

*RASE has commissioned a report on the issues surrounding new entrant recruitment into farming and related sectors.*

*RASE's report – New Blood – concludes that unless the industry raises its game in promoting itself as an attractive, rewarding career destination it is likely to lose out in the battle for a diminishing pool of available entrants.*

## Vigorous campaign needed to compete for tomorrow's workforce

Farming must compete actively and vigorously with other potential employers to attract the best practical, technical and academic people to its workforce.

Other sectors – including the armed forces, the National Health Service, teaching, IT, engineering and retail – are regularly, and aggressively, advertising and promoting themselves.

Unless farming joins that battle, the industry will finish up with a workforce of 'what's left' and that won't do. As a highly technical, science-based industry we cannot succeed unless we attract the best brains and most committed workforce.

The RASE investigation has collected views and information from within and outside the industry to find out how farming can become more attractive to people of imagination and energy – the workforce the industry needs to meet its future challenges.

Recruiting the next generation of managers and workers is not a problem confined to the UK. There is a world-wide consensus that agriculture is struggling with an outdated image. The industry does not

effectively and positively 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 be asked to choose agriculture as their career in competition with other industries which nowadays are better resourced and put their case with vigour and clarity.

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 conditions, flexible work patterns and careers and continuous professional development. We need, where appropriate, to engage with the issue of affordable and acceptable rural housing.

A large number of initiatives are doing great work in getting involved with making an impact on various aspects of putting the industry's case but there is little co-ordination between them.



The industry needs a collaborative strategy to get the best young people to join us. 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 – and staying – ahead of them.

*Alan Spedding*

# ALL SECTORS MUST WORK TOGETHER TO NEW ENTRANTS TO FARMING AND ITS



The Royal Agricultural Society of England's report, *New Blood – Attracting the Best People to UK Agriculture*, is not intended as an end point, but rather as the early steps in a process that has much to deliver to the farming industry.

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

- 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 bridgeheads 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.

*At last there are signs that the UK farming industry can look forward to a stronger, more vibrant future*

*Dr Gordon McGlone, OBE,  
Chairman of Lantra*

## 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.

# TO BRING THE BEST RELATED INDUSTRIES



## 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.

*If we present ourselves as a failing, basket-case industry then we should not be surprised that in 20 years time we are peopled accordingly.*

*Guy Smith, Essex farmer*

*(The industry) needs to foster intelligent and informed discussion and not shy away from areas which are difficult to describe.*

*Sir Mike Tomlinson  
retired Chief Inspector of Schools*



# FARMING NEEDS 60,000 NEW ENTRANTS OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS



Predicting the numbers of people the industry will require as new entrants is difficult but it looks like farming must recruit in excess of 6,000 a year for the next decade 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, creating a shortfall in numbers coming forward.

The good news is that the 6,000 new entrants farming needs is fewer than 1% of the total pool of young people which will be available to enter UK industry every year between now and 2020.

However, that does not take account of the managerial, skilled and unskilled jobs that will be created in ancillary and support industries such as agricultural engineering, crop and animal protection, veterinary, merchenting, retail and extension.

A recent IGD survey has shown that the general public support British farmers

strongly. But it says that the industry needs to be 'louder than ever before about... (its) special values'.

Farming is perceived as weak in public relations and communication skills. It must get across to potential entrants that farming is complex, technical, challenging and satisfying. The industry's current efforts do not compare well with image building for competing careers in the armed forces, NHS, teaching, science, engineering and the motor retail business.

Many of these groups are better resourced that farming ever could be so there is a real need to make up for this by putting more effort where there will be most impact and, most important, by working together across the industry disciplines.

The 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.

## NEW BLOOD – ATTRACTING THE BEST PEOPLE TO UK AGRICULTURE

Producing more food as well as some of our fuel and continuing to improve our landscapes, soils and wildlife are huge challenges 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 uncertainties arising out of unstable world finances.

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 Author*

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