

The Attraction of Agroecology

and the barriers faced by new entrants pursuing
agroecological farming and land work



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A report by The Landworkers' Alliance, 2022
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“It was important for us to start small and at a scale that we could handle, but we feel like it’s necessary to grow to achieve what we want to.”

Adam and Helen, Cumbria



© Joya Berrow



© Anne-Merie Young, C&M Organics

“I have a vision of wanting to lead and create a CSA that is led by, and centres, people of colour.”

Jo, London



© Joya Berrow

“I wish that sustainable farming was advertised as a career path option for those of us who don’t come from farming backgrounds. We can be a real strength.”

Lizzie, Somerset

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“We’re actually running a commercially viable business, nothing gets wasted. Apple juice, if we have any surplus, can be turned into cider, which can then be turned into vinegar, and vinegar can be made into balsamic and the apple juice can be made into syrup. There’s endless sorts of combinations of things you can do, all on a very small scale.”

Jake and Miriam, Devon



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“There’s a lot of things that we don’t do that you normally would do: we don’t do a lot of topping, we don’t cut any hedges. If you come down here in the morning, the place is alive.”

Hallam, Oxfordshire

Executive Summary

Based on findings from transdisciplinary research and drawing on the interviews with eleven different new entrant case studies, this report encourages the governments of UK nations to recognise and act upon the urgent need to focus their support for new entrants into farming on breaking down the real barriers to entry for agroecological, short supply chain land-based enterprises.

The report shows that agroecological farming and land work is an attractive sector, and investing in routes into agroecology for new entrants has the potential to both rejuvenate and diversify the farming and food production sector, while also helping governments to meet their food, climate and green recovery commitments.

Firstly, the introduction of the report highlights the current scarcity of information and research available on new entrants to farming and land work in the UK. However, it also draws attention to some emerging statistics which suggest that environmentally-friendly farming is drawing greater numbers of new entrants to farming than ever before, as well as appealing to young people from conventional farming backgrounds.

Secondly, the report moves on to outlining the findings that emerged from the primary research conducted for this report. The opportunities that supporting new entrants into agroecology presents are explored, showing that agroecology provides purposeful and fulfilling work for new entrants to farming, bringing them, their communities and the nation as a whole many benefits.

Thirdly, the report turns to the challenges that new entrants to agroecological farming currently face when trying to enter the sector. A number of key barriers are highlighted, including lack of paid entry-level work and training; lack of access to knowledge and education regarding agroecological farming; stigma and stereotypes attached to farming and land work; lack of access to land; lack of access to affordable housing; limited access to capital; a lack of connections with people and networks to support a journey into landwork; and a dearth of supportive markets.

Finally, the report concludes with a number of recommendations for how governments can better support those who are seeking to work or start businesses in agroecological farming and landwork. The report argues that what is needed is a combination of direct support to new entrants at all stages of their journey alongside broader system changes that would not only support agroecological new entrants but also help create a more sustainable, vibrant and localised food system.

The high costs of entry into agriculture, the need to bring more people into the industry (as others retire without anyone to take over the farm), and the need to reduce our reliance on volatile food imports all justify providing support to new entrants. However, the urgent need to tackle the biodiversity and climate crises means that any funding, training and support provided must also be in line with government commitments to support sustainable, innovative and ecologically based food production which offer solutions to the climate crisis and build capacity for land-based green jobs.

“When you’re working at this scale,
a small amount of money goes a
huge way.”

Sinead, East Sussex



© Joya Berrow



© Joya Berrow

“It’s about more
people rather
than machines.”

Tom and Connie,
East Neuk of Fife, Scotland

“What I hope for
from a career in
agroecology is peace
of mind, a better
relationship with
food and myself and
a sense of purpose.”

Joseph, London



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Introduction

Following the UK's exit from the EU in January 2020, agricultural departments in the governments of all four UK nations have sought to develop new agricultural policies.

In England, this transition plan has included a 'New Entrant Support Scheme', the pilot of which will be launched in autumn 2022. Defra's stated aim is to "provide funding to create lasting opportunities for new entrants to access land, infrastructure and support"¹. However, the consultation process to design this scheme involved little direct discussion with new entrants into agroecological farming, despite evidence that agroecology is attracting new and diverse entrants to farming² as well as being of great interest to young people from conventional farming backgrounds too³.

Defra has the opportunity to remedy this through its piloting process, but in the meantime, this report seeks to address this consultation gap. It presents stories of eleven different new entrant case studies that are pursuing an agroecological approach to food production and land management. In doing so, it highlights the opportunities that agroecology presents, not only as a way of producing food that is environmentally beneficial, but also for attracting diverse new entrants to farming and providing them with fulfilling and dignified livelihoods. All of the eleven new entrant case-studies demonstrate the enthusiasm that there is amongst new entrants to produce food and manage land in an agroecological way. However, each case study also shows the challenges that new entrants who choose to take an agroecological approach face. The report concludes with a list of

.....
1 see Defra 2020

2 see Wangler, 2016; Nourish Scotland, 2017; Bristol Food Producers, 2020

3 see NFYFC 2021

recommendations building on this evidence which we encourage governments to take on as part of the development agricultural policy across the UK.

In England this includes the 'New Entrant Support Scheme'. The legislative timetable for the post-Brexit agricultural support is further behind in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and, at the time of writing, are yet to announce new dedicated new entrant support schemes. Wales and Scotland both already have mentoring and land matching services for new entrants and the Welsh Government accepted expressions of interest for a small horticulture start-up grant, that was open in May and June 2022. However, whilst this limited support is welcome, all governments have a long way to go. See Appendix 2 for a more detailed overview of current new entrant support schemes in Scotland, Wales and England.

What is agroecology?

Agroecology is an approach to food systems that produces high yields whilst enriching, rather than depleting, ecosystems⁴. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, n.d.) state that:

"Agroecology is based on applying ecological concepts and principles to optimize interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment while taking into consideration the social aspects that need to be addressed for a sustainable and fair food system. By building synergies, agroecology can support food production and food security and nutrition while restoring the ecosystem services and biodiversity that are essential for sustainable agriculture."

.....
⁴ see Pretty et al., 2003; Pretty et al, 2006; Laughton, 2017; Alliance, 2018

The Landscape of New Entrants in Britain

For many years the landscape of new entrants to farming and landwork in Britain⁵ has been difficult to paint. This is due to the fact that there is a relative absence of data on new entrants and young farmers in Europe in general, and limited research focusing on new entrants to farming.

There has therefore been some uncertainty over who this group actually is⁶. The European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability⁷ has highlighted this lack of information, arguing that *“very little attention is given to the newcomers in agriculture, the businesses they begin, or the business models that they develop”*.

The UK context is no exception to this scarcity of accurate data on the number of new entrants to farming. However, Defra (2019) reports that the average age of farmers in the UK is 60 and a third of all agricultural land holders are over the typical retirement age of 65. These figures would suggest that there is a dearth of young new entrants to farming and landwork in the UK.

Yet other statistics show reason for optimism. For example, the Scottish Government reported demand outstripping their three grant schemes to support new entrants and young farmers between 2015 and 2018. More specifically, the Young Farmer Start-Up Grant Scheme received 596 applications and made 207 grants, the New Entrant Start-Up Grant Scheme received 110 applications and made

49 grants, and 1106 applications were received for the New Entrant Capital Grant Scheme and 736 grants were made⁸. As the number of holdings in Scotland (51,000) is half that of England (106,000) it would be reasonable to assume that demand for the same schemes would be twice as high in England⁹.

Furthermore, the Ecological Land Cooperative, Scottish Farm Land Trust and Bath & Bristol Organic Growers surveyed 277, 1,286 and 66 participants respectively, in order to gauge interest in their starter farms and land matching services, and found that 277, 989 and 66 of these respondents were interested in a starter farm¹⁰. The Landworkers' Alliance Membership figures also reveal a rising number of new entrants taking up landwork, particularly within the agroecological sector. The Landworkers' Alliance has experienced strong year on year growth since its establishment in 2012, and at the time of writing represents over 2,250 members across the UK. Due to the recognition that there is a particular increase of young people wishing to enter into the agroecological farming sector, in March 2021 the Landworkers' Alliance initiated a dedicated youth branch, named Youth FLAME, which is specifically designed to support this group of new entrants. In just 17 months, FLAME has grown to represent over 100 individual members.

Sustainable approaches to farming seem to be of particular interest to new entrants to farming in Britain. The recent Future Land Use Survey conducted by the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC) in June 2021 with next generation farmers and land managers found

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⁵ As noted previously, we have not been able to cover Northern Ireland, due to the lack of staff and our limited membership there, as explained on page 36. This is something we hope to change in future.

⁶ see EIP-AGRI 2016; Pindado et al., 2018; Zagata and Sutherland, 2015; Milne and Butler, 2014

⁷ see EPI-AGRI, 2016

⁸ see Wangler and Payne, 2020

⁹ see Defra, 2019

¹⁰ see Wangler, 2016; Nourish Scotland, 2017; Bristol Food Producers, 2020

a significant positive interest amongst young farmers in relation to issues relating to environmental management. For example, in response to the question “Which of the following options is closest to your opinion of what should influence future land use?” respondents indicated that their highest priorities were food production, biodiversity and conservation. The report concludes therefore that young farmers are highly motivated to produce more food, and want to do so in an environmentally beneficial way.

Combining the figures above with the statistics from the ecologically focused Ecological Land Cooperative, Scottish Farm Land Trust and Bath & Bristol Organic Growers about the high demand for starter farms, it would seem that it is important to not only be supporting new entrants to farming, but also to support these new entrants to engage in agroecological food production in particular. This appears to be a priority for young people who come from a conventional farming background and new entrants to farming alike. Research carried out across Europe similarly finds that aspiring new entrants to farming are particularly interested in farming that is environmentally friendly¹¹.

This report presents eleven case-studies of new entrants to farming and landwork who are pursuing an agroecological approach. It builds on the Landworkers’ Alliance survey of 156 new entrants that was conducted in 2020¹², providing in-depth qualitative insights that contextualise the quantitative results of the survey. In doing so, it makes a contribution towards addressing the gap of research available on new entrant farmers, as well as providing in depth data as to why exactly new entrants are so motivated by agroecology, and the challenges they face in starting and sustaining their food and landwork businesses.

.....

11 see EIP-AGR, 2016; Access to Land, 2018

12 see Landworkers’ Alliance, 2020b

How are ‘new entrants’ defined?

There is no singular definition of the phrase ‘new entrants’. For some, this phrase applies only to young farmers, whilst to others it refers only to those who begin farming without having come from a farming background. In the survey of new entrants conducted by the LWA two years ago (2020b), it was found that some farmers and growers self-identified as new entrants up to 10 years after taking on senior decision-making roles, whilst others stopped describing themselves as a new entrant after 3-5 years working in this area. The report therefore concludes that there is a “need for some flexibility in assigning new entrant status; depending on the person’s skills, confidence, and the rang of enterprises they are managing” (pg.4). The people interviewed for this report identified as new entrants in different ways, either as those not from a farming background, or just starting out in their farming careers, or returning to work on the family farm after working in other industries.

Their stories provide hope for a future where farming and land work in the UK is a thriving sector, producing more food per hectare and in a way that supports the health of people and the environment whilst also providing meaningful employment for both rural and urban communities. To do so the opportunities highlighted by these new entrants will need to be harnessed by policy makers by providing assistance to help them, and other new entrants, overcome the challenges they currently face in entering farming and landworking sectors.

The Attraction of Agroecology

As highlighted in Appendix 2, there is a lack of comprehensive support for new entrants to farming and landwork in the UK.

However, despite this, there are still a significant number of new entrants interested in entering this sector. In particular, many new entrants are interested in producing food in an agroecological way, not only providing healthy, nutritious food for their communities but contributing wider social, economic and environmental benefits. As the section on 'The Landscape of New Entrants in the UK' identified, producing food in an environmentally sustainable way is attractive to young farmers from conventional farming backgrounds¹³, as well as to new entrants to this field¹⁴. This constitutes a real opportunity for the UK to forge a thriving food and farming sector that is beneficial for both people and the planet.

The research included in this report supports this argument, as our interviews with new entrants clarified that a wide range of people from diverse backgrounds are interested in entering agroecological farming. We found that these new entrants had different motivations for engaging in such work, ranging from social, to political, to environmental concerns. For many, their motivation to pursue a career or livelihood in agroecology was driven by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, but all either defined agroecological practices as the only way in which they would consider farming, or highlighted agroecological practices as some of their primary attractions to farming and land work.

If provided with adequate support these highly motivated new entrants would be the key to the much-needed agroecological transition in Britain. This would not only ensure the diversification and revitalisation of our

farming and land working industries, communities and landscapes, but would also contribute towards the UK meeting the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets to which it is committed. Furthermore, as it provides multifarious employment opportunities that are attractive to new entrants, agroecological farming and land work has the potential to reinvigorate rural communities¹⁵, and provide the green jobs needed for the realisation of the UK Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and green recovery (UK Government, 2020).

This section of the report highlights in more detail the reasons why the new entrants interviewed were motivated to pursue agroecology, demonstrating the opportunity that there is within the UK for a growing and flourishing farming industry now and in the future.

Fulfilling Work

Many of the new entrants interviewed said that a key motivation behind their decision to enter an agroecological farming career was that they found this work to be highly fulfilling and beneficial for themselves as individuals. For example, Lally Owen, a market gardener from Dorset who runs Springtail Farm with her partner Tomas Carolsfeld, told us that:

“People can get a lot of meaning from it [agroecological farming] and a huge amount of food can be grown.”

Lally, Grower, Dorset

Timmerman and Felix (2015) also make this point, observing that work on small-scale agroecological holdings is more attractive compared to large-scale industrial agriculture,

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¹³ see NFYFC, 2021

¹⁴ see Wangler, 2016; Nourish Scotland, 2017; Bristol Food Producers, 2020; EIP-AGR, 2016; Access to Land, 2018

¹⁵ see Laughton, 2017

because it is meaningful, skilled and values the application of the worker's intelligence in overcoming challenges.

As well as finding working in agroecological farming meaningful, other new entrants said that they enjoyed the opportunity that this field provides to learn new skills and engage in challenging problem solving. Many said that they also found the work to be fun and enjoyable. Adam, a Kickstart Trainee based at Swillington Organic Farm in Leeds told us for instance that he found his work at the farm much more stimulating than his previous job working in a warehouse:

“It was boring [doing warehouse work]. I didn't want to do it. I didn't want to get up from work, but now at this farm, I am up! My motivation is animal work – I love it. Making sure they are happy and healthy, and making sure they're alright, and watching them grow, it's like watching a baby grow. I like being on a farm, you're not stuck in one place, you're out in the fresh air. And especially on an organic farm, it doesn't smell like normal farms it's got nothing artificial or nout like that”

Adam, Kickstart trainee, Leeds

Across all of the new entrants that were interviewed, the opportunity to spend more time outside, rather than working at a desk, was a key driver behind their desire to work in agroecological food production and land work. Spending more time in nature and interacting with wildlife has been found to be positively correlated with workplace satisfaction¹⁶. In addition to this, some added that in comparison to previous jobs, they relished the way

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¹⁶ see A Matter of Scale, Laughton, 2017



Adam

Kickstart Trainee

Swillington Organic Farm, Leeds

Adam is 20 years old (at the time of interview) and lives in Leeds. He found his job at the Swillington Organic Farm through the Job Centre as part of the Kickstart scheme. The initial six month contract at the farm involved a wide variety of tasks, from working in the garden, to manning the vegetable stall, collecting eggs, and feeding the pigs, sheep and cows. Adam's favourite part of the job is working with the animals at the farm.

As a child Adam dreamed of becoming a vet. After school he went to agricultural college for two years to study Level 1 and Level 2 certificates in animal care, as well as to re-sit his GCSEs. After this, Adam worked as a volunteer at a pet shop whilst also working in a warehouse. He became bored of the warehouse work, and so went to the job centre to seek more stimulating opportunities. It was there that he learnt of the Kickstart job at Swillington Organic Farm.

At Swillington Organic Farm Adam has been able to assist vets with animal care, as well as take part in other tasks. He enjoys spending time outside and learning new things, and finds working with the animals at the farm highly rewarding. One day he would love to either fulfil his dream of becoming a rvet or have his own farm.



Lally and Tomas

Springtail Farm, Dorset

Springtail Farm is a market garden in Wootton Fitzpaine in West Dorset run by Lally Owen and Tomas Carolsfeld. Both aged 31 at the time of interview, Lally grew up in the UK whilst Tomas grew up in Canada. They met at university, at the College of the Atlantic in Maine, U.S., and Lally worked on one of the two campus farms during her time there and really enjoyed it. Tomas carried out his senior project on food waste, but had not considered becoming a food grower himself until Lally suggested it. Now he says all that he can think about is vegetables!

After University, Tomas knew he wanted to do something practical and not have an office job. He worked as a boat guide on the northwest coast of Canada for a season whilst Lally worked in hospitality. She hadn't forgotten her experience growing on the farm in Maine, and wanted to give it a try as a full-time occupation.

They found a job working for a local grower in Dorset, but both decided that they would like to have their own business. Lally's parents ran a restaurant in Lyme Regis that used produce from FivePenny Farm.

Whilst Tomas was away in Canada that summer, an opportunity came up to have access to half an acre of land at FivePenny that was unused. Lally started growing some herbs and vegetables, and by the time Tomas returned from Canada an opening had also arisen at the local market for a new vegetable trader, so they decided to start growing vegetables and selling them through the market.

For Lally and Tomas, part of the appeal of taking a small-scale, regenerative approach to growing food was that it didn't require a large amount of up-front investment. They are continuing to grow the business and take on more land as well as invest in new equipment with their profits. As well as selling produce at the market Tomas and Lally also sell veg boxes direct to customers and some produce to wholesale shops and takeaway restaurants. They also now employ two part-time workers. Tomas and Lally have found that demand for their veg far outstrips what they are currently able to produce, and they would like to buy more land to upscale their business but finding affordable land is proving challenging.

in which agroecological farming allowed them to engage in practical tasks that had clear and tangible goals and a demonstrable purpose.

These findings mirror some found in previous research with new entrants into agroecology. Laughton (2017) found in

her survey of 69 small agroecological farms in the UK that there are a number of environmental and social benefits that make this occupation attractive to new entrants¹⁷. The work is intellectually challenging, as it requires designing integrated systems, and efficient resource management. It is also sociable work that entails significant community

¹⁷ see note 2



engagement. It provides the opportunity to engage in variable work and to learn skills on the job. Unlike a lot of seasonal work on conventional farms, such as fruit-picking, work in small-scale agroecological farms provides the satisfaction of seeing processes through from start to finish, rather than just participating in a fragment of the production process.

Further satisfaction is gained from producing healthy food for which there is a known demand. Also the financial barriers to small scale agroecological production are less than for conventional agriculture, which requires purchasing and equipping a large farm that relies on many external inputs to function.

Additionally, some of the new entrants said that they felt demand was growing for organic food, and that therefore engaging in agroecological farming made sense for the success and longevity of their businesses.

Potential mental health benefits was another reason given for seeking a career in agroecology, with one interviewee citing working with nature and doing meaningful work producing food for oneself and others, as being crucial for mental health.

“I was attracted to agroecology because I wanted to try to find a way of relating to the world that made more sense. I’ve done jobs that are considered great in the eyes of society and had nice pay cheques, but they were so hollow so I thought, what is this really producing? What’s the real benefit to society? What I hope for from a career in agroecology is peace of mind, a better relationship with food and myself and a sense of purpose.”

Joseph, Prospective new entrant, London

Joseph

Prospective new entrant, London

Joseph Thompson is a 29 year old (at the time of interview) aspiring food producer in West London, who has dreams of one day having his own piece of land on which to grow food. He was inspired to pursue agroecology for several reasons including: the benefits it brings about in terms of both mental and physical health, the purpose that growing good food gives to one’s sense of self, and the relationship between good sustainable food and having a healthy diet. Joseph currently works as a delivery driver for Ocado, but has recently been engaged in a Shamanic apprenticeship which is what inspired him to think more about food, where it comes from and our relationship to it.

Although some of Joseph’s family on his mum’s side are farmers in Wales, Joseph points towards lack of access to land as the primary barrier to him entering the sector and beginning to grow food; especially in London where land is extremely scarce. In the past he has grown mushrooms, and one day hopes to have a pot of land on which to set up a micro-herb business with his brother, as he sees this as a cost and space effective enterprise. For Joseph, doing hands-on practical work is far more rewarding than an office job and having researched agroecology is more drawn towards agroecological farming than he is to conventional farming because of the quality of life associated with agroecological practices and principles.

Purposeful Work

Alongside intrinsic individual motivations for wanting to pursue agroecological food production and land work, the new entrants that were interviewed also mentioned numerous extrinsic motivations for their decision to enter this line of work beyond personal satisfaction alone. These included wanting to produce healthy, affordable food that benefits local people at the same time as contributing to the protection and regeneration of the environment. Many of the participants mentioned the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis as key motivators for wanting to engage in agroecology. Similarly, the Scottish Farmland Trust (2017) report that 85% of the aspiring new entrants to farming that they surveyed cited 'looking after the environment' as a key motivating factor, and 79% cited wanting to 'help build/sustain rural communities'.

Contributing to local community life, culture and tradition, whether rural or urban, was another motivating factor mentioned by some of the participants, including Jake Glanville of McG Juice in Devon:

“We wanted to do something with it ourselves being keen gardeners. And having looked at tithe maps of the area, like a lot of the West Country there are orchards all around these old farmhouses. So we just thought why not, you know, recreate that. We got very excited about all that sort of side of things. We just felt it was, you know, it was fun to do. It seemed to be something productive. We felt that even if we did absolutely nothing with them, and the apples fall and the trees disintegrate, it will be a wonderful sort of environment for wildlife. Much better than that just sort of semi-improved grassland”

Jake, Apple grower, North Devon

The finding that external motivating factors are as important to new entrant agroecological farmers as internal, personal factors is also corroborated by a study with new entrants conducted by Taherzadeh (2019). Taherzadeh interviewed 20 young new entrants to sustainable food production and similarly found that their motivations for embarking on this path can be divided into 'personal-social' and 'environmental'. The 'personal-social' motivations include wanting to do meaningful work, have a purpose, be outdoors, and engage in practical and hands-on work with tangible outcomes that are community-based. The respondents were also motivated by the belief that 'life is short' and so they wanted to do a job that brings joy, and is supportive of mental health and wellbeing. The 'political-environmental' motivations include the perception of sustainable farming as a 'right livelihood' which aligns with their values and principles. All of the respondents were concerned with the environmental impact of industrial agriculture and wanted to change food systems. They saw regenerative agriculture as a solution to 'climate chaos', and a positive action they could take to change the social and economic aspects of the food system in the UK for the better. They were motivated by the concept of sustainable agriculture as part of a 'localised economy', and some also mentioned sustainable farming as a 'form of resistance' and 'activism' that enabled them to be a part of a wider social movement.

Alongside this existing research the case studies included in this report provide further weight to the argument that a diverse range of people are highly motivated to enter the field of agroecological farming for a diversity of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. This passionate and driven cohort of new entrants is motivated by environmentally friendly farming specifically, rather than farming in general. Supporting these new entrants to achieve their goals of producing food in a way that benefits people and the planet will be a crucial factor in ensuring the future of the UK farming industry, as well as addressing the climate and biodiversity crises, and making fresh and healthy food more accessible for all.



Jake and Miriam

McG Juice, Devon

Jake and Miriam Glanville have lived in North Devon for around 16 years after moving there from London. They sell apple juice and other (mostly) apple-based products at local farmers' markets and to nearby cafes, pubs and restaurants.

Jake was originally an economist, whilst Miriam's background is in fine art. After a sabbatical travelling with their four children around South Asia and New Zealand, the couple decided to relocate to Devon. Jake continued working as a consultant, before he and Miriam jointly took over running their family publishing business. During this time they planted an orchard on their five acre field, and found themselves increasingly making connections with the local farm and food communities. This included *Orchards Live*, an organisation that provided courses on pruning and other aspects of traditional orchard management. They decided to rent a pressing kit and do community pressings, and their business grew from there.

Jake and Miriam's orchard contains mostly local Devon varieties of apple, with 30 types of tree all together. They had noticed when they bought their house, and the adjoining field on which their orchard sits, that on old tithe maps there had once been orchards around their village. This inspired them in 2009, to plant their field with trees, using cardboard from the local post office as mulch. Their first crop was in 2014. Initially they bought all of their trees, but now they mainly graft their own from varieties that have proved successful. In order to make the business profitable they produce premium products from their produce, such as apple balsamic vinegar and apple syrup. Miriam uses her artistic skills to design the labels for the products.

Jake and Miriam take an agroecological approach to their orchard, and also try to upcycle and reuse as much of their equipment as possible. They enjoy the lifestyle that their orchard business provides, including the ability to meet customers and be a part of the community at local farmers markets. They are proud that they can be a part of keeping local apple orchard traditions alive in Devon.

Agroecology for New Entrants: The Challenges

Whilst the interviews with the new entrants highlighted the numerous reasons why they were motivated to pursue agroecological farming and land work and the significant opportunity supporting these new entrants presents for the UK farming sector, they also brought to light numerous challenges faced by those wanting to enter the sector.

In order to ensure that those seeking to forge new agroecological businesses are able to fulfil their ambitions for the benefit of people and wildlife, governments need to ensure measures to address these barriers to new entrants are included in future new entrant support schemes.

There is a significant amount of research on the barriers to entry for new entrants to farming.¹⁸ These barriers have led some to refer to farming as a ‘closed profession’ except to those who inherit land, or wealthy urbanites moving from the city to the countryside in acts of gentrification¹⁹.

Drawing on the Transitions to Agroecological Food Systems submission to the Agriculture Bill Committee (2018) these barriers can be summarised as:

- Lack of access to land *in terms of availability, appropriateness, affordability, with access to accommodation and/or other buildings, and security of tenure or ability to invest*
- Lack of access to knowledge and education regarding agroecological farming
- Limited access to capital

- Lack of paid entry-level work and training
- Stigma and stereotypes attached to farming
- Lack of connections with people and networks to support journey into landwork
- A dearth of supportive markets

The interviews carried out for this research found further evidence that these barriers are holding new entrants to agroecological farming back from achieving their full business potential. The barriers raised by the interviewees will now be discussed in further detail.

Access to Land

“Access to land is the biggest barrier. Everything hangs on having the land.”

Joseph, prospective new entrant, London

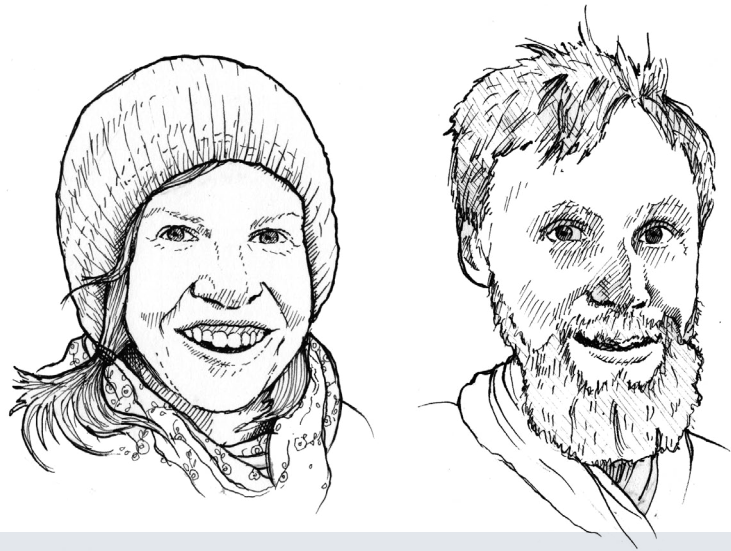
Access to land is one of the major barriers that new entrants face when wanting to begin producing food in an agroecological way.²⁰ In a survey of 156 new entrants in 2020, the Landworkers’ Alliance found that 61% struggled to access land.

For those wishing to start an agroecological enterprise in the city, scarcity of land can make finding a plot of land to farm a major barrier to entry. In both rural and urban areas land prices continue to rise. For many new entrants, renting land can be the only affordable option. However, finding a secure tenancy with a supportive landlord is not an easy process. This was a point raised by Adam Crowe, one of the new entrants interviewed for this report:

¹⁸ see Landworkers’ Alliance, 2020b; Nye, 2020; Helms et al. 2019; Payne, 2019; Taherzadeh, 2019; Laughton, 2017; Nourish Scotland, 2017; Scottish Government, 2016; Williams, 2015; M-J Zondag et al., 2015; Milne and Butler, 2014; Macaulay Institute, 2008.

¹⁹ see Sutherland, 2019

²⁰ see note 4



“Without laying it on too thick, landowners are quite hungry for the money that they can get from short term lets and the demand for land is great enough that there’s competition and people will put in ridiculous tenders for a short term tenancy. So from our point of view, having access to my Dad’s tenancy is incredible, but my Dad’s relationship with his landlords isn’t brilliant. It’s probably worth more to them as possession without a tenant than it is to keep a tenant. So yeah. It’s been a tricky relationship over the years”

Adam, Rare-breed sheep and cattle farmer, Cumbria

Adam and Helen

Rare-breed sheep and cow farmers, Cumbria

Adam Crowe and Helen Rawlinson farm rare breed sheep and cattle in Cumbria. They sell the meat and wool that they produce directly to local consumers.

The couple met ten years ago whilst both working in nature conservation, but they had both always been interested in food. Adam grew up on a tenant dairy and sheep farm in Cumbria and his parents encouraged him to pursue a career in nature conservation as they were concerned about whether farming would make for a stable career in the future. Helen grew up in a town and, apart from an allotment, did not have much exposure to farming as a child. They both studied Environmental Conservation at university.

After university Adam worked on his parents’ farm for a year and then got a job at Natural England. Adam loved learning about local habitats and species from ecologists as part of his job, but ideally he wanted to be doing a more practical job that didn’t involve sitting at a desk. Helen was working for the Cumbria Wildlife Trust on a limestone grassland project that worked with farmers to manage limestone grassland in a more wildlife friendly way. Through this work she came to see how much positive change in habitats requires working with farmers.

In 2015 Helen did some volunteering work abroad whilst Adam undertook a six months traineeship on a market garden. Around four years ago they got access to some land in Cumbria to begin their own farming venture. Adam had been volunteering at an orchard on a local estate and was offered the opportunity of using the space for grazing, so they bought 20 sheep through the local farmers network, and started grazing them in the orchard. They also now have some cows which they graze on pasture and meadow.

Alongside their farming business Helen also works as a Countryside Officer for Arnsdale and Silverdale. Adam still works on the family farm and as a conservation grazer and provides conservation grazing for nature reserves. The couple is also planning on moving to the family farm to take on more responsibility there.

Jo Kamal, a previous Kickstart farm trainee from London, also raised the issue of accessing land, and the need for opportunities for new entrants to be able to do so:

“How do people from backgrounds that aren’t from farming get land? How do we not just work on land? And how do we actually live on the land? And provide for it in that way? I’m thinking of the Ecological Land Co-operative – I’m thinking that we need more things like that. Things that can really provide people opportunities to, I don’t want to say, own land, because I don’t know if I believe in that. But just be with the land in a way that they haven’t been able to before.”

Jo, Kickstart Trainee, London

The challenges associated with the security of investing in rented land means many agroecological new entrants would prefer to buy land, if funding were no barrier. The long term benefits of agroecological and organic management, in terms of soil and biodiversity health, mean that investment in land goes far beyond financial investment. Crop rotation, organic matter improvement through green manure use, soil erosion prevention and non-use of artificial fertilisers and agrochemicals result in naturally fertile soil and more balanced ecology of pests and predators. The improvements resulting from agroecological management are rarely recognised by the market, giving new entrants further incentive to buy rather than rent land that they are investing in. However, this is not affordable for most new entrants, including many of those interviewed for this report.

Access to Housing

A key issue connected to the inaccessibility of land mentioned by our interviewees was the challenge of accessing affordable housing. If new entrants have managed to save money to invest in a new agroecological business, then they are faced with the dilemma of buying land and then having no money left for housing, or buying somewhere to live but then having to rent land with a lack of security of tenure. This was a dilemma raised by Tomas from Springtail Farm in Dorset (see page 12 for case-study of Tomas and Lally from Springtail Farm):

“Housing is another huge part of it. I wanted to buy land, and then grow and move onto the land. It’s so hard to imagine renting somewhere with security and decision power and where you are fairly compensated for the infrastructure you put in and you can trust your landlord. It makes most sense to live on the land because of financial constraints, but then you can’t because of planning. How can I make enough to support the farm and live in a place?”

Tomas, Grower, Dorset

The new entrants interviewed for this report, including Lizzie Rowe, egg entrepreneur and researcher, frequently raised the need for more flexible planning regulations to make living on the land a more feasible option for those engaging in agroecological farming. As Lizzie explained:

“My dream, and my husband’s, is to buy some land for ourselves, and build a small

eco home on it. But then, finding land that you can use for agricultural purposes, but also have planning permission, can get really expensive, especially when all we're wanting to do is build this tiny little house. So, I think, help with derogations or help with regulations of having planning permission on land [is needed]."

Lizzie, Researcher and egg entrepreneur, Somerset

Access to Capital

Starting a new farming business is expensive, particularly for new entrants who do not come from a farming family and therefore have no inherited equipment to support their work in the initial stages. In a survey of 156 new entrants in 2020, the Landworkers' Alliance (2020b) found that 46% found it a challenge to access financial support. It takes a few years to establish agroecological businesses and then be able to reinvest profits into necessary equipment and further staff in order to scale-up operations. This was an issue raised by Sinead from Aweside Farm during her interview:

"It always comes down to capital, doesn't it? I guess, being a small farmer, we don't exist to Defra. Lots of the work that we're doing is directly helping the community and our environment, but we're not recognized for that. And we're not compensated for it. The super destructive farm is doing no good for the planet, but

because they've got a good amount of acreage, they can get their subsidies²¹. For a farm like this, we planted a tonne of trees, and the only way that we can afford the trees is because I washed pots [as a second job], so we could get the money. What's being rewarded in our system is destruction, but when you're trying to do something good, you generally just get more put onto you, and more responsibility put on to you, but no kind of financial support for it. It's not fair that only a certain section of the farming world gets help and the others don't."

Sinead, Vegetable and flower grower, East Sussex

In England, whilst Defra's new Sustainable Farming Incentive now requires farmers and land managers to deliver public goods (such as environmental benefits) in order to receive subsidies, they maintain a 5 hectare eligibility requirement, meaning that Sinead and Adam still wouldn't receive any support for the benefits that they have delivered.

If financial support were available to new entrant agroecological farmers like Sinead and Adam, then this would enable these businesses to scale up more quickly and thus become financially viable. Adam Crowe (see page 17 for case-study) also pointed out the problems with financial support, specifically minimum-spend requirements for grants. The amount of grant money that agro-ecological start-ups need can be relatively little, and thus representing good value for money for Defra and other grant making organisations:

²¹ Since the time of interview England have rolled out the Sustainable Farming Incentive that incentivises farmers to adopt environmentally friendly farming and land-use practices, but the 5ha threshold would prevent small farms from accessing this financial support.



Sinead and Adam

Aweside Farm, Sussex

Aweside farm is a 4 and a half acre plot in East Sussex run by Sinead Fenton and Adam Smith since March 2020. They grow vegetables, mainly heritage varieties, and edible flowers and culinary herbs. The couple gained access to the land via the Ecological Land Co-operative (ELC).

Sinead and Adam have a shared love of nature, but their careers have not always been aligned with this passion. Sinead grew up in London and studied geology at university. She worked in mining for a year, but found the destructive nature of the industry disheartening. Whilst working a number of different jobs in search of finding a career which was more restorative in nature she learned about agroecology. Sinead began volunteering with a number of different food organisations across London in order to learn more about the practical side of growing. Through this process she made contact with Audacious Veg, a 0.1 acre veg growing operation in East London. In 2017, after a year of volunteering there, the management team wanted to leave and asked if Sinead would like to take the reins. Meanwhile Adam had been working in finance and accounting, but was also looking for a new career that would enable him to spend more time in nature. The couple therefore decided to embark on the new adventure of running Audacious Veg together. They ran the plot for two years and learnt a lot along the way. However, they also came to realise that it was difficult on that scale to make the business commercially viable. Whilst there is a high demand for locally grown produce in London it is hard to access enough land to grow enough to sustain an income.

Sinead and Adam had learned about the ELC at the Oxford Real Farming Conference. In 2019 they applied for the plot of land that Aweside Farm is situated on; a plot had been farmland growing maize for 30 years prior to being purchased by the ELC. Sinead and Adam have a 30 year mortgage with the ELC for the land via their rent-to-buy scheme. As well as selling produce to restaurants and shops they also have a community food growing project at the farm, and have planted woodland and established habitats for wildlife.

“The Countryside Productivity Grants that have been available to rural development funding have a minimum spend of £3,000 and only cover 40% of the cost. So we’d need to buy equipment costing around £7,000. For us it would be useful to have funds to buy something for a few hundred quid; you don’t need new kit, you need functional kit. It’s pocket money in Defra terms. A broader window for funding [is what is needed], specifically for equipment for new entrants. There was a bit of discussion on a Whatsapp group I’m on, for first generation farmers, and one of the biggest things for them getting into farming as well as land was buying the equipment. Not coming from farming families, people starting completely from scratch, not having an old cattle gate or something like that.”

Adam, Rare-breed sheep and cattle farmer, Cumbria

Evidence in the value of small grants can be found in the results of the edible horticulture small grants pilot²² run by Food Sense Wales, Tyfu Cymru and others. Grants covering 100% of purchase costs for new equipment and infrastructure were given out and ranged from £2,500 to £4,375. The scheme had a very positive impact on efficiency and productivity increases.

94% of the new entrants surveyed by the LWA (2020b) also indicated that a grant would help them transform their enterprises.

Industry Connections

Finding land, housing and financial support to begin an agroecological business is made possible by having connections with mentors and advisors who can provide information on these matters. For many new entrants to landwork, especially those who do not have family members engaging in landwork or those from urban areas, it can be a challenge to make connections with those already involved in landwork in order to gain access to opportunities and support. This was a challenge raised by Jo Kamal, a community farm trainee from London:

“I think one of the big barriers has been that I really haven’t had any connections in food growing. I remember at the very beginning, being really emotional and sad that there were a lot of people that were quite a bit younger than me that were already doing land work, because they had family members who are into it who owned land, which obviously is not, was not, and has never been a thing for me. So that was a sad time. But I’ve managed to work through that. But yeah, not really having the connections [is a major barrier].”

Jo, Kickstart Trainee, London

Hallam, a micro-dairy entrepreneur from the Cotswolds, was one of the many interviewees who spoke of how important it has been to have mentors to help provide guidance and training along their pathway to farming.

²² See pilot report here: <https://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/app/uploads/2022/03/FSW-Business-Support-Grants-Pilot-21-Final.pdf>



Jo

Kickstart Trainee,
Sutton Community Farm, London

Jo Kamal worked as a Kickstart Trainee at Sutton Community Farm in London. The 25 hour a week contract with the farm involved learning to grow veg and harvest veg, as well as other aspects of managing a farm.

Jo came to pursue agroecological food growing through their environmental activism which is strongly motivated by their spirituality and commitment to anticolonialism. They were previously involved in efforts to decolonise Extinction Rebellion in Sheffield and Leeds. However, they began to feel burned out from the intensity of this work, and that there was too much emphasis on problems and not enough on solutions. Whilst studying their postgraduate degree in Journalism, Jo read *Farming While Black*²³ and became aware of how political food growing can be. They started volunteering at a community allotment scheme in Sutton and found the work to be highly enjoyable and fulfilling. They applied for the traineeship at Sutton Community Farm and were one of four applicants selected.

23 Farming While Black, Leah Penniman (2018)

“I’ve been very lucky in who I work with; I’ve been really lucky. I worked for a chap called Luke Stacy – that was my placement job – he took me on with not an awful lot of experience really. I’d done a bit of beef stuff, but there were 30-odd sucker cows and stuff like that. So to get the opportunity to go there was massive.”

Hallam, Micro-dairy entrepreneur, Cotswolds

In the long-term, Jo would like to move out of London to a more rural area and run a CSA scheme that centres people of colour. They are also very interested in herbalism and plan to also train in this field.

Training, education and jobs

College & On-farm Training

The type of formal education at British agricultural colleges generally focus more on conventional ways of farming. This leads new entrants to agroecological farming to seek other opportunities in order to tailor their learning towards the type of skills they require:

“When you’re first finding out about stuff [farming], the opportunities that are around or the opportunities that I found, were more geared towards conventional farming. And I was looking at doing stuff like going to University and doing an agricultural course, but I quickly realised that that wasn’t the world that I wanted to work in.”

Sinead, Vegetable and flower grower, East Sussex
(see page 20 for case-study)



Emma

Trainee Forester and Market Gardener, Cornwall

Emma Eberhardt is a trainee forester and market gardener in Cornwall. She is also one of the coordinators of Youth FLAME, the youth group of the Landworkers' Alliance. Emma grew up in Lyon in France with no background in farming or forestry, but she has always had an interest in the environment and the outdoors and moved to the UK to Cornwall to study Environmental Science at university. There, she became involved in the Green Living initiative which recruited students to manage allotments on campus. It was through these experiences that Emma saw that growing food in an environmentally friendly way could have a significant positive impact on the health of wildlife and people.

After graduating she worked in environmental education at the Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth. She then moved to Cornwall to work in forestry and as a market gardener, while also doing a Masters degree in Agroforestry and Food Security through distance learning at Bangor University.

As a trainee forester Emma carries out coppicing – including restoration coppicing – of woodland owned by organisations such as the Wildlife Trust. The coppiced wood is then made into charcoal and firewood, or occasionally into wood flooring or other wood products by local carpenters. The market garden that Emma works for is organic and supplies local restaurants and shops.

For Emma, working in forestry and market gardening gives her the opportunity to pursue her interest in ecology whilst spending more time outdoors and in nature. She enjoys learning new skills and is passionate about making good food affordable and accessible for everyone. In the future Emma is interested in designing agroforestry systems, engaging in contract work on farms and continuing to provide opportunities for people to learn about how to produce food in an agroecological way.

There is, however, a real lack of funded training and entry-level jobs available for people beginning their journey into landwork and farming and so for many, the expectation is that they will work for free or volunteer in order to gain training and skills they need before being eligible for paid work.

This is not an option for many new entrants, especially those from low-income backgrounds without the savings to sustain their living costs for a year or more. This was the case for the Emma, a trainee forester and food grower

from Cornwall:

“I was actually applying for jobs for quite a while before moving down to Cornwall, and I think lack of experience was the main thing that was keeping me back really. But I got rejected from quite a few of them because they’d say, you don’t have

enough experience, we'd recommend you do WWOOF-ing²⁴ for a couple of seasons. I've never done WWOOF-ing before. So it's something I've been interested in doing, but just never had the opportunity to. I was at a stage in my life where I couldn't really afford to do volunteering. I think [we need], first of all, just more jobs, more jobs that are accessible to people who're just starting out. And you know, for young people the fact that you have to volunteer, especially in horticulture, to get into the industry, it just makes it very inaccessible to a lot of people."

Emma, Trainee forester and market gardener, Cornwall

The relatively low income of small farms means that there is a limit to how many people they can afford to employ staff. The Kickstart scheme which Adam Scarth and Jo Kamal were both employed on provided a really valuable solution to this. The Department of Work and Pensions paid young people on Universal Credit minimum wage in return for working at least 25 hours per week in a training role. However, the scheme has now closed to new trainees.

Connections can also be a key source of knowledge about paid work and traineeship opportunities and so those entering the sector with no prior connections or family members in farming have to build them up in their spare time, which often relies on that individual to be in a fortunate enough position to undertake volunteering. The Landworkers' Alliance (2020b) survey of 156 new entrants showed that 54% of respondents experienced access to relevant training as a barrier.

Knowledge and information

For many new entrants the need for knowledge and information on agroecological growing practices and business skills does not diminish once they have launched their own enterprises. However, there is a lack of access to helpful advice and information to help support new entrants with their new agroecological businesses, including information about tax, insurance and other key aspects of running a business but also information specific to agroecological practices in the UK context. This was a point raised by Hallam, a micro-dairy entrepreneur interviewed for this report:

"The other thing [holding me back] is directions. I actually have a really good environmental health officer; she was really helpful. But if you're a young farmer starting out, and you don't have any farming background, you don't really know. You don't really know what to do in terms of paperwork, people just expect you to know. I've never had any instruction on sheep movement licences. It was just, 'Oh, yeah, you know?' And it's like, well, no, actually, I don't know all those things. You've got to learn so fast. Yeah, get all these things, get them in the right order as well. I've been lucky because I've had instructions, but you could very, very easily get completely lost in it. And actually get yourself in quite a lot of trouble because you haven't done it either."

.....
24 WWOOFing refers to short term volunteering under the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms scheme <https://wwof.org.uk/>



Hallam

Microdairy Entrepreneur, Oxfordshire

Hallam Duckworth is a first generation farmer based in West Oxfordshire. He has just over 100 sheep and has just started a micro dairy which is based at FarmEd, alongside this Hallam also works for another local sheep farmer. FarmEd is based on the 107 acre Honeydale farm and provides a learning space for people to build sustainable food and farming systems that nourish people and regenerate the planet.

When he was younger, Hallam enjoyed horse riding, and became interested in farming through working on a livery yard that was based on a farm a few villages away from where he grew up. Hallam went on to study agriculture at Harper Adams University, where he was one of six non-farming background students out of a class of one hundred. At Harper Adams he studied modules on a wide variety of types of farming. He took some modules on dairy farming, but they were geared towards larger scale conventional dairy farming, rather than running a micro dairy. As part of the course Hallam undertook a placement on a mixed farm near Milton Keynes. After graduating, he worked on a dairy farm in Devon. He really enjoyed the experience, and began to dream of starting his own dairy.

Without a family farm to inherit, running a micro dairy was the only accessible option for Hallam, as it required much less space and fewer up front investments. In order to make a living from this smaller scale approach to dairy farming Hallam is producing premium products such as ice cream, alongside staples like milk. He believes that taking an agroecological, regenerative approach pays off in the long run, as it requires fewer inputs to produce higher quality products. Hallam also notes that there is a growing demand amongst consumers for locally produced, high quality food and drink. Lastly, he feels that farming in an environmentally friendly way makes for a nicer working atmosphere, with more wildlife and healthier soils.

You want a mentor, just someone to say 'here's a step by step guide of how to go from nothing to keeping 50 sheep – this is what you need to do'."

Hallam, Micro-dairy entrepreneur,
Oxfordshire

Tom and Connie, the entrepreneurs behind East Neuk Market Garden, also said that it can be challenging to know where to go to find information and knowledge on how to scale up an enterprise:

"A challenge too is skills. By all accounts we were too inexperienced to start this but it happened. And when we think about scaling up or doing something else, we need to know how to do some kind of field-based tractor work. I've not ploughed anything, but there's no way to learn. I can't go on a weekend course and learn how to operate a modern tractor, or learn how to plough. I would have to find a farmer to show me. So there's a big gap, in terms of not only learning the initial skills, like at horticultural college, but also a levelling-up gap."

Tom, Market gardener, Fife

In Wales, the Farming Connect scheme provides a mentoring scheme, which pairs new entrants and farmers looking to diversify into new sectors with farmers experienced in the relevant field. Mentors receive funding from Farming Connect to provide 15 hours of advice and support. Were a similar scheme available in England, people like Hallam would be able to benefit from this advice and support.

School, stereotypes and stigma

School

The educational barriers to new entrants into agroecological farming begin at school. Careers in farming are rarely promoted as a positive career option: farm management is often seen as a closed profession, limited to those who inherit farms, whilst working on someone else's farm is too often presented as low skilled, undesirable work.

Kinesthetic skills, which are important for success in land work are undervalued in our academically focussed education system, whilst the intellectual skills required for landwork and running a land based business are not recognised by career advisors, meaning more academic students are discouraged from it. Despite the urgent need to increase Britain's agricultural workforce, little is done to make conventional farm work more attractive to young people and little is known about agroecological farming careers, which as shown above has many attractive elements. Many of the new entrants interviewed for this report came to agroecological farming almost by accident or as career changers. Young people are frequently motivated to choose careers that address climate change, biodiversity loss and other environmental matters, as their futures are directly threatened by such issues. Yet agriculture and horticulture are more often seen as part of the problem, rather than the solution. If there were greater awareness of the benefits of agroecological farming in schools and careers advice services, we would likely see many more new entrants.

Stereotypes regarding farming as a profession that you need to be born into, and that is only suitable for particular people, means that for many of the new entrants that we spoke with, agroecological food production was not seen as a viable job option for a long time. Some, such as Lizzie Rowe a researcher and egg entrepreneur, suggested that this should be addressed by talking to young people about the potential of farming, and promoting the field as a career option whilst children are at school:

"I always lived in the countryside. But none of my family had anything to do with farming; I had nothing to do with farming. And it's something that I've thought about since because if someone had said to me as a child, 'hey, you can have this job where you get to work outside all the time, you get to work with animals, you get to be in charge of this land that you can create a haven for wildlife on, you can help the planet' I'd be like, oh, where do I sign that? Farming to me was always something you only did if you're from a farming background, if you're born into a farming family. I suppose if I had known about the smallholding world, and that you don't have to own a giant farm where you've got like, you know, 30,000 birds and a couple of sheds, I think it would have been a more welcoming kind of world but it just wasn't an option to me as a child so I just never thought about it."

Lizzie Rowe, Researcher and egg business entrepreneur, Somerset



As Sinead from Aweside Farm points out, the longstanding lack of diversity in farming may be preventing the sector from being as successful and innovative as it could be:

“It just perpetuates the same thing, if we keep getting the same people who have access to this, who continue to get access to this, it misses the needed diversity of thought.”

Sinead, Market gardener, East Sussex

Lizzie

Researcher and Egg Business Entrepreneur, Somerset

Lizzie Rowe started her egg business in March 2021 in a village in south Somerset. She runs this alongside her work as a researcher in animal welfare and sustainable livestock systems at the Bristol Veterinary school and as a freelance consultant, as well as her position as Project Manager for the technology company Better Origin. Better Origin has designed mini insect farms in shipping containers which use artificial intelligence to turn agricultural waste into insects for livestock feed.

Lizzie was inspired to start her smallholding as she wanted to be able to put her research into action and produce food in a sustainable and animal friendly way herself, as well as to spend less time on a computer and more time outside. She leases the acre of land for her egg business from a local organic farmer.

Whilst she grew up in the countryside, Lizzie does not come from a farming background. She studied natural sciences as an undergraduate and then specialised in Zoology. Her PhD is in Veterinary Sciences. Her thesis focused on companion animal welfare. After leaving academia and working for a number of charities she became aware of the scale of the issue of welfare for farm animals, and saw how much scope there was for improvement in this area. She returned to academia in order to focus on this topic, realising that it was vital to marry animal welfare with sustainable food production as they go hand in hand.

Lizzie started with 50 egg laying hens and feeds them almost entirely on agricultural waste. This includes oat tailings from a local organic oat grower, and black soldier larvae which she cultivates herself. Lizzie also ensures that as well as being organic and waste reducing, her chickens have a high level of enjoyment in their lives as well as high welfare. She sells her eggs to local shops. Lizzie wants to create a blueprint for other smallholders to grow their own larvae to feed their hens in a sustainable way. She also plans to run educational sessions for local children as well as participatory sessions for those struggling with their mental health in the future.

Emma, trainee forester and market gardener, also raised the point about the importance of introducing farming as a career option at school during her interview:

“[It would be great to have] something so that students know that land work is an option, because for me, it never was one. I mean, it might be a bit different in England, but when I did my schooling in France, it was just never an option. It wasn’t even mentioned. It was so much like you know, this is the UCAS application form. It wasn’t even considered that I wouldn’t go to university. So yeah, I think having more options available to students [is what is needed].”

Emma, Trainee forester and market gardener, Cornwall

Access to markets

For all of the new entrants with businesses and start-ups that we spoke to, demand for their produce was extremely high. All of the business owning new entrants told us that they couldn’t keep up with the demand:

“There’s a huge demand that outstrips what we could grow on our land. It’s a good position to be in.”

Lally, Grower, Dorset

However, due to the barriers explored above, being able to scale up to meet this demand is a challenge. Accessing these larger local markets, such as public procurement

contracts, will require support in forming coalitions and co-operatives with other producers. However, currently it is hard to get insurance, for example, for co-owned machinery, as raised by Tom from East Neuk Market Garden:

“I don’t want to expand or think about expansion as an exponential thing. There’s probably a size, double or triple what we have now, so still under 10 acres that is manageable on a human level. And like we mentioned before then moving onto a regional or multiple co-operative farm model, where we could say ‘hey we have this CSA market that we want to expand, either to existing people or new people, join that and you can help increase the CSA’s market and work together but you can have your own plot, your own project and cooperatively manage it’. Which might be at first just pairing with people we already know, so it’s not a new thing. It’s very hard to imagine how that happens, the amount of structure and process. And just the legal stuff, like becoming a cooperative and how that works.”

Tom, Market gardener, Fife



Tom and Connie

East Neuk Market Garden, Fife

East Neuk Market Garden is a 2 acre agroecological market garden in Fife run by Tom Booth and Connie Hunter. Opening in 2019, Tom and Connie run a CSA scheme and supply local restaurants and shops, as well as the local farmers market, with produce from the garden. Alongside this, Connie works as a miller for Scotland the Bread, a local project to grow sustainable grain and bake better local bread.

Neither Tom nor Connie come from a farming background, although Connie's grandparents were egg farmers in the 1970s and 1980s. Connie first became interested in agroecology whilst studying Development Studies and Politics at SOAS University of London. Whilst studying she became involved in the university food cooperative and it sparked an interest in food justice. After graduating she worked on community food growing projects in Tower Hamlets and Hackney. Tom studied History and Philosophy at Aberdeen worked in city planning followed by a Masters in spatial planning. Whilst he credits Connie with introducing him to thinking about growing food, he finds that his studies in philosophy helped him to think about what was important in life and also how to plan complex systems.

Tom and Connie decided that they wanted to work together growing food, as this would enable them to support the issue of food justice in a tangible way, whilst spending lots of time outside and having an adventure together. They went WOOFing in Europe for four months. During this time they worked on an intensive market garden in North West France. They were given a lot of responsibility and really enjoyed the experience. The owner said that they should try

working on one farm for a whole season to see if it really was the job for them. On returning to the UK, they got paid jobs with accommodation on site working for the Pillars of Hercules Organic Farm in Scotland and made connections with other organic and agroecological farmers in the area.

Meanwhile, Connie's mum had decided to become a flower farmer through renting 2 acres from the Balcaskie Estate. The Estate has a vision for a re-localised food system in Fife, and so they rent parcels of land to food producers and have renovated a barn into a covered market space with a brewery, mill and other facilities. Tom and Connie decided to rent the parcel of land next to Connie's mum's flower farm. It has rabbit and deer-proof fencing, water and electricity, and they are able to share equipment with Connie's mum, as well as advice.

They say they have both learnt a lot since starting their Market Garden, but right from the start they knew they wanted to take an agroecological approach for many different reasons. These include wanting to regenerate the soil, support biodiversity and promote human health. They wanted to grow a wide range of things and feed as many people in the local area as possible in a sustainable way, showing how it's to grow lots of food without chemical fertilisers and sprays, and that agroecological farming is in fact more productive per hectare than conventional farming. They also wanted to be part of the movement to repopulate the countryside and get people back onto the land. Long-term they would like to have as many people as possible involved, both through educating local children and also pairing up with other small farms in regional cooperatives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The new entrants interviewed for this report highlight the significant opportunities at hand to revitalise Britain's farming sector with diverse and highly motivated new farmers and growers, as well as the challenges which are currently preventing this vision from becoming a reality.

The new entrants featured are falling through gaps in current support provision, despite the important role they play in not only producing food for their communities but also creating wider social, environmental and economic benefits.

Agroecology offers an opportunity for new entrants to combine entrepreneurship with environmental stewardship, and can provide meaningful and attractive work. Contrary to the perception that people in the UK do not want to do land-based work, there is an appetite for such work as long as it is interesting and varied and underpinned by values of sustainability, food justice and animal welfare.

Due to a cultural bias against land-based work in the education system, few new entrants currently find their way directly into farming from education, but instead come to farming, forestry and horticulture after embarking on a different career path. Land-based occupations could benefit from the different perspectives and ideas carried by new entrants from diverse backgrounds, many of whom are highly motivated by the need to address issues such as climate change, environmental degradation and food poverty.

However, significant barriers are preventing a more rapid uptake of agroecological farmers and landworkers; including limited training opportunities, lack of access to land and capital for aspiring entrepreneurs, and structural market and supply chain issues. The latter means that food

has increasingly become undervalued with only a small percentage of the sale price finding its way back to the farmer. This makes it challenging for new entrants to secure a livelihood that is sufficient to cover accommodation and other costs.

At a time when the conventional farming industry is facing a major labour and renewal crisis, the findings of this report highlight the opportunities that supporting more new entrants into agroecological farming and land work can present to the sector. In order to seize these opportunities, however, real attention must be paid to the barriers that these new entrants currently face.

Policy Recommendations

The food and farming system of today has more fundamental problems than can be addressed in a short report. However, it is essential that any new entrant support policies acknowledges the reality of the environmental and economic challenges faced by the land-based sector, and puts in place the measures that enable a skillful and motivated generation to rise to these challenges. Throughout this research a clear consensus has emerged regarding the need for holistic new entrant support schemes that support and nurture the diverse new talent entering the agroecological farming sector. Recommendations for more holistic policies to support new entrants into agroecological farming and land work are as follows:

1. Build Skills & Knowledge

More investment is needed to improve knowledge and training from school level to continual professional development once established, to change institutional attitudes and to support those seeking to work the land in ecologically sustainable ways. Training and support

should be tailored to each stage of the journey and rooted in agroecological practice.

Incorporate agroecological farming and food production into school curriculums & careers advice

There needs to be a focus on improving the understanding schools and career advice services have of the rewards and opportunities that agroecological farming offers as a career, the multiple skills needed, and the routes into it.

1. The introduction of T-Levels²⁵ presents an opportunity for 16-19 year olds to gain skills in agroecological farming and forestry. It is important that employers be supported and incentivised to provide training placements for young people on T-level courses.

Building basic skills: Support on-farm apprenticeships and accredited training programmes

As demonstrated by the case studies in this report, on-farm training can be key to developing the technical skills needed for agroecological farming. Apprenticeships should cover both the practical and business skills needed for running a farm, and should be matched with adequate funding in order to cover apprentices' housing and living costs. Online and classroom training should be seen as additional to enhance this on-farm learning, and support should be provided to enable these training programmes to be accredited and ensure minimum standards of training and recognition of skills gained.

1. Investment in agroecological training should be part of the new agriculture funding schemes across Britain. In England they should form part of Defra's final New Entrant Support Scheme (the pilot scheme, which currently only covers business skills). Scotland and Wales are yet to announce new dedicated new

entrant support schemes, but there should also be provision funding for agroecological training, and this should be included in the upcoming Welsh & Scottish Agriculture Bills.

2. The Department of Work & Pensions should consider a replacement to the Kickstart Scheme focussed on crucial sectors for the green economy, including agroecological farming and forestry.
3. Government funded courses on offer through agricultural colleges and other accredited training providers should integrate modules on organic practices as core to the curriculum.
4. It should also be easier for career switchers to get accredited training funded. Already having an existing Level 3 (A-level, Scottish Highers or equivalent) should not have to preclude funding for additional Level 3 Training.
5. In England, the Department of Education should lift the moratorium on new courses for Level 3 and below being approved, in order to enable courses focussed on agroecological methods to be approved for drawdown funding.

Enhancing skills: More funding for incubator farms

Incubator farms allow new entrants to trial an idea in a supported environment with shared infrastructure and equipment on a plot that is part of a larger farm, where peer support and sometimes further training is available. Many FarmStart programmes also feed into an existing market, offering valuable training in the demands of commercial production, while removing the pressure of developing a market from scratch.

Establishing Farmstart projects within the current legislative context is a challenge, and those that are established

²⁵ T-levels are technical-based qualifications currently in place in England, offering an alternative to A-levels, apprenticeships and other 16 to 19 courses. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/introduction-of-t-levels/introduction-of-t-levels>

often rely on grant funding to subsidise a loss of income. Funding should be provided to support organisations offering Farmstart programmes in order to increase the opportunities available. Government should also support a joined up and networked approach to this. For example, in France the organising body for incubator projects, RENETA, is 50% funded by public money'

Building specialist skills and knowledge: More investment in mentoring schemes

As new entrants begin to develop and expand their businesses, support will still be needed in the first few years of their venture.

Mentoring schemes, which reward the mentors for their time and knowledge are financially intensive to operate, but invaluable in guiding new entrants through the early years after start-up. Public funding to support mentoring schemes run by organisations with strong links to experienced agroecological practitioners and establish efficient and effective models to help them mentor new entrants would ensure that more new entrants progress to running successful businesses. Business planning advice should form part of the mentoring, as it is most useful at the point when the new entrant actually starts their business, rather than when it is theoretical before their business even exists.

Defra should support mentoring schemes in England, and ensure that they are relevant to agroecological farmers. In Wales and Scotland, the existing mentoring schemes Farming Connect and the Farm Advisory Service in Scotland, should be reviewed to ensure that they are made more relevant to agroecological farmers.

2. Enabling access to land & housing

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²⁶ [Fresh Start Land Enterprise](#) Centre matched prospective new entrant farmers and other "land entrepreneurs" with land owners who were interested in leasing out parcels of land.

²⁷ [Our Food 1200](#) is an initiative aimed at getting 1200 acres of land in Monmouthshire and the Brecon Beacons growing fruit & vegetables. To enable new entrant vegetable farmers to access land, they operate a local land matching service.

Access to land is a key barrier for new entrants into land work. A number of organisations are using innovative ways to address this, but they are swimming against a tide of rising land prices and increased competition from carbon off-set schemes, leisure use, housing and industry. Governments should examine what can be learnt and how existing positive schemes can be supported and/or replicated.

Land matching & share farming Introduce government land-matching and share-farming schemes

Land matching services link those who are seeking land with those who already have it, with multiple business and tenure options. These are provided in Scotland and Wales, but in both cases more local on the ground support could improve their success (see Appendix 2 for more details). No government land matching scheme currently exists in England, but Defra has the opportunity to learn from Wales, Scotland and historic schemes such as Fresh Start Enterprise²⁶.

Landowners and land agents require training about different land matching options and how they can bring new entrants onto their land to create viable, sustainable and successful businesses. Local, on the ground support to tease out potential problems is also crucial. Much can be learned from the experience of Our Food 1200²⁷, an independent matching service in Monmouthshire and the Brecon Beacons, which focuses on matching landowners with new entrant fruit & veg farmers and providing local support.

Multi-enterprise farms such as Farm Step at the Earth Trust in Oxfordshire, Stream Farm in Somerset offer a means of accessing land with reduced infrastructure costs.

Biodynamic Land Trust has a similar offer, as does the Soil Association's Land Trust.

Keep county farms as community assets

As highlighted in CPRE's 2019 report *Reviving County Farms*, historically county farms have provided an entry route for new farmers, but they are now rapidly being sold off. If they were kept in public ownership either through councils retaining them or through community asset transfers, then they could be used to support new entrants including by establishing multi-enterprise farms and Farm Starts. Legislation related to Community Asset Transfers varies significantly between Scotland, England and Wales, with Scotland giving communities the most rights and Wales the least²⁸. Wales and England should follow the example of Scotland in allowing communities first right of refusal when assets of community value, including county farms are put up for sale.

Provide low-interest loans for land trusts

Land trusts are another way in which the challenges of accessing land can be met²⁹. However, land trusts are limited by the finance they are able to raise and the land they are able to buy. By providing or underwriting low interest loans to land trusts, governments could help significantly increase the impact that they can have. Individuals and organisations can also help by donating land to land trusts.

For example, the Ecological Land Co-operative purchases farmland, gets outline planning for infrastructure and agricultural workers' dwellings and then makes these smallholdings available to new farming, forestry and other rural enterprises on long-term leases or via rent

to buy arrangements. Their plots are often divided into multiple enterprises with shared infrastructure. Like county farms, land trusts can provide land to Farm Starts. Sinead and Adam, featured in this report, have a lease with the Ecological Land Cooperative, which enabled them to access land with residential planning permission at a more affordable price than would otherwise have been possible.

Join up policies for new entrants and those leaving the sector

In England, the newly introduced Lump Sum Exit Scheme³⁰, that enables farmers to exit farming by claiming their remaining Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payments as a lump sum so they can retire, should be made conditional upon their land being made available to new entrants or community farms, such Community Supported Agriculture. As it currently stands, there is no mechanism to ensure that the land freed up by those exiting the industry is made available to new entrants.

Reform planning regulations

Planning restrictions confound the problems of land and housing access for new entrants. Minimum hectare requirements for permitted development rights create barriers for small farms when setting up. Even when new entrants have enough land to take them over the threshold, some local planning authorities only allow permitted development rights to existing businesses, putting start-ups at a disadvantage.

Given the urgent need to increase food production and manage land in a more sustainable way, new agroecological farm, forestry and horticultural businesses

²⁸ [Our Land: Communities and Land Use – Institute of Welsh Affairs](#)

²⁹ Much can also be learnt from the French organisation 'Terre de Liens' which has pioneered a new entrant incubator and land access model with great success. Between 2003 and 2018 they acquired 177 farms and 4253 hectares of land under the agroecological management.

³⁰ Defra (2022) Lump Sum Payment Scheme <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/lump-sum-exit-scheme>

should be proactively supported by the planning system, which claims to be guided by the principles of sustainable development. Often the problem lies with the application of planning policy by local planning officers, who are more concerned about preventing abuses to the planning system by people who are not genuine farmers. Professional development training for planning officers would build understanding about the value and viability of small scale, agroecological enterprises, and their need for infrastructure and on-site accommodation. Such training is likely to be offered by Landworkers' Alliance in coming years.

The additional challenge of accessing affordable rural housing and the benefit of living on the land for the purpose of running a land based business justifies reform to planning rules around agricultural & forestry worker accommodation. Even though agricultural worker accommodation consent exists, the burden of proving the necessity for this accommodation is very high and takes little account of affordability of local housing compared to expected income from land work.

The One Planet Development Policy in Wales provides a successful model for this approach, which could be applied elsewhere in the UK; however, it does provide a very high level of administrative burden and many local authorities in Wales are still resistant to it³¹. Another option could be a more flexible approach to agricultural workers' dwellings, to include affordability rather than just requirements to attend to animals (which is the standard justification required). Currently, there is a very high burden to prove that a dwelling is necessary, especially for horticulture. Lack of affordable local housing is not generally considered relevant.

3. Direct Financial Support for New Businesses

Remove area thresholds for agricultural subsidy payments

New entrants have historically been discriminated against with respect to subsidies because many are unable to afford the minimum area of land to qualify (5 hectares in England and Wales, 3 hectares in Scotland). As support schemes are amended, area based eligibility should be changed to evidence of an existing or proposed commercial enterprise, as was done with the recent Welsh horticulture grants³².

Provide grants and loans for new entrants

Grants and loans should be tailored towards creating productive farming and forestry that generates environmental benefits. At a time when agricultural policy is being rewritten; evidence of the ecological and climate crises is becoming ever more present and concerns about the fragility of our food system are on the rise. Investing in new agroecological farmers and foresters will provide significant value for money and build a more resilient food system.

■ Start up grants

Grants covering both capital and revenue should be available to new entrants in the early stages of their business with complimentary low interest long term loan financing.

■ Development grants

Development grants should be available for agroecological farms to enable them to invest to expand, diversify and become more economically

³¹ [The One Planet Development Scheme](#) is a planning policy which grants permission for new dwellings in the open countryside in Wales, for people running sustainable land based businesses and living a low carbon lifestyle. A minimum level of basic living needs must be met by the land based enterprise and those benefitting from this exemption must record and maintain a minimum carbon footprint.

³² Welsh Government released two new horticulture grants in Spring 2022; a development scheme <https://gov.wales/horticulture-development-scheme> and a start up grant <https://gov.wales/small-grants-horticulture-start-up> neither had a minimum land area under the eligibility criteria instead relying on evidence of a commercial business or business plan.

sustainable. Again, dedicated loan financing should complement this.

4. Building resilient local supply chains

The long-term resilience of our farming, forestry and horticulture sectors depends on those working within them being paid a living wage, and being able to afford accommodation close to where they work. The concentration of the industrial supply chain means that food producers are often caught in a 'cost-price squeeze', whereby the margin between production cost and the price they are paid by the market is so slim that there is little with which to pay those who produce food and other primary products. Small and medium scale agroecological businesses are only able to remain viable by selling direct to customers or via short supply chains, to increase the percentage they receive from the final sale price. While this enables them to achieve better prices for their produce, it places agroecological products in a 'niche' or luxury position, and restricts the proportion of the market they can access.

For agroecological farming, forestry and horticulture to be able to attract and sustain a new generation of land-workers it is essential that these sectors are able to expand beyond the position of niche and access a larger proportion of the food, fuel and fibre market.

The expansion of the agroecological land-based sector requires bold, cross-departmental thinking from governments, at both a national and local level. We have detailed a number of policy proposals to support short supply chains in our Vocal for Local publication (2021). Measures proposed include:

- Partnerships enabling people on low incomes to access fresh produce from local farms, for example by using subsidised vouchers such as those offered by the Alexandra Rose scheme.
- Use of dynamic procurement systems, to enable small and medium scale growers to access public catering contracts,

Appendices

Appendix 1: The New Entrants

The new entrants interviewed were diverse in gender, race, class, geographical location, sector and socio-economic background in order to try and best reflect the diversity of new entrant farmers and landworkers that the Landworkers' Alliance represents. Please note that the ages of the new entrants in this report were their ages at time of interview.

Some of these new entrants were at the beginning of their journey into the agricultural and land-based sector and were searching for opportunities to learn and progress into this industry. Others, at the time of interview, were engaged in training such as participating in the Government's Kickstart Scheme, while some had already set up their own agroecological enterprises.

The majority of the new entrants interviewed were in England, with one Scottish case study represented. Although we had hoped to have broader geographical representation of new entrants in the UK, some of the case studies initially selected were unable to commit the time needed for the interview. The Landworkers' Alliance has a strong membership and staff teams in Wales, Scotland and England and a small membership in Northern Ireland, which we hope to grow and support with staff and resources in the future. As we do not have dedicated staff in Northern Ireland at present, discussions on the policy context are limited to England, Scotland and Wales. We hope that future work will include Northern Ireland.

Whilst the regulatory, political, economic and cultural contexts vary between the UK nations, from the common experiences of our new entrant members detailed in this report, we can assume that similar needs and challenges are shared by new entrants in all parts of the UK.

Appendix 2: A Note on Methodology and Ethics

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with sixteen individual new entrants into farming and land work,

representing eleven different case studies. See Appendix 1 for a list of the interview questions.

The interviewees were recruited through a purposive sampling technique drawing on the networks of the LWA. The interviews took place between April and May 2021, lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour and 30 minutes and were recorded before being transcribed into text. In accordance with ethical guidelines verbal consent for participation was acquired from all of the interviewees who were also made aware that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

Appendix 3: Current New Entrant Schemes in Scotland, Wales and England

Despite demand being strong, current new entrant support policies are insufficient in supporting diverse new entrants, particularly from non-farming backgrounds, into agroecological land-based businesses.

Scotland

Farming Opportunities for New Entrants (FONE)

FONE was established in 2016 with the aim of providing a coordinated approach to supporting new entrant farmers. The focus has primarily been on land access and the programme claims to have helped 76 new entrants into the agricultural sector by providing over 112 opportunities and over 7,070 hectares of land. However, many of these new entrants are now coming to the end of their tenancies with no land to move onto, highlighting that short tenancies only provide temporary solutions to the access to land question.

The Scottish Land Matching Service

This service links people seeking business partners, employees or with land available, with those looking for land and opportunities in agriculture.

Grants

The Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) 2014-20 included three dedicated grant schemes that claims to have helped kick-start more than 250 new agricultural businesses and assisted hundreds of other business development projects with around £24 million of support. The schemes have now closed.

Advice & Mentoring

The Farm Advisory Service has a new entrants programme which provides advice and support on starting and developing farm businesses including both agricultural and business skills. It also links new entrants with more established farmers in a mentoring scheme.

Whilst Scotland has an array of support schemes for new entrants, the numbers reached is still relatively low and still not sufficient to address the fact that the average age of farmers is increasing and the number of active farmers is decreasing. Scotland has the highest concentration of land ownership in Europe, so increasing access to land is crucial; however, it is not sufficiently addressed by these schemes.

Wales

Farming Connect

Farming Connect is a Welsh Government funded advice, support and training service for Welsh farmers. This includes support specifically aimed at new entrants such as Business Planning Advice for New Entrants and 15 hours worth of funded mentoring.

Land Matching: Venture

Farming Connect's Venture Programme matches new entrants with land owners and established farmers who are either looking to take a step back and want to share the business with a younger farmer or seeking to diversify into a new area of agriculture and looking for partners to take on the new part of the business.

Grants

The Welsh Government recently announced a series of grants including a dedicated horticulture start up grant of up to £3,000. This grant is only available for those that have not yet started a horticulture business and is not available for anyone who has started recently, even if they have been operational for less than a year. At the same time they announced a match-funded horticulture development grant, but this required three years' worth of accounts meaning that a number of new entrants will fall between the two. There is no minimum land size in order to qualify for these grants, which is welcome and a change from previous financial support. The overall grant programme is expected to last for 3 years with future rounds and there may be changes to the details of the eligibility requirements.

The previous Young Entrants Support Scheme (YESS) in Wales provided grants totalling £7.1m and supported over 520 young people establishing or taking over farm businesses. It applied to farmers who were based in Wales, under the age of 40 and were either setting up as head of the holding for the first time, or had set-up as head of holding within the previous 12 months. YESS provided grants of up to £15,000 and access to funded mentoring services from established farmers.

Whilst there is dedicated advice and support for organic farming and environmental measures available in Wales, new entrant support is not specifically tied to sustainable farming per se.

England

England has the least amount of publicly funded support for new entrant farmers in Great Britain. At the time of writing, Defra are considering expressions of interest for their New Entrant Support Scheme pilots. Applicants were organisations and consortiums that will offer business and entrepreneurial skills support to new entrants, rather than the new entrants themselves. As yet, there is no suggestion of any capital grants or a land matching service in England.

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The Landworkers' Alliance is a grassroots union of farmers, foresters and land-based workers in the UK. We campaign for the rights of producers and lobby the UK government and devolved nations for policies that support the infrastructure and economic climate central to our livelihoods. We have a growing membership who we work to support by developing agroecology training and solidarity support networks.

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