North Warwickshire*

Advisers do their very best to think about the options suitable for each young person as an individual and are not biased to one industry. The skill of an adviser is to highlight all the options, draw out peoples' skills and interests and help young people consider the full range of options by providing unbiased information. However an individual's career choice can be influenced by a wide range of factors; including the media, parents and peers.

*“Students' career options are often influenced by their parents and sometimes it is difficult to change a student's mind when their parents have seen or heard adverse publicity about a particular career. It is therefore very helpful when I have first hand knowledge about a career and can give students accurate, up to date information about career opportunities. With this in mind I try to attend such events as Careers in Food and Farming which I find invaluable in obtaining information on land-based industries. It is apparent that not only are the roles within the industry changing but also the skills needed to fulfil those roles. I was very disappointed when last years event was cancelled due to the Foot and Mouth outbreak and look forward to attending the event this year.”  
Connexions Personal Adviser working in Rugby*

### **Attracting young people**

Work experience is an effective way for young people to experience the world of work first hand and good quality placements are in demand. Land based industries can do a lot to promote their sector by providing placements that give a real insight into an industry. Taking time to invest in placements can pay dividends; young people go back to the classroom enthused about your industry and will tell others. As a service we are always looking for new and innovative placements for our young people.

Coventry & Warwickshire Connexions, like other Connexions services, is keen to work with employers and industry specialists to promote the opportunities available in all industries. This has been achieved for the land-based sector through a Rural Skills Open Day, held at Charlecote Park, organised by the National Trust in partnership with Connexions.

The aim of the day was to help local young people explore the many employment and training opportunities on offer in the rural sector. Local businesses and trades demonstrated their skills and talked to young people about working in a particular field. Stalls and information points provided advice and opportunities whether through training, volunteering or employment. With over 500 young people attending, it seems the sector certainly has appeal.

Most of the young people reported they had learned something during the day, and many were looking for potential employment and training opportunities, including volunteering. The practical demonstrations and interactive displays, showing the sector at work, were the highlight for many of the attendees.

The trend is that more and more young people are continuing in education at 16 and fewer numbers are entering employment. Our tracking systems in Coventry & Warwickshire show us that in 2007 over 80% of school leavers continued their education at school sixth form or college, and only 13% went into employment, with only small numbers (2%) entering employment in the agricultural sector. The sector reports an ageing workforce so attracting new entrants is vital.

One way to encourage more young people into the sector is the provision of high quality apprenticeships with clear progression routes. A quality apprenticeship can be the start of a rewarding career, and employers, who are keen to attract youngsters to the sector, should think about investing in this type of opportunity.

As a service, Connexions Coventry & Warwickshire recognises employer input is key to both young people and advisers understanding industry. We do our very best to ensure advisers are supported and given opportunities to update their knowledge at regular intervals. We do this through partnership working, events and information resources, and hope that this approach ensures young people are kept up-to-date with industry and the range of opportunities available so they can make fully informed choices about their future.

Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire is at: [www.cwconnexions.org.uk](http://www.cwconnexions.org.uk)

## **Response from Denis Chamberlain**

The issue of attracting and – more importantly – developing “new blood” in agriculture is a topic that has been debated by every generation I have witnessed in almost 40 years of happy labour in the farming industry. I believe that, in the Fresh Start initiative, we are at last doing something positive to really encourage the entrepreneurial spirit so important to success in a farming business.

Fresh Start is an all-industry initiative, supported by Defra, which was established in 2004. In addition to working with potential industry new entrants, Fresh Start seeks to help established farmers to think about how they can develop their business, including their exit strategy, in the light of current agricultural policy. It is also actively seeking ways to encourage and support family succession and to develop strategies within farm businesses for continuity in which new entrants can develop through joint venture, share farming or contract operations to build equity.

The most successful part of our strategy has been the Fresh Start Academies. The first was established in Sussex in 2005 and we now have 17 Academies operating across the country. The Fresh Start Academy involves three elements – business skills training, mentoring and the possibility of identifying business opportunities via a matchmaking network.

Fresh Start works nationally with all the major representative farming and agribusiness groups and locally with rural professionals to help develop the careers and the skill base of potential entrants. We now have new website: [www.defra.gov.uk/farm/working/new-entrants](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/working/new-entrants) . These pages can put you in touch with local Academies, the land-based colleges with which they are working and the coordinators who facilitate them.

To date, the Fresh Start Academies are engaging with around 400 potential entrants. It isn't the complete answer but it is a good start.

Denis Chamberlain is Chairman of the Fresh Start National Stakeholder Group and Director of Marketing at RASE

## **Response from Mike Keeble**

For the past thirty years or so government policies have driven young people out of agriculture. And, to be fair, farming families have sometimes not helped to encourage their kids to stay by giving them real responsibility. So much of the talent we need now have voted with their feet and unsurprisingly gone off to where they feel they will be better appreciated.

Yet despite that there is no real shortage of aspiring farmers as can be seen any time when land comes up to rent or in areas such as mine where, on this estate, the average age of farmers is under 50 and every farm has the next generation ready for action ‘in the barrel’.

What is lacking is opportunity, enthusiasm and appropriate education that fits the new era of specialist food production.

At the old Northumberland Farm College, Kirkley Hall I am helping with a project which will be able to offer all three of these essential ingredients as we redevelop what has become a worn out vehicle.

With help from a farmer-led group we are in the process of establishing a specialist upland centre for red meat production, pastoral conservation and environmental care in tune with the needs of food production, tourism and wildlife. Right from the start we will be operating in a spirit of co-operation with the five college farms and welcoming farmers to see what is happening. Also with local farms and the farmers involved in teaching and supplying expertise and where necessary equipment.

We want to involve the stockmen and women of the future as well as farmers to engender a new

professional attitude to red meat production which is at one with the environment and tourism and produces profit for the participants.

We already have the backing of a well established arable co-operative which we see as being an essential part of red meat production in the future as well as five respected upland farmers who are bringing their farms and expertise into the programme.

We now need the support of farmers and the wider industry to show the way forward in this important link between the uplands and arable farming on which so much of our rural economics and communities depend in the future.

Mike Keeble farms with his wife in Wensleydale and is a journalist.

## **Comments from: Jack Ward, CEO, NPTC**

### **Short term opportunities and career progression in agriculture.**

It is worth highlighting the forthcoming changes to the qualifications frame work which are planned for 2010. This will involve the unitisation of the current qualification system making it easier to achieve a qualification by studying in bite sized chunks.

Under the current system a learner is required to sign up for a complete qualification e.g. level 2, 3, 4 etc. This often involves a much greater commitment than an individual or his or her employer is prepared to sign up for. Under the new system it will be possible to commit to a series of individual modules which, over a period of time, will amount to a full and recognisable qualification. Although this in itself will not amount to a progression path within the industry, it will mean that new entrants could find it easier to pick up qualifications as part of a lifelong learning process. This option could help to address the problem of people employed in the agricultural sector being regarded as experience rich but qualification "lite". It might also help those people looking to move out of the industry at a future point in their career by providing them with recognisable qualifications which have value in the eyes of a future employer.

### **14 – 19 Diplomas**

Sept 2009 is the start date for the new Environment and Landbased Diplomas. The launch of the new diploma offers an "applied and part vocational" alternative to the existing GCSE and A level route for 14 – 19 year old students. It also responds to calls from various parts of the industry for agriculture and agriculturally related issues to be included as part of the school curriculum.

The success of the new diplomas will depend on effective collaboration between schools, colleges and industry. Each sector has an important role to play in the delivery process. It is important to note that the purpose of the diplomas is not to produce industry ready staff but to give students an alternative to the existing GCSE and A level qualification route that has a more vocational and work related option.

Promotion of the new diplomas will be vital and backing from the industry will be critical to their success. There is a great opportunity for those sectors of the industry with an interest in encouraging young people into the industry to work closely together to encourage the uptake of the new diplomas.

### **Mid career development opportunities**

It is important that the industry makes provision for those that want to further their careers and studies post university and college.

The opportunities provided by Nuffield, Worshipful Company of Farmers, The Leadership Course, MDS and the Institute of Management are good examples of what the industry has to offer. There is more opportunity to raise awareness about these opportunities and make them a more mainstream part of the personal development process for those engaged in agriculture and horticulture.

## **CPD opportunities**

NPTC has been involved in the development of CPD schemes since 2003 when the NRoSO scheme was launched for sprayer operators. During the intervening years, NPTC has been developing the scheme to build in a much stronger theme of value added through the development of tailored courses, improved learning materials and staff trained in the delivery of the training material.

A new scheme has been developed to cater specifically for the pig sector and while the membership numbers aren't spectacular, the achievements of the scheme are spectacular given the difficult economic background within the pig sector. The scheme has helped to create and support a development scheme which recognises and records individual achievement against a recognised series of levels.

Properly constructed and with the right level of support from the industry, CPD systems can add value rather than simply increase bureaucracy. They provide the opportunity for recognition of skills and development in a simple and industry friendly format.

And for those looking for evidence or a career path, CPD schemes can tick those boxes too.

## **Smiths Gore Activity From Keith Barriball**

Activity focused on developing "New Blood" in agriculture, undertaken by Smiths Gore through its training, development and research activity.

### **A) Business Development Groups**

Delivery of ongoing training and professional development to common themes/interests farmer groups based on a local geographical focus. Examples involving "new entrants" or "new decision makers" include the following:

- i. Thirsk Group – Aspiring new entrants with a focus on training activity to support tenders/proposals for new tenancy opportunities, the presentation of their written tender and business plan, interviewing skills, and developing an understanding of the networking and promotional activities required for them to achieve new tenancy opportunities. To date in a group of approximately 12 regular attendees, 4 have successfully achieved tenancy offers within the last 18 months.
- ii. Oxford Group – Predominantly farmer's sons in the process of taking over or becoming increasingly involved in the business activity of the family farm. Delivery activity is focused on business management, personal skills, and a wide variety of contemporary issues facing them within the management and decision making of their business.
- iii. Private and Institutional Estate Tenant Groups – Knowledge transfer, skills development and training activity encouraged by the private estate to facilitate the business skills and likely succession within current tenant groups (delivery locations including Yorkshire and South East).
- iv. Institutional Estates Tenants Forum – Facilitation of tenants' forum to identify key issues of support and synergy between the Estate ownership and farmer tenants with a view to encouraging and improving the likely success of succession of tenants on the estate. A number of Estates are engaged in this process from the North West, to the South East.

### **B) Formal Training and Development Workshop Programmes**

- i. A recently developed "Generational Change" professional development programme (4 days) focusing on the skills and knowledge (personal, business, taxation, business structure, supply chain knowledge) required to facilitate successful generational change. The programme is currently being piloted in the South West with a view to national roll out with suppliers to a corporate national within the agricultural supply chain. This is likely to cover all regions of the mainland UK.
- ii. Individual day workshop on "Succession Planning", covering a variety of issues that require addressing in order to achieve successful generational succession. An "awareness raising" day workshop, first delivered in 2006.

### C) Research Work and Modelling on National Institutional Estates

The application of an IT based GIS model including 7 key criteria likely to influence potential succession probability. This is applied as a means of predicting succession probability, analysing tenant fit to Institutional “values”, and to apply within this strategic planning support for both “succeeding and retiring” tenants. Of particular use the model is applied to planning amalgamation, future investment and supporting the sustainability of key tenants within the estate infrastructure, whilst also facilitating the likely support and retirement of those identified as the most likely outgoing tenants.

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#### From Richard Longthorp

We need what all the very clever and well educated people I think would refer to as a “paradigm shift” in our approach to this challenge - we see problems, threats and challenges. Others would see a brave new world of opportunity. We feel threatened that people who we upskill then want to move on to a new job. We need to see it as an opportunity to bring new blood in – new blood with new ideas, new enthusiasm and new energy. We need to foster an environment where everybody is actively encouraged to progress either within or without their existing business. The best and most dynamic people are always going to want to move on. If we don’t accept that then we are bound to be disappointed.

But for this to work we concurrently need to ensure that the industry is up-skilling, not just individual businesses. That said those businesses that have an ethos of skills development are unlikely to have major problems in attracting the best individuals anyway.

2. Leadership is crucial. We need people with a vision and determination to do “what is right”. This will probably not win them the plaudits they might achieve by say winning the TB/Badger issue or WTO negotiations but in time people will look back and say “That bloke did right you know”. This is likely to be best achieved by individuals who are particularly suited to “single issue” politics. Grab one issue (skills/recruitment), and shake it and don’t let go until they’ve got what they want. They will need to bring a wide church of people with them – both upstream (agri political leaders), and downstream (farmers and staff). The reason that it requires a single issue approach is that we can all be sidetracked by the more pressing or urgent problems.

3. The 14-19 diploma offers a massive opportunity to industry – NOT to have people vocationally trained as some in the industry may misunderstand the scenario to be but to engage positively with a wider group of young people than ever before and have a huge careers shop window.

We need to ensure that we realise this potential and schools need to ensure that they do not just send us the Harry Enfield “Kevin’s” of this world as some of the writers allude to – albeit not by the term “Kevin”

Both these prerequisites for success need to be worked on as I do not see any evidence of adequate progress having been made on either

Also, one of the big potential blockages to progress, particularly for family businesses, is “what to do with Dad”. I was fortunate that my father had other interests and he gave me autonomy at an early age. I fortunately in turn was able to do the same with my son. But so often I see father clinging to the cheque book almost until his deathbed. I know that this has been looked at before but ways and means of “easing” one generation out and easing the next generation in before the latter is drawing his/her pension do need to be investigated. This will have a leveraged effect – new blood will be drawn in and that new blood will in turn help other new blood in.

## From Vic Croxon, Landex

There is evidence that recruitment into farming courses this September in Landex colleges is up about 10%. This assertion was based on the evidence (textual and numeric) that twenty Landex member colleges kindly contributed

## From Sarah Palmer, National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs

### On-line survey of YFC members

As a means of finding out about some of the concerns and issues surrounding young people as they enter into farming, the NFYFC conducted an on-line survey of YFC members over the summer of 2007.

The ages of respondents covered the range of the YFC membership, with a bias towards the older age groups. Over 60% were aged 19 years and older. The majority of respondents were from a farming background (88%), although 25% of respondents were from families in which their parents did not, and had not farmed.

### Future ambitions

Whilst 43% of respondents had ambitions to be farm owners and 25% had ambitions to become farm tenants, 32% aspired to other careers within the farming industries..

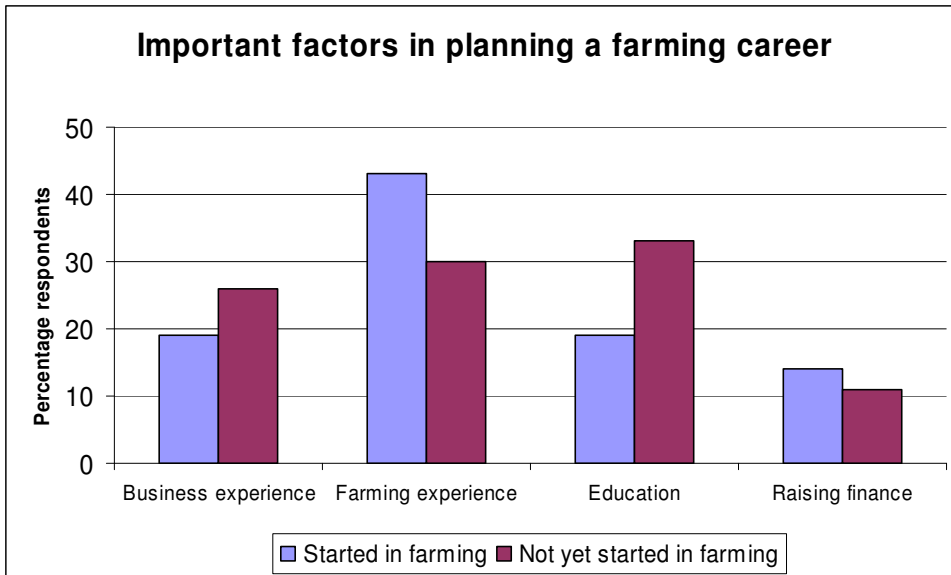
Looking forward, respondents were asked to select three options from a list of 15 options which best described how they would like their farm or the farm they work on to look in 10 years time. The five most frequently chosen options, and the proportion of respondents selecting each of them, are shown below;

- |               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| 1. Profitable | 49% |
| 2. Enjoyable  | 45% |
| 3. Thriving   | 30% |
| 4. Livestock  | 30% |
| 5. Family     | 27% |

The high proportions selecting 'profitable' and 'thriving' indicates the degree to which young farmers are aware of the need for sound business underpinnings to their farming ambitions, whilst the high proportions selecting 'enjoyable', 'livestock' and 'family' demonstrates the sense in which farming remains a vocation for many young people, rather than a simple business proposition.

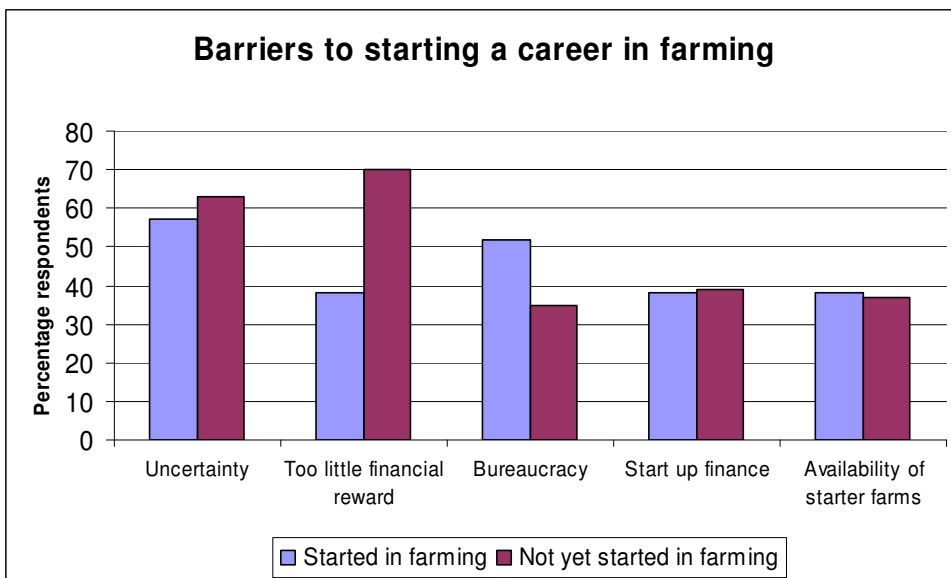
### Planning farming careers

Respondents were asked to indicate which of four key areas was most important to them as they planned their careers in farming. **Gaining farming experience** was seen by *more* respondents than would be expected by chance alone and raising finance by *less* than would be expected by chance alone. The proportions indicating the importance of gaining farming experience increased for the group which had also stated that they had started their career in farming, indicating that this group in particular had realised the diversity of farming outside their own experience.



### Factors which deter from a career in farming

Two questions probed the barriers faced by young people considering a career in farming. First of all, respondents were asked which of 9 factors would put them off a career in farming. The five most frequently chosen options, and the proportion of respondents selecting each of them, are shown in the figure below.



Not surprisingly, those respondents who had already started their career in farming responded differently to the other groups. A lower proportion was deterred by the financial rewards of farming and a higher proportion was deterred by the bureaucracy involved.

Seventy one percent of respondents who had indicated that they would not follow a career in farming (but who had stated that they intended to become tenant farmers) gave 'too little financial reward' as a factor that would put them off a career in farming.

Secondly, respondents were asked to write in less than 50 words what they thought the biggest barriers were to young people entering farming today. Responses were sorted into the following broad categories;

1. Financial reward 27%
2. Land prices 22%

3. Capital costs	22%
4. "Breaking in" 15%	
5. Uncertainty	10%
6. Long hours	9%
7. Land availability	9%
8. Bureaucracy	9%
9. Public image	3%

Hence it appears that it is financial and business constraints that are the biggest barrier to new entrants; in the levels and uncertainty of financial reward, the high costs of entry and the difficulties of raising start up finance. Given that one half of all respondents were concerned that their farm business should be profitable in the future, it appears that young people are taking a highly pragmatic approach to their farming careers.

### **Opportunities for young people entering farming**

Finally, respondents were asked to state what the best opportunities are for young people entering farming today and the selection below presents the range of these;

*"There are some great opportunities for people who are keen to work hard and start off small and work their way up....once you get your foot on the ladder it should be good".*

*"Great opportunities to make a difference with the environment".*

*"A good healthy lifestyle with plenty of opportunities for diversification".*

*"Farming offers an opportunity to use a range of skills, from maths to tractor driving, in an amazing working environment".*

### **A view from the machinery sector from Roger Lane-Nott CB Director General of the AEA**

The Agricultural Engineers Association was founded 132 years ago and is the Trade Association for the manufacturers, distributors and importers of Farm Equipment and Outdoor Power Equipment. Its members include all those companies involved in supplying machinery for the land from combine harvesters to secateurs and everything in between.

We have seen a major shift over the last 20 years with UK manufacturers declining or being absorbed into multinational companies. The number of independent UK manufacturers of Farm Equipment is now small but all the major companies have a presence in UK and market their machinery within UK.

As agriculture has changed so has the machinery with AEA members always close to the changing requirements of end users. But their customers are, in fact, the dealers although they do engage fully with the end users. This results in key relationships with their dealers and agreements that try to assist both.

The industry has for some time been concerned about recruitment, training and retention. This is particular relevant as machinery becomes ever more sophisticated and requires technicians that are both highly trained in diagnostics as well as repair. Whereas 20 years ago this was based on experience and spanners it is now based on high quality training, experience and a laptop!

To start with recruitment, the industry has a careers project which has concentrated on attracting the dealership technician. This is predominantly funded by the dealers and probably needs more industry co-ordination but it is producing results.

Training is a complex business as there is a need to have good raw material before training starts. This is not easy as the education system is not producing young people with an acceptable level on basic skills. There is then a need to train on the core competences (hydraulics, pneumatics, mechanical, electronic etc) and achieve an acceptable level before the product specific training is undertaken.

To ease this situation the AEA Training and Education Committee spent 2 years working on a scheme that would assist this process and at the same time help retention by providing a better recognised career structure for technicians. What they came up with was the Land based Technician Accreditation Scheme or LTA for short. With the backing of the major manufacturers of agricultural, horticultural, forestry and grounds care equipment, the Landbased Technician Accreditation scheme (LTA) has been developed by the AEA Members in conjunction with the IAgRE with the support of BAGMA, on behalf of the land based engineering sector.

The objective of the scheme is to provide a nationwide means of benchmarking, monitoring and assessing the competence of technicians employed within the sector. The LTA scheme will also provide encouragement and recognition for both employers and technicians who voluntarily commit to continual professional development in pursuit of technical support excellence.

There are four categories or tiers with all tiers being registered on a central database held by **IAgRE**.

- **LTA 1** – Self registration on-line. Entries on this register would be categorised as either Apprentices (on recognised programmes) or more skilled/mature entrants not yet otherwise assessed and categorised. There is currently no charge to register.
- **LTA 2** - Newly qualified apprentices or assessed skilled technician meeting the required criteria.
- **LTA 3** - A skilled & experienced technician who has successfully attended a series of assessed course programmes - may be a product specialist.
- **LTA 4** - A professional technician having a proven and assessed track record. Additional assessment criteria are included to demonstrate exceptional diagnostic and technical ability together with customer and technical mentoring skills.

The scheme has been established by the leading manufacturers to give credit and recognition to the developing skills and knowledge of technicians working in the land based sector. All training is accredited by the relevant manufacturers in conjunction with the employers to guidelines agreed jointly with them, IAgRE and Lantra. The scheme also provides a clearly defined career path for those working in the landbased engineering sector. The LTA scheme is backed by the trade associations representing:

- Manufacturers - AEA
- Dealers –BAGMA(UK) and FTMTA(Republic of Ireland)

LTA is administered by the IAgRE and where appropriate, IAgRE facilitates the registration of suitably qualified technicians as Engineering Technicians (EngTech) with the Engineering Council (UK). For those companies with European-wide interests, the LTA scheme is approved by EurAgEng as meeting the requirements for recognition as EurAgEngTech.

### **LTA - The Scheme**

Those registered under the LTA scheme will be technicians working in the fields of:

- Agriculture
- Horticulture
- Amenity (including professional and domestic grounds care)
- Forestry/Arboriculture
- Environment

Through their work on the maintenance and repair of equipment in the various sectors, they will be supporting the production of:

- the food for your table
- the timber for your paper, furniture and building
- bio-fuels for a sustainable future and the maintenance of outdoor recreation spaces for the well-being of the environment and our amenity.

In these times of rapid change, and with the ever increasing complexity and sophistication of tractors, harvesters and groundscare equipment, there has never been a greater need for competent technicians. By registering and assessing these technicians, we are not only recognising their professionalism but also providing the confidence to consumers that their equipment is being cared for by qualified and competent staff.

This is a start but we also have to look at how machinery is going to be used in the next 30 years and adapt to suit. There are some who think that all machinery will be run remotely from an Operations Room in the Farm Office but while this is feasible today there is the problem of Health and Safety requirements, and crossing roads to deal with. Some say that we need to change how we farm and here modern techniques are driving the design of machinery. There has been a greater demand in the last few years for higher horse power tractors to allow economies of scale and the completion of seedbed preparation with fewer passes. But there is another consideration and that is regulation. The EU is continuing to pour out new legislation on noise, emissions, vibration and a plethora of environmental demands that will not always help farmers (viz. The EU parliament pesticides decision in December 2008) and will continue to have an effect on machinery design and price.

So what is utopia for the Machinery Sector? In a time when we know the demand for food is going to continue to increase there will continue to be an increasing demand for machinery to meet the needs of the producer. While the solution may be to have tractors and self propelled equipment that is run on fuel cells and charged overnight from ideally a renewable energy source this may not be possible in all but the most advanced farms. So the machinery sector is left with trying to anticipate where farming is going, respond to regulation but try also to influence both regulation and standards, and continue to offer a quality career.

It is the view of many in the sector that landbased industries are being hit less hard than other sectors and that the current recession is helping with retention and recruitment of technicians to our industry, although transfer of skills from automotive to the landbased sector will take time. Manufacturers don't presently seem to suffer from recruitment issues, as progression from dealer to manufacturer is seen a natural progression through the industry so recruitment directly by AEA members is less of an issue. The fact that the current situation may be stable should not blind us to the possibility that events may change – in fact just a few years ago recruitment was identified as a significant potential problem, especially at dealer level, and it could be again. Farming families are a potential pool of resources as individuals who understand agriculture and its demands but at the same time the design and production of farm machinery has become highly sophisticated and there is also call for significant engineering skills.

## **A view from the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC)**

### **David Caffall, Chief Executive, AIC**

The age profile of the agricultural supply sector mirrors that of the industry it serves with many senior managers likely to retire in the next five to ten years. While there may be sufficient 35-45 year olds able to fill their shoes, there is a dearth of younger blood. This reflects the harsh economic climate of the past decade and the downturn in numbers training in colleges and universities.

The (AIC) represents a significant part of the supply trade. Its 300 member companies operate in: animal feed manufacture and supply; crop protection services; fertiliser manufacture and supply, grain and oilseeds marketing, and seed processing and supply. A recent survey of AIC member companies identifies almost 84,000 posts – full and part-time – directly employed. However, there are many other jobs that depend on these businesses including hauliers, laboratory staff, IT specialists, and many other agencies. It is calculated that up to 350,000 jobs could be dependent on the supply industries.

Agriculture is becoming ever more central to not only feed a growing population, but also to provide fuel, enhance the environment and reduce the impact of climate change. There is no doubt that the supply industries will provide excellent career prospects; the challenge is to convey that optimism to the next generation.

Many AIC member companies recognise the challenge and are investing heavily in training new recruits. The positive attitude of the current NFU leadership has helped encourage youngsters to take a fresh look at the opportunities of agriculture. It is an ancient industry, but one with huge technological prospects. It is this innovation and potential for development which must form the foundations of the strategy to meet future food security challenges. The potential to work on imaginative, exciting

solutions must be promoted more to attract a youthful and dynamic workforce. There is clearly more work to be done if we are to provide the products and services that 21<sup>st</sup> century agriculture will require.

**Section 3**  
**Seminar, afterthoughts and cameos from land-based colleges**

## New Blood Seminar

A seminar was held at the Arthur Rank Centre on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008 to run through the main conclusions of the discussion so far and identify some points which might have been missed, what needs to happen and how we can make it happen. The conclusions are summarised here.

Those attending are listed below:

Laura Biddick-Bray, Lantra (for BPEX)	Professor Wynne Jones, Harper Adams University College
Denis Chamberlain, Chairman of the Fresh Start National Stakeholder Group and Director of Marketing at RASE	Professor David Leaver, Emeritus Professor Royal Agricultural College
Richard Clarke, farmer and consultant	Steve Lindsay, National Project Director - Fresh Start
Paul Conlin, Curriculum Director, Northumberland College	Sarah Palmer, NFYFC
Vic Croxson, Landex, (Land based colleges)	Veronica Retallack, Training Co-ordinator, Cornwall
Corrinna Gibbs, FACE	Joanna Righton, RASE
Bill Graham, FACE, Discussion facilitator	Ann Roughley, Wigan Education Business Partnership
Elaine Grove, LANTRA	Alan Spedding, New Blood Editor,
Janet Hickenbottom, FACE	Jenny Stokes, Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire
Anthony Hyde, CE, British Institute of Agricultural Consultants	Donna Tavernor, Country Land and Business Association (CLA)
Mike Keeble. Farmer and journalist (possibly plus one)	Paul Temple, Vice President, National Farmers Union
Anne Kellaart, Farmer and FWAG	

### General points

The demography is working against us so there is going to be more and more competition between industries for the best young people. Also we are now losing people from the industry. Among the problems - a lot of young people are stopped from going into agriculture by their parents, agricultural courses were said to have been dumping grounds for poor students. Farming is still regarded as 'low social class' by some of the teaching profession.

On the other hand food and farming are increasingly in the public eye, the image of farming is getting better and we need to grab this interest and go with it. The recession means employment prospects are generally falling so we can paint the industry as something which is not going away and so offers job security.

The report needs to recommend mechanisms and process and articulate more clearly the demand side of what we are about. Think what messages will make it attractive to the industry – new diplomas, apprenticeships, professional status etc. Messages need promoting into schools and through colleges into schools. A lot of time and effort is expended in colleges which do this and we need this perspective from someone involved.

### What agriculture needs to do

We will not have the resources to mount a major PR campaign so working with and supporting others will be key.

Is the whole question just one of skills? And if we get that right the rest will follow. Certainly the industry's commitment to training and systematic professional development is vital. One issue which needs attention is to persuade employers to release young agriculturists for regular and planned training. Another is timing training activities to fit the target groups. CLA's Enterprise Works scheme, for instance, has found more support for evening courses. This is especially true when you are trying to attract smaller farmers.

Farmer-led activity needs to be on a wider scale. The Kirkley Hall College initiative was started by talking to farmers.

Do we need a champion or champions? There were mixed views. From 'Peter Kendall is doing a fantastic job – we don't need a champion' to 'Jimmy Doherty has grown into the role of champion' and to 'We need more champions.'

A more quantified evidence base is needed. For example it would be useful to estimate how much new blood we need. We need more young people's views including those who have been interested in coming into agriculture but didn't. National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs surveyed their membership in 2007 (a summary of the results has been added to the report) and they intend to run it again with support from LANTRA.

We are always talking to ourselves and reactive rather than proactive – so the report will need wide circulation. For instance it should go to every MP and member of the House of Lords.

### **What messages do we need to get across?**

Activity to attract people into farming needs to focus on three areas:

- The life they can lead
- The money they can earn
- Work/life issues

We need to anticipate where our changing industry is going – eg there may be potential to build beef feedlots in the East of England.

### **Messages directed at whom?**

- We need to target our limited resources where they would be most effective. This might be (or include) getting involved with the Environmental & Land-based Diploma which is reportedly raising interest for us already.
- Careers advisers
- Teachers – but it needs to be related to the curriculum
- Primary schools – that is when they start thinking about what they want to do - give them a slice of experience.
- Urban kids would be interested.

### **How?**

We need a communications panel to co-ordinate it all.

There was an enthusiastic reception for the idea of having a Careers Fair at Stoneleigh. The Yorkshire Agricultural Society had done this very successfully for younger children but found that 14-16 year olds are difficult to get focussed. Both the Kent and the South East Agricultural Societies have also run events – they gave up with older children though.

More farm placements

Work with Connexions with careers advisers and placements

Main rings at agricultural shows could be used more for food and farming demonstrations – but we need people who can communicate and get the hard facts across

Professional development days for teachers

Harper Adams University College had worked with four universities on teacher training programmes so that they know when farming and food fits into the curriculum. Explore how this work could grow.

It is important for young people to visit agricultural colleges to see what happens.

A lot of possible qualifications are not wanted by the industry – we need a better balance of long courses and short.

Work experience needs to cover the parts of the industry that are not all out in the field.

We need to learn from other industries which are doing better work as ambassadors, eg NHS, engineering, the Army, arts and the media.

Is there scope for having stands at teaching union conferences? It would be expensive but there are three possible routes – teacher unions, subject associations and education shows.

LEAF Open Farm Sunday – there are opportunities to link- in.

Local shows

Cumbria runs a city-rural link which leads to mutual benefits

### **Other points**

1. Retention and recruitment - most of the people who will be in the industry in 30 year's time are there now and we need to work to retain them. Also the industry needs to look to recruit older people. However we think these are complex and different areas so we want to focus the report on recruiting young people.
2. The report should put some focus on planning issues. Often retirees are not allowed to build retirement houses where they want them. Often they do not, want to live in the local village or town.
3. People trying to get into farming have difficulty building equity. You need £250k working capital to take on a 350 acre farm.
4. Schools often cannot afford the cost of transport to farms. Could the RASE work with other show societies to help support school buses? The Curry Report recommendation for help to get children onto farms has not been acted upon.
5. LANTRA is defining all the job roles in Agriculture – could be useful for careers advice

## **Contributions after the seminar**

### **From Guy Smith**

Just to give you a little case study as to how easy it is to engage the schools.

Last year me and a couple of others thought about having an Essex Food, Farms and Countryside Schools day. Our first stop was Essex County Council. Somewhat to our disbelief they were very keen and gave us the building blocks we needed - £35,000, links into the schools network and the schools transport system. In short the result was a good day out for 3000 primary schools children aged 9-11 drawn from 50 schools across Essex. We found the other £25,000 needed for the day with relative ease. We held it in the grounds behind Writtle College. The other satisfying thing is we were full within weeks, if not days, of the schools being told about it and the same is true of next year. ECC are even more committed and enthusiastic as are Writtle.

It is impossible to gauge the overall effect but if it put the seed of a job in agriculture in just 5% of the youngsters there and promoted the college to them then it might just have been step in the right direction.

As for farming champions, it is not a matter of finding someone to champion us for us, it is a matter of

us all wanting to champion ourselves.

### **From Mike Keeble**

I would like to see mention made of the need to get courses far more focussed. Most agri-courses still try to deal with the whole range of farming even if they are concentrating on, say, dairying.

As the SPS goes so too will a lot of farmers for beef and sheep producers are not making money without the brown envelope and the amount they receive will fall considerably in 2012.

Farming will, as a consequence, get into larger and more efficient units that require specialists.

The Kirkley Hall project is foreseeing this. Dairying is leaving the hills and margins which make up 45% of our land area. Red meat production linked to the environment and conservation are the only farming options for our uplands and they need to develop in parallel. So in our curriculum design there is no need to teach dairying, mechanisation beyond the basics or arable cropping. But there is a need to teach processing beyond the farm gate, about abattoirs and cooking the product.

My point is that our industry is now becoming a group of very specific integrated business's each requiring very specialist managers and technicians. No longer is there a place for the general farm worker, the Jack of all Trades. We need to promote each sector as an individual opportunity.

As such Colleges will need to work with the new generations of farmers in course design and using those same farmers as part time teachers, possibly using their own farms as working areas. All quite contrary to the traditional ways and potentially a cause of rancour with the Unions but that is the way it has to be

### **From Richard Clarke**

I was very encouraged by the seminar, there is so much going on at all levels to address the concerns about the future of the industry and those working in it. Of course, I left full of intentions to send you a note so here goes!

1. The organisations, the people, the ideas and the vision are all in place to take New Blood issues forward
2. A major organisation should form a small "umbrella" secretariat to co-ordinate activities, manage promotions, have the status and clout to engage high profile champions, deal with publicity, generally act as an ideas centre and catalyst for new initiatives etc etc. Would RASE take this on? NFU is too political. I know Wynn Jones is retiring but what about Harper?
3. The "umbrella" will cost, it will need a dynamic person to lead with admin support. There are plenty of parties with vested interests who should contribute and I would hope there would be government and charity funding possibilities
4. On reflection (after the meeting) I do think it is important we make some quantitative analysis of our objectives - we don't want half the kids in the country signing up for working on farms! In fact the reality is a modest percentage of the whole. It shouldn't be that difficult to make predictions based on number of farmers and farm workers, current demographics and assumptions about future trends in the industry. A job for one of our academic establishments?
5. Personally I do not think New Blood needs to include in its remit issues about starter farms (either

you can raise the funding or not) issues about planning in the countryside or development of new farm business enterprises

## **From Jim Davies of the Mistral Group**

**Taken from Potato Council Grower Gateway reporting a potato seed event in Scotland**

### **Breeding brain-drain**

A dearth of fresh talent threatens to starve the potato industry of new varieties. Managing director of Mylnefield Research Services Nigel Kerby told delegates that the industry must do more to promote the exciting and progressive world of plant breeding.

“The food industry faces significant challenges in terms of food security, the food versus fuel debate, and managing the threatened withdrawal of key pesticides. Plant breeding is a critical core expertise of any nation that intends to have a vibrant agricultural industry strong enough to take on those challenges. But it is a profession that requires trained and educated plant breeders and the UK simply hasn't the capacity to train the next generation.”

Breeding is at a critical stage, with exciting new developments in disciplines such as genetics, biometry and molecular biology. But there are no specific degrees to furnish young minds with the knowledge kindled by leading plant breeders, currently in their 50s and 60s, who are looking to hand over the mantle.

The problem will be partly addressed by a new SCRI scholarship for students wanting to enter the profession. But the industry should look wider, make the most of the opportunities to promote itself, and perhaps look at how the food services sector has encouraged new entrants, urged Dr Kerby. “What we need is a Jamie Oliver of the plant-breeding world. We have to make the most of the attributes of the industry across all sectors, and perhaps that's a job for the Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board.”

## **Land-based colleges promoting agriculture as a career**

The Seminar identified to capture some examples of the work that Land-based Colleges do in terms of promoting agriculture as a career for young people. Vic Croxon, Chief Executive of Landex which represents the Land-based Colleges kindly provided the cameos.

### **College of West Anglia**

We liaise with schools a lot with respect to encouraging recruitment. Activities include 3 Taster days to EACH campus Milton and Wisbech involving 20 - 30 children in activities, visits and tours of the farms, 4 lecturers going out to the 24 schools for careers talks on 1 occasion for each school etc. We also have 1 open day at each campus in May. Perhaps the most significant development recently is with the 14 - 19 diplomas where, because of our geographic location, we are involved with 5 consortia for the delivery of these diplomas.

## **Easton College**

We have been working very vigorously on this issue for over 15 years aided by funding from both the Clan and Chadacre Agricultural Trusts. We have built excellent relationships with schools and with the Children's Services Department. Our work starts with primary school visits to the college farms (with viewing facilities at the major units plus a purpose converted schools barn. We then focus a lot of our effort on 14-16 where this year we have over 500 participants attending Easton 1 day per week for two years from 36 secondary schools. We are leading the county wide development of the new Environmental & Land-based Diploma; we also lead the North Suffolk consortium and are the Government Offices trail blazer for the new land and environment diploma. Success from this initiative has been high with big increases in post 16 recruitment and over 95% staying on in FE at the end of the two years. We also organise careers "open days" roughly every six weeks, plus involvement in a variety of open farm type events in the county. We are in discussion with the County Council over taking control of their outdoor and environmental education service. As you can see we have been taking this very seriously and are investing a six figure sum from our own reserves each year in this work.

## **Derby College**

Derby College writes to all schools in the county, several times a year : once to offer agriculture taster courses for year 9s as well as to offer year 10 or 11s the chance to 'sit in' the NCA for a day, another letter offers a Land based Taster ( with an option to do agriculture) to Year 10 & 11 and the third contact is to remind careers teachers that agricultural courses still exist and can be accessed by school-leavers. We include posters for them to display in their schools. Student services and schools liaison visit schools and give talks and discuss agriculture as an option for year 10 & 11. We give guided tours to visiting groups from primary and secondary schools, guide/brownie/cubs etc-we aim to respond positively to any request relating to agriculture We attend every school careers convention that we are invited to, take the promotional stand to local ploughing matches (2) and most country shows in Derbyshire (9 last year) and take a 'land based' display to Derby and Chesterfield LSC Choices events. We send out press releases to all county papers to promote agriculture at Derby College as well as advertise in local papers, show programmes, etc.

## **Hartpury College**

Hartpury College has a vibrant Schools Department serving over ninety students from eight schools in Gloucestershire. The courses supplied range from NPTC Entry 2/3 to NVQ Level 2 & BTEC 1<sup>st</sup> Diplomas with subject areas in Agriculture, Horticulture, General Engineering (with an agricultural flavour) Animal Care and Equine studies. The students study from between two hours to a day per week over a period of one to two years and the BTEC courses require thirty days of work experience placement which are co-ordinated between the College and the schools. Work is set outside College time on the BTEC courses and this is administered back at school in school-time.

Rob Warren (Subject Leader/Schools Liaison) and Jill Shechter (Events Manager/Schools Liaison) attend many Careers Conventions each year to advise and recruit students into land-based subjects. Jill Shechter also attends Mock Interview & Industry Days in schools as well as organising Taster Courses four times a year at Hartpury College. Both tutors regularly host schools to the College on vocational visits.

Rob Warren is the FACE Representative to the College and a Director of the National Farms for Schools (FFS) and a Director of the Forest of Dean Education Business Partnership. The College played an active role with many schools visiting through the Food & Farming Year 2007-8 and the Schools' Department holds all nine units of the CEVAS Award.

All students entered for awards have been 100% successful for the last three consecutive years. The Rural Skills Department also plays an active role in attracting students with special needs into agricultural courses by providing Taster Weeks for Year 10 & 11 students wishing to embark on land-based studies post Year 11.

## **Bicton College**

### **School Liaison**

- Attend up to 50 school careers events on an annual basis
- Give talks and presentations at schools
- Attend interview sessions and careers workshops at schools
- Regularly meet with school careers advisors and year heads

### **14-16 Programme and Diplomas**

- Currently we have 200 pupils from schools (60 of whom are Agriculture students) on the 14-16 Increased Flexibility programme. Last year 20% of our 14-16 Agriculture students progressed to an agricultural FE course at the College.
- For the last three years we have achieved a 100% success rate for our 14-16 Agriculture programme - all students have achieved their NVQ level 1 Agriculture
- Currently developing a new diploma in Environmental and Landbased Studies with Exeter and North Devon schools

### **Events and activities for schools**

- Regularly hold school visits and tours at Bicton College, including around the Farm
- Hold a 'Festival of Food and Farming' on an annual basis which is attended by 1000 Year 8 and 9 students from schools all over the county. This event allows students who would never have the opportunity to learn about agriculture to tour the campus, including the farm, and take part in a planting activity at the end of the day
- Hold an annual event for Head Teachers, Careers Advisors, Year Heads and Connexions staff to come to the College, tour the facilities and learn more about us
- In 2009 we will be working with a number of primary schools on the 'Greenfingers' initiative to promote agriculture and horticulture amongst a younger target audience
- Attend 14-19 Learning Fairs which schools attend throughout the county
- Taster Days held each term, whereby school students can take part in an Agriculture session
- Lambing Sunday is held at the College Farm on an annual basis. This is promoted widely at all schools to encourage students to visit the farm and learn more about our agriculture courses
- We hold an annual college Open Day whereby our current agriculture students showcase the work they have done throughout the year. This event is widely promoted at schools in the region and we hold interviews and tours throughout the day.
- Work closely with the Young Farmers organisation and have a Young Farmers group of students at the College
- Have several stands at the Devon County Show and invite schools to our stand during 'Schools Day' on the Friday.

## **Reaseheath College**

Reaseheath College, Cheshire, has a long history of working in partnership with schools and these activities have increased significantly over the past six years.

Reaseheath's successful Vocational Opportunities Programme (VOP) recruits 120 students annually from over 20 secondary schools from throughout Cheshire and Staffordshire. The young people, from Years 10 and 11, attend college on one day a week to develop practical and employment skills. Students choose from agriculture and countryside, equine, animal management, construction, horticulture or engineering, achieving an NVQ Level 1 or equivalent qualification, plus the inspiration towards a possible career.

Reaseheath has also taken the lead on the new Environmental and Land-based Diploma, which will be offered throughout Cheshire from 2009. It is expected that the college's collaborative work with schools will be significantly increased as the diploma programme rolls out up to 2013. Schools Programmes are managed by a dedicated Pre-16 Learning Manager, who links with curriculum areas to ensure high quality learning opportunities.

In addition, Reaseheath hosted 'out of classroom' experiences for 49 primary and secondary schools during the Year of Food and Farming (September 07 – July 08). Over 1,600 pupils, from the age of three up to 'A' level standard, visited the college farm, vegetable and fruit gardens, food manufacturing halls and animal centre. The activities were so successful that they are to continue for the current academic year.

## **Myerscough College**

Myerscough College's Schools Liaison team carries out various school recruitment activities at high schools within Lancashire and beyond. In 07/08 they attended/conducted 115 Career Conventions in schools, 25 Assemblies / Presentations, 7 Mock Interviews, 21 Campus tours, 16 Drop-in sessions and 19 Work Experience events. The Marketing team attended 14 UCAS events across the country, organized Open Mornings at each of the College campuses around once a month, and organised Taster events for Further and Higher Education attended by 373 pupils in 07/08. In order to support schools recruitment activities, the team works closely with the Connexions / Young Peoples Service. Staff regularly visit offices to meet with advisers and update them on the opportunities available. The College also holds regular sessions when school staff and Connexions / YPS staff can visit the College for an information afternoon. In the 07/08 academic year, 5 events were held and 43 people attended. Myerscough College has hosted school activity visits for many years. Over the past four years these have developed and numbers of visits have grown to 753 from 22 schools. The majority of the visits are from primary aged children but the College is seeing an increase in the number of secondary schools / sixth forms who have brought their pupils. Recently the College hosted a group of trainee teachers from Lancaster University. There are two further groups booked in from Lancaster University and Edge Hill University. Additional activities include: the FACE co-ordinator for the North West is a member of the schools liaison team; the College hosts NEET activity weeks and Chemistry at Work events and provides courses for around 450 14-16 year olds enrolled at a wide range of schools across the region where students attend either one of the college campuses or at bespoke vocational centres established within their school communities.

## Contributors to the discussion

Thanks are due to the 51 individuals who took part in the discussion:

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