# Survey of new entrants to agriculture and land based work
## April – June 2020
### The Landworkers' Alliance




In April – June 2020, the Landworkers' Alliance ran a survey to better understand the needs, demographics and barriers facing new entrants to agriculture.

The primary aim of the survey was to help policy makers understand the barriers new entrants face, the support they need and the amazing contributions they are already making to agriculture and land based work in the UK. As the average age of farmers continues to rise, the challenges facing the industry mount and the urgency of shifting our farming and land use to socially just and environmentally sustainable systems increases there has never been a more important time to support a new generation of farmers, growers, foresters and land-based workers.

156 new entrants responded. The majority were LWA members, and almost all were running diverse, agroecological enterprises and selling the majority of their produce directly to customers.

For the purposes of this survey we defined new entrants as people who have been in a senior decision making role in an agricultural holding for under 5 years, or those who had been in such a role for under 10 years but still considered themselves to be a new entrant.

The results indicate a that there is a large and diverse range of people setting up mixed, agroecological holdings with a good amount of experience under their belts and ready to scale up their businesses. However, they face a wide range of barriers and need support to meet their potential.

Contact us for discussion or more information on these figures
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## Summary of results

The range of area farmed and turnover was wide as is to be expected of new entrants, but the average holding was 8.1ha with a turnover of £23,500. The total turnover of the group was around £2,000,000.00

The gender and ethnicity of respondents was significantly more diverse than average for UK farming, with 54% of respondents female, 17% of respondents not white British, of which 9% identified as Black, Brown or Indigenous People of Colour and an average age of 37.

The respondents ran mixed enterprises, with 63% operating more than 1 enterprise. The majority of those operating 1 enterprise were running diverse horticultural holdings with a high degree of complexity.

The most popular enterprises were those that provide a high turnover from a small area including vegetables, fruit, poultry, plant nurseries, processing and some livestock. Only 3% currently run dairy or arable enterprises, but 16% and 11% aspired to do so with the right support.

The respondents indicated very significant barriers to setting up and scaling up their businesses with 61% struggling with accessing land, 46% struggling with accessing finance and 54% experiencing access to relevant training as a barrier.

77% had education at degree level or above but only 21% had agricultural qualifications at level 2 or higher, suggesting a lack of relevant training.

Only 4% of respondents did not identify access to land, finance or relevant training as a barrier and in most cases those who did not were working other jobs to generate income for start up costs.

Only 15% have accessed grants and 8% had accessed loans so far, but 94% indicated that a grant would help them transform their enterprises.

With an average grant size of £20,000 and a total grant package of £3,000,000 the respondents believed they could increase average holdings size to 12.6ha and average business turnover to £56,800 with a total annual turnover of £7,000,000

These results indicate that there is a large and diverse range of people setting up mixed, agroecological holdings with a good amount of experience and ready to scale up their businesses. However, they face a wide range of barriers and need support to meet their potential.

## Demographics

The survey had 156 responses from new entrants. The total number of respondents was higher but we didn't include responses from people who had been farming for over 10 years, or people who had been farming for over 5 years who didn't consider themselves new entrants

**Time involved in farming as head of holding or in senior decision making role:**

Less than 2 years – 61%
2 – 5 years 24%
5 – 10 years 17%

*Comment: Some farmers and growers self-identified as new entrants up to 10 years after taking on senior decision making roles, while others stopped self-identifying as new entrants after 3 – 5 years. This suggests the need for some flexibility in assigning new entrant status; depending on the person's skills, confidence, and the range of enterprises they are managing. It is likely that if training was improved (lack of relevant training was identified as a barrier by 54% of respondents) the length of time people considered themselves to be new entrants would decrease.*

**Farming Families**

61% had no family connection to farming

*Comment: this confirms anecdotal evidence that a significant number of people are interested in making their livelihood from agriculture without any family connection to farming.*

**Gender**
54% female
45% male
1% other

**Age**
Average age 37

**Ethnicity**
White British 82%
White non-British 8%
BBIPOC (Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Colour) 9%

*Comment: The new entrants who responded were younger and more diverse than average for farming in the UK. Across the UK in 2019 83-84% of farm managers* *and holders were male[i], and 98.6% were white British[ii]. The median age of farmers and farm managers in England is 58 - 60[1]*

*This indicated that new entrants working diverse, agroecological holdings, are a promising way to bring a younger and more diverse range of people into agriculture.*

## Country

England – 72%
Wales – 10%
Scotland – 15%
Northern Ireland – 1%

## Education levels

77% had education at degree level or above but only 21% had agricultural qualifications at level 2 or higher.

*Comment: This higher than average level of general education, but lower than average level of agricultural education suggests a lack of qualifications considered appropriate by the new entrants surveyed.*

*In the UK in general, 35% of farm managers have formal agricultural education whereas in this survey only 21% had, and our figures includes level 2 which is a very low baseline.*

## About their enterprises

Current Business Turnover (not including 64 N/A responses)

54% <£10,000
15% £10,000 – 20,000
15% £20,000 – 50,000
4% £50,000 – 100,000
1% £100,000 – 200,000
2% £200,000 – 500,000

Average £23,500 - assuming midpoint of each range and bottom of upper range

Total turnover of respondents £2,000,000

Target business turnover (not including 34 N/A responses)
6% <£10,000
29% £10,000 – 20,000
37% £20,000 – 50,000
18% £50,000 – 100,000
4% £100,000 – 200,000
3% £200,000 – 500,000

[1]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/771494/FSS2013-labour-statsnotice-17jan19.pdf

2% £500,000+

Average £56,800 - assuming midpoint of each range and bottom of upper range

Total target turnover of respondents £7,000,000

Current size of enterprise (ha) – (not including 51 N/A responses)
80% <5
10% 5 – 10
6% 10 – 20
4% 20 – 50
2% 50 – 100
2% 100+

Average 8.1ha - assuming midpoint of each range and bottom of upper range

Total landuse at present is around 900 ha or 2250 acres

Target size of enterprise (ha) – (not including 25 N/A responses)

69% <5
33% 5 – 10
9% 10 – 20
10% 20 – 50
6% 50 – 100
3% 100+

Average 12.6ha - assuming midpoint of each range and bottom of upper range

Total land use 2200 ha or 5500 acres

70% plan to setting up or expanding production within a year or as soon as possible

*Comment: these figures indicate a competent and experienced group of new entrants, ready and able to scale up with the appropriate support.*

**Barriers to setting up or expanding production**

Access to Land 61%
Access to finance 46% (loans or grants)
Training or experience 54% (much of this business related)
Accommodation and planning permission 35%
Farm profitability issues 31%
Farm worker issues 12%
Lack of formal tenancy 9%
Tenancy too short 9%

Only 4% of respondents did not identify access to land, finance or relevant training as a barrier and in most cases they were working other jobs to generate income for start up costs.

*Comment: this confirms that the vast majority of new entrants experience serious barriers to setting up and scaling up their enterprises, and that accessing land, finance, relevant training and accommodation are the most commonly encountered.*

*Note: For new entrants at the beginning of their careers accommodation and planning permission to live on the land are often conflated with wider issues accessing to land. This means it is likely that accommodation is more widely encountered problem that these figures represent.*

*It is also noteworthy that only 31% experienced profitability issues as a barrier.*

**Support Needed**

We asked respondents if a grant was available, what size would allow them to begin or scale up your production

6% needed no grant
13% needed under £5000
23% needed £5000 – 10000
36% needed £10000 – 25000
13% needed £25 – 50000
4% needed £50,000 – 75,000
2% needed £75,000 – 100000
2% needed £100000+

Average grant size needed was £20,000 - assuming midpoint of each range and bottom of upper range

Total grant needed was – £2.9 million

*Comment: these figures show that a relatively small grant investment could make a significant different to the turnover and area farmed. A one off grant investment of £2.9 million would increase the respondents turnover by £5million a year.*

*Interestingly the average grant size was £20,000 which, if given to the 156 respondents would lead to a total grant of £3.1 million. Whereas the total needed when respondents identified the grant that would be most enabling for them was £2.9 million, even though the range varied from £5000 to £100,000. This suggests flexibility in grant sizes would be beneficial for new entrants and not necessarily lead to higher grant budgets.*

**Previous support**

15% have accessed grants before
8% had accessed loans before

*Comment: considering that 46% of respondents identified access to finance as a barrier, and only 6% did not require a grant to scale up their enterprise, this confirms anecdotal evidence that there is a very significant lack of appropriate grants and loans for new entrants.*

**Current and Target land use**

118 respondents indicated their current enterprises.

Of these 63% were mixed farms, including at least 2 different enterprises

37% included fruit.
76% included vegetables,
34% included poultry,
24% included livestock,
3% included dairy,
18% included processing,
3% included arable,
1% included coppicing and forestry,
15% included plant nursery,
22% included flowers and
2% included seeds

142 respondents indicated their target enterprises.

Of these 84% were mixed farms, including at least 2 different enterprises

54% included fruit.
75% included vegetables,
39% included poultry,
29% included livestock,
16% included dairy,
35% included processing,
11% included arable,
1% included coppicing and forestry,
24% included plant nursery,
25% included flowers and
32% included seeds

*Comment: people are starting with simpler holdings then they aim for, but choosing those with high turnover per acre.*

*Developments planned include business with a higher degree of complexity and lower turnovers per acre increases in arable and dairy production, and in seeds and plant nurseries*

We asked respondents what equipment, infrastructure and tools they needed and when. The table below shows the most commonly identified items

| **Item needed** | **in next year** | **In 1 - 2 years** | **In 2 - 3 years** | **4-5 years** | **5 + years** | **TOTALS** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Polytunnels | 76 | 39 | 15 | | | 130 |
| Irrigation | 82 | 33 | 6 | | | 121 |
| Processing barn/packing shed | 58 | 39 | 14 | 3 | 2 | 116 |
| Water storage | 63 | 37 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 112 |
| Prop equipment | 73 | 32 | 6 | | | 111 |
| hand tools | 81 | 24 | 4 | | | 109 |
| insurance | 71 | 29 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 107 |
| cold store | 45 | 33 | 10 | 5 | | 93 |
| software | 58 | 28 | 3 | 1 | | 90 |
| crop covers | 58 | 21 | 9 | | | 88 |
| delivery vehicle | 41 | 32 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 84 |
| Retail Equipment (other) | 48 | 22 | 6 | | 1 | 77 |

*Comment: the vast majority of equipment and infrastructure that new entrants need is standard agricultural equipment. This confirms anecdotal evidence that by focussing on specialised and non-standard equipment the countryside productivity grants have not been benefitting new entrants, and that a separate support scheme for new entrants would be more effective.*

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[i]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/771494/FSS2013-labour-statsnotice-17jan19.pdf
[ii] https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/most-ethnically-diverse-jobs-britain-policy-exchange-forum-employment-workforce-farmers-taxi-drivers-a7625456.html