



‘Towards a New Professionalism’

The Skills strategy for agriculture and horticulture

One year on – Progress report

April 2011

Towards a New Professionalism – The skills strategy for agriculture and horticulture – one year on

The voice of British farming

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Introduction

The Agri-Skills Forum partners aspire to a professional farming industry characterised by a highly skilled, innovative and flexible farming workforce. We are working to ensure that farmers, growers, managers and workers collaborate with providers to receive the training the industry needs in the form it can access. We expect that a professional and skilled workforce will ensure agriculture delivers sustainable increases in productivity, economic growth in rural areas and an industry attractive to the next generation.

Individual sectors have started to develop and implement their own specific skills initiatives and solutions to ensure there is a motivated and dynamic workforce. There are many examples of where knowledge and skills development are regularly combined to deliver outstanding levels of food production, land management, food safety and animal welfare and environmental protection.

However, while many in the industry are gaining new skills, the agriculture and horticulture industries also face a range of challenges in the near future, meaning they cannot be complacent. Climate change, the growing need to produce more food while impacting less on the environment, advances in technology and increasing opportunities to diversify mean farmers and growers need higher skill levels and knowledge. Recent research also confirms that England is experiencing a critical shortage of skilled farmers and workers which left unchecked could impact on food security; Lantra estimates that 60,000 new entrants are needed across the agriculture and horticulture industries alone over the next decade to replace retiring workers.

It was against this backdrop that the Agri-Skills Forum was established. Its formation recognised that it was the responsibility of the industry – representative bodies, farmers, farm workers, growers, trainers, colleges, Lantra and Government – to ensure skills issues were being addressed within agriculture and horticulture.

The primary objective of the forum is to facilitate the development of business and workers within agriculture by ensuring that the content and delivery of training and skills development is available as and when needed, at a price that is affordable and that meets the needs of both the individual and the business.

The forum is chaired by NFU Deputy President, Meurig Raymond and has achieved an unprecedented degree of collaboration between all the major agricultural organisations to address the issue of skills throughout agriculture and horticulture. The forum provides a communications portal through which experiences and best practice can be shared.

Key members of the forum established a 'management group' to formulate policy on skills and training. Representatives from this group met with then Defra Secretary of State Hilary Benn in April 2009 and were asked to produce a strategy to embed skills development into everyday business practice and bring about changes to improve understanding of new technologies, develop business and leadership skills and bring about a more co-ordinated approach to skills development.

The strategy was based around the theme of professionalism and sustainability and builds on a series of actions that address the recommendations of the Curry Commission's Report on the Future of Farming and Food (2002), Defra's Learning and Skills Knowledge Review (2004) and Lantra's A Skills Assessment for the Environment and Land-based Sector (2009). It takes account of the vast amount of 'learning' and professionalism that already exists within the industry and recognises that a voluntary approach that does not impose additional bureaucratic costs on businesses or individuals is required.

The strategy was launched in February 2010 where it was supported by all major agricultural organisations and Defra Secretary of State. The strategy also contains an action plan. This aims to ensure the UK can equip itself with the right skills to guarantee a profitable and sustainable agricultural industry for the future, capable of increasing food production whilst tackling environmental challenges, delivered by a workforce that is recognised for its professionalism, where farming is valued and is an attractive career of choice.

The main objectives detailed in the strategy are as follows:

Recognising existing skills and skills development activities:

- Developing continuous professional development schemes
- Helping farmers and growers to become eligible for reduced regulatory burden
- To increase the focus on skills recognition and skills development at all levels

Promoting skills development and concept of professionalism as key in business

- Stressing the benefits of higher level technical, management and business skills and increased professionalism
- Developing a means whereby farmers and growers can easily access training, qualifications, assessment and funding

Promote the industry as being a professional and progressive place to work

- Better understanding of the importance of new entry routes and career opportunities
- Encouraging industry to support learning and promoting careers

Working with the Government to meet future challenges

- Working with key organisations on major skills-related issues
- Encouraging organisations to help ensure a co-ordinated approach

Supporting Defra in Government on skills issues by helping:

- Influence relevant Government initiatives impacting on industry
- Ensure Defra supports development of professionalism across the industry

This report details the progress made towards achieving the actions within the Agri-Skills 'Towards a New professionalism' strategy by organisations represented on the forum.

It also outlines a set of priorities, suggested by the Agri-Skills Management group, which will be the focus of work over the forthcoming year.

Communication of the Strategy

Following the publication of the strategy two working groups were established. One group covered continuous professional development (CPD) and how professionalism can be recognised in agriculture and horticulture. This group is explained in further detail in the 'Progress against the objectives' section.

A communications working group was also established in order to promote the relevance of training and professionalism. Key target audiences identified included farmers and growers, regulators, assurance schemes, trade associations and professional bodies, retailers, Landex and agricultural colleges, careers organisations, the general public, Government and the media. The communications group members consisted of representatives from AHDB, Defra, FACE, Fresh Start, Landex, Lantra, NFU, NFYFC and RASE.

Press work around the launch of the strategy resulted in raised awareness and coverage of the Agri-Skills campaign throughout the trade press. The launch in February 2010 was attended by then Defra Secretary of State Hilary Benn. A joint press release was also issued with supportive quotes from Hilary Benn, Meurig Raymond, NFU Deputy President, and Richard Longthorp, Chairman of the Agri-Skills strategy working group. Additional quotes were also supplied by Peter Martin, Chief Executive of Lantra and John Bridge, Chairman of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board.

Further work has seen the strategy increasingly being talked about and referred to in the farming industry domain. Farmers' Weekly has published a series of articles focussing on training and skills and career development and they ran an article on the strategy with case studies in April 2010. Farmers' Guardian has also highlighted the importance of professionalism and skills within agriculture. British Farmer and Grower, the NFU member magazine, has also run a series of articles on skills and training development and in the May 2010 edition ran a 'Training and Careers' supplement and an interview with Richard Longthorp. The full range of the media coverage relating to the Agri-Skills strategy can be found in Annex 1.

The communications group has held a series of short meetings which have focussed on the following areas:

- A 12-month communications plan which has been developed in order to promote the strategy and help industry recognise the business benefits of skills and professionalism
- The communications group has helped to identify user friendly key messages from the strategy that will be helpful for the industry to use in press releases and other material
- Each partner on the communications group has also agreed to develop a page on their organisations website to highlight the work of Agri-Skills and promote agriculture as a career of choice.

The communications group have also been involved in raising awareness of Apprenticeship Week in February 2011. This has involved articles and case studies in several publications including British Farmer and Grower, Lantra Connect magazine and City and Guilds Land Based Services Outlook magazine. Press releases and website articles on member organisations websites have also been used to promote an NFU / Agri-Skills survey on apprenticeships which aimed to find out about the level of knowledge and awareness of apprenticeships within agriculture and horticulture and the possible barriers to take up. The results from this survey will help inform the Agri-Skills group about apprenticeships.

The NFU has also designed a logo for Agri-Skills to give identity to the campaign which will be shared across the partner groups. This is a valuable contribution to the overall communications strategy, saving substantial costs to the group.

While this progress can't be regarded as firm outcomes it should be recognised that they are stepping stones to helping the industry to become more receptive and take on board some of the actions contained within the strategy.

Progress against objectives

This section charts the progress made against the objectives in the original report, detailing the contributions made by organisations involved on the Agri-skills forum.

Objective 1: Recognition of existing skills and skills development activities

1.1 Identify the key partners to work with to develop existing continuous professional development (CPD) schemes in order to create a comprehensive and coherent framework of provision that enables an individual's professionalism to be authenticated.

Following the publication of the Agri-Skills strategy a working group was established which focussed on Continuous Professional Development and how professionalism can be recognised within agriculture. The group's membership consisted of representatives from City and Guilds Land Based services, Defra, Harper Adams, Institute of Agricultural Management, Landex, Lantra, NFU and RASE.

The group focussed on devising a set of principles which existing and future agricultural CPD schemes could adopt. These principles aimed to ensure the integrity of CPD activities undertaken by individuals working in the industry and the transferability of recognition across schemes. Lantra drafted a document outlining a set of common principles and framework which could be adopted by all schemes.

These principles were signed off by the CPD working group members. Existing CPD schemes operating within agriculture were consulted on the draft principles. These existing schemes include:

Scheme	Members
Pig Industry Professional Register	439
National Register of Spray Operators	20,161
BASIS – professional register	4100
FACTS	3000
Poultry passport	2224
Institute of Agriculture Secretaries and Administrators	150

The NFU and Lantra have worked with the Poultry Industry and Poultec in the past year to promote the uptake of the Poultry passport scheme. The Poultry Industry passport allows the user to have instant access to their records which are fully maintained and updated on their behalf, on a continual basis. To ensure validity all training records are verified and inputted by an independent administrator from Poultec training. The past year has seen an increase of 510 registrations, totalling 2224 registrations from the start of the scheme in November 2008.

The National Federation of Young Farmers Club, which acts as a conduit of information for industry training and professional development training and the importance of CPD for its members, has also held discussions with Lantra to investigate future CPD recording mechanisms for young farmers.

It is acknowledged that whilst promotion of CPD activity should be encouraged across the whole of the industry, the concept is likely to gain most traction with the next generation of farmers, growers and their staff. To this end discussions also continue with Landex as to how participation in formal CPD can be encouraged amongst those leaving agricultural colleges.

Other work in this area has focussed on the Dairy and Horticulture sectors who have expressed an interest in developing CPD schemes.

The NFU Next Generation Dairy Board identified training and skills development as being vital to the future of the British Dairy Industry. In recognising there are various ways in which training can be undertaken the board felt it was important for there to be an agreed method of recording and measuring skills development. Following a number of discussions between industry bodies, including Dairy Co, Lantra and the NFU, agreement was reached on the need and value of developing a skills recognition scheme in the dairy sector.

A proposal from the NFU Next Generation Dairy Board was put forward at the Dairy Co board meeting in autumn 2010 where it was agreed to investigate the best method of developing a CPD scheme in this sector. An initial working group meeting was held in October and the next meeting is scheduled for April 2011.

Defra's Fruit and Veg Task Force report also contained recommendations on skills and training and had a focus on recognising the value of 'on the job' training. Lantra have supported the development of this document. The NFU Horticulture and Potatoes board have set up a working group which aims to progress the recommendations of this report including implementing a system of continuous professional development within the sector.

Part of this headline objective was also to investigate ways of acknowledging and capturing current knowledge transfer activity to evidence high level skills. Lantra have developed a web based CPD template, Skills Manager, for use by the industry.

1.2 Increase the focus on skills recognition, and skills development at all levels, leading to the new professionalism and gain commitment from the main farming, trade and professional organisations, including education and training providers.

To increase the focus on skills recognition and skills development at all levels Lantra have trained 18 agricultural ambassadors in conjunction with the NFU. They help by promoting business benefits of skills at careers and other promotional events. Further details on the agricultural ambassadors are provided elsewhere in this report.

Lantra have also developed an England Council with Agriculture and Production horticulture representation to promote the concept of professionalism within the sector. The Chairman of the Agri-Skills management group, Richard Longthorp, also chairs this England Council.

The NFU Policy Board, which comprises NFU Officeholders and Commodity Board Chairman, has been kept informed of progress over the past year and endorsed the importance of increased professionalism within the industry. The NFU has established the Next Generation Dairy Board who have responsibility for skills and training and the Horticulture Board also has a board member assigned with the responsibility for training and skills to encourage skills development in these sectors. The NFU Horticulture and Potatoes working group that aim to work on the recommendations from the Fruit and Veg Task Force report will meet in April 2011.

The NFU is also a co-founder of the Poultry Meat Training Initiative and are represented on the management group, which continues to look at ways of encouraging take up and promotion of the Poultry passport scheme.

Harper Adams has led the development of the Rural Employer Engagement Development Network (REEDNet). This provides accredited higher level skills programmes to meet industry needs (e.g. BASIS, FACTS and AMTRA courses as well as others directly aligned to particular industry sector /company requirements). Using fast track methods for approval, and with the current benefit of higher education sector co-funding to help industry meet the cost of providing accredited learning, novel approaches have been adopted, such as the accreditation of in house industry CPD schemes. This has enabled Harper Adams industry partners, and their employees, to meet their learning objectives, whilst affording participants the opportunity to take advantage of 'bite sized' pieces of higher education that might encourage them to engage in further learning later in their career.

The Institute of Agricultural Management, who were also represented on the CPD working group, has taken action to progress the recognition of competence and expertise in all matters of farming and land management. This recognition is to be gained by rigorous evaluation of the individual's performance record and career development with CPD a mandatory requirement. In the past year they have also created a Professional Agriculturalist member category. This is applicable to farmers, managers, advisers, consultants and experts across the entire agricultural industry. It is aimed to give a career objective to new graduates and entrants to the industry.

The Institute of Agricultural Secretaries and administrators (IAgSA) are actively encouraging new entrants into their industry and have launched a series of training modules to support this. The Farm Accounting and Administration programme provides a series of modular courses to enable potential administrators to gain the

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necessary knowledge to tackle the complexities of accounting, record keeping and terminology within farm businesses. The first module of the programme, Financial Recording for the Farm Business, has been approved as a Lantra Customised Course and the first course has been delivered. An annual programme is now being scheduled.

Training is a key objective of IAgSA and as the membership and support body for the agricultural and rural business administration sector they have developed a bespoke programme to ensure quality, consistency and continuity of training for those wanting to become part of this workforce. Working with Achieve-Ability Plus (training provider) they are able to offer potential administrators a modular course that will help meet their training needs.

AHDB sector boards including Dairy Co, HDC, and Potato Council courses and activities provide points for industry CPD schemes. BPEX also run the Pig Industry Professional Register Scheme. Other sectors have a focus on skills recognition with all sector boards providing technical farm events and business groups as part of their knowledge transfer programme to encourage and increase learning across the industry. BPEX's skills strategy has now entered its fourth year, with further opportunities becoming available. This offer includes the Professional Managers Development scheme which runs over 18 months and combines structured management training with presentations from industry leaders; a Leadership Development scheme which provides training to those new to supervision and management; and Stockman Development training which includes workshops run every two months based on certificates of competence. The Pig sector has also developed a Trainee of the Year Award which last year was presented in a ceremony at the House of Commons.

Defra have worked in partnership with Agri-Skills stakeholders to ensure there are discussions with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills on the concept and requirements of professionalism and links between active participation in CPD and reduced regulatory burdens.

Part of this objective was also to ensure that parts of the industry are aware of the importance of and engage with emerging qualifications. The Agricultural apprenticeship at level 2 and 3 has been reviewed and submitted by Lantra for implementation in April 2011. The Lantra website also provides a wide range of information on qualifications available along with over 80 qualifications available on the Qualification and Credit Framework at various levels. A number of Land Based colleges are offering employer focussed Foundation Degrees.

1.3 Stimulate research and ensure more effective knowledge and technology transfer (KTT) so as to promote productivity and innovation

The skills element and the uptake of new knowledge is increasingly being considered and built into programmes of R&D and Knowledge Transfer initiated by the levy organisations through AHDB. The different sector boards within AHDB approach skills in different ways but examples of skills delivery through Knowledge transfer initiatives are outlined below.

AHDB Knowledge and Technology Transfer

Examples of knowledge transfer programmes run by sector boards within AHDB include the EBLEX better returns programme which encourages British beef and sheep producers to evaluate their businesses to identify where improvements can be made in terms of cost reduction, environmental impact and animal performance. The skills and knowledge transfer work is carried out through a programme of direct communication with livestock producers combined with practical, free events across England, backed up by a range of informative literature and other resources.

Further examples include a Knowledge Transfer Partnership between HDC and Reading University. HGCA have also run arable business groups. These often consist of existing agronomy or discussion groups that want to benefit from using HGCA Business Management tools such as Crop Bench and Price Risk Management training which provides free information and increased understanding of production costs and cost issues. Other initiatives in this sector include Be Precise which seeks to provide growers with the information and knowledge to make informed decisions about whether precision farming techniques are appropriate for their farm system.

BPEX also have their own highly developed Knowledge Transfer offer that sits within the same department as their skills initiative.

Harper Adams has actively sought to develop further links with AHDB. Further funding of applied research in key areas remains an objective they will be pursuing in future discussions as an aid to enhancing productivity. They are currently working with the Horticulture Development Company to assess the value of establishing a Fresh Produce Centre that aims to raise awareness of this sector to new entrants and to give students an opportunity to develop research skills appropriate to the salad and vegetable industry.

Lantra have ensured that knowledge transfer has been directed by robust research into the skills needs of industry through the LandSkills RDPE programme. This has been through collating the challenges facing industry now and in the future and relating this to skills needs and training topics. Programmes have been directed by industry steering groups, to ensure that productivity and innovation are delivered.

1.4 To gain acceptance in principle, and co-operation from regulators, to help enable those recognised under the new professional framework to be eligible for reduced regulatory burden

During 2010 Defra announced that a Farming Regulation Task Force would be tasked with identifying ways in which to reduce the regulatory burden on farmers and food processors through a review of all relevant regulations and their implementation. As part of this review a consultation process was undertaken.

Richard Longthorp, Chair of the Agri-Skills management group met with the Task Force to feed into this consultation. Lantra also fed into the NFU consultation response which contained a section on training.

The NFU response contained proposals on reducing regulation through demonstration of competence. It recommended that Defra should work with Lantra and industry representatives to review existing legislation and identify areas where compliance can be illustrated through a producer's demonstration of competence, by their membership of CPD schemes and the implementation of a detailed training programme.

The NFU response also contained a set of principles to guide Government intervention. These principles recommended that comprehensive Impact Assessments should provide an evaluation of the costs and benefits of the regulation and should also include an assessment of the skills and training that farmers would need to undertake to meet the policy proposals.

Defra have stated that the Task Force review will report in May 2011.

Objective 2: Promotion of skills development as being central to business improvement and the concept of professionalism

2.1 Communicate a better understanding of the business benefits to both employers and employees of higher level technical, management and business skills.

Defra have actively engaged and contributed to communicating the benefits of skills to farming businesses. Examples include use of the Farm Business Survey to provide evidence of links between business success and business competence, and use of Farming Link e-Newsletter to promote Lantra's Apprenticeship week activities to farmers.

Over the past year Lantra have gained approval to be the centre for Investors in People for the sector. Delivery of this programme will promote the understanding that business improvement can be achieved through skills development of both employees and employers. Case studies will be created promoting the business benefits of training in agriculture and horticulture and how this can improve business performance.

They have also delivered a PR and Marketing campaign to promote the business benefits of training. In the last 12 months the Advertising Value Equivalent about the business benefits of skills totalled just over £3 million.

In the North West, Lantra have recruited six farmers as Farming Ambassadors, accessed Defra funding and provided training, working in collaboration with the NFU to develop their skills. Lantra also facilitated the use of RDPE funding in the East Midlands to develop an Ambassador Programme in conjunction with the NFU.

NFU and Lantra Farming Ambassadors

The NFU and Lantra farming ambassadors in the North West have received a full induction on the Agri-Skills strategy and the importance of CPD, with future promotional activities to be identified in line with their sector and the NFU regional office.

In the East Midlands the NFU has just completed the third year of the farming ambassadors training and it has proved to have been a resounding success. Funded via Lantra courses it has allowed 18 carefully selected younger farmers to benefit from one-to-one training from top quality instructors.

The programme saw three days training offered covering presentation skills, chairmanship and negotiation skills and media training. The legacy for the East Midlands is that there is now a select group of 18 well motivated and trained farmers. The NFU is able to provide opportunities for those trained to go on to represent the industry in a whole variety of areas. Some are now serving as County Chairman, some on commodity boards and others as Branch Chairman.

When media opportunities become available the NFU now have an additional resource to call upon, which benefits both parties.

The Health and Safety Executive have continued to promote the benefits of training through their workstream on 'Improving competencies and training'. This project is focused on improving the health and safety competencies of those working in farming through education and training, with an emphasis on the achievement of nationally recognised health and safety vocational qualifications. It continues to be associated with the HSE's "Make the Promise – come home safe" campaign so that training and competency are advocated as vital elements in the drive to reduce accidents on farm.

Accidents, injuries and ill health all result in pain; grief and suffering but also impose financial costs to a business. Damage to property, plant and equipment as well as production losses also impose costs. Training and competency in health and safety have an important role to play in reducing these costs thereby contributing towards sustaining a viable and profitable business.

Competence in managing health and safety should also be viewed as an essential part of professional management. The key aims have been to raise the level of health and safety awareness of workers; improve the health and safety skills of those with supervisory or management responsibilities and educate newcomers into the industry to provide them with essential health and safety knowledge.

The activity described within this objective is in addition to the work of the communications group who have sought to communicate the benefits of training to employees and employers. Their activity and progress is highlighted elsewhere in this report.

2.2 Communicate the benefits of increased professionalism to partners and consumers

Harper Adams have developed links with the British Poultry Council to encourage poultry sector businesses to invest in future skills development and succession planning at managerial level by the sponsorship of their students, and by providing work placements and career opportunities. This has resulted in nine companies joining an umbrella scheme, with the expectation that more will join in due course. The poultry sector has been extremely supportive in this initiative, which was launched at the British Pig and Poultry Fair in 2010.

Defra has demonstrated strong commitment to skills development in agriculture through the actions of the Defra Ministerial team, by helping to raise awareness of the Agri-Skills Forum and importance of skills to the competitiveness of farming to farming audiences in ministerial speeches, participation of ministers in key skills meetings and the Secretary of State's early endorsement of the Agri-Skills Strategy and action plan in a press release.

Defra has also promoted and encouraged skills development in the horticulture industry through engagement with stakeholders on the Fruit and Vegetables Task Force.

Lantra also held an event at the House of Commons in partnership with Improve SSC and Skillsmart Retail to promote the importance of food production and food supply chains to Government.

Food Supply Network

A briefing was held in the House of Commons in October 2010 in a push to close the skills gap across the food supply industries. The three sector skills councils involved – Improve, Lantra and Skillsmart Retail – all report worrying skills gaps hitting the UK's ability to feed itself.

The event was hosted by Minister of State for Agriculture and Food, Jim Paice MP and was attended by over 100 employers and industry representatives from three sectors, Members of Parliament, peers and senior civil servants. Key speakers included Jim Paice MP, Justin King, President of IGD and Ross Warburton, President of FDF. Topics covered at this event included skills; the difficulties in recruiting staff; the need for strong Government support and delivery of the Agri-Skills strategy to ensure farmers and growers are recognised for their skills and professionalism.

Following the event, Andrew George MP, launched an Early Day motion calling upon Government policy makers to give a higher priority to skills and training in the food supply network.

2.3 Actively support the expansion of facilities such as reliable high speed broadband and associated technologies in order to optimise the delivery of training

Lantra have developed a web based CPD template for use by the industry and this can be accessed from their website. The Lantra Skills manager tool is being used within the Rural Development Landskills programme to record training undertaken. More than 11,000 individuals are recorded on this system. In Yorkshire and Humber for example, 9,693 training events have been delivered, 10,697 training days delivered, 3210 businesses have been supported and 60% of the RDPE grant has been spent on livestock sectors.

The use of secure on-line training recording systems has seen the Poultry Industry Poultry Passport scheme increase its registrations in the past year. Further information on this is detailed in objective 1.

Harper Adams have worked with the agricultural engineering sector in discussions on the future skills requirements in the industry (at technical and higher education level) and have engaged with particular companies in support of their expanding workforce requirements. They have assembled, with industry support, a proposal to the Regional Growth Fund for the creation of a Centre for Precision Farming, and have recruited to a new Chair in Agricultural Engineering in support of this initiative. Two further posts in this field are shortly to be advertised. This will ensure that their agricultural engineering graduates are best placed to contribute to advances in technology that will impact upon productivity within the sector.

2.4 Develop a real or virtual 'gateway' through which individuals and businesses can quickly and easily access training, qualifications, assessment and funding

A training and skills section has recently been developed on NFU Online. This provides information on the Agri-Skills strategy and latest news relating to skills and training issues. This section also includes a monthly summary of the training available to farmers in their region.

Farmers have also been able to access training more easily through collaborative working. One example is the West Midlands TB project, which started in November 2010 and is being run as a joint partnership between the National Farmers Union, National Animal Disease Information Service and the Animal Health Agency and is funded by LandSkills WM. More information on this is below.

West Midlands TB project

The West Midlands TB project is a joint partnership between the National Farmers Union, National Animal Disease Information Service, and the Animal Health Agency and is funded by LandSkills WM. The funding, which has recently been significantly increased in acknowledgement of the initial success of the project, is being used to fund 25 individually tailored bovine TB and wildlife bio-security training workshops. The events, which are organised and chaired by the relevant local veterinary practice, feature three presentations focusing on bovine TB & testing, safe trading, cattle bio-security and badger ecology / wildlife bio-security. The presentations are delivered by Animal Health WM, the veterinary practices lead veterinary surgeon and the NFU.

The workshops, which have so far attracted large attendances of between 80 – 100 cattle keepers, have provided an excellent opportunity for myth busting, imparting potential disease mitigation strategies and two way knowledge transfer. With increased bio-security awareness high on Defra's agenda the WM TB Project is both important and highly relevant and is proving collaboration between Vets, Animal Health and the NFU to be a hugely successful medium for the dissemination of bTB information.

The NFU training material has also been made available to the South West TB Advisory Service and the wider NADIS network of veterinary practices, which has resulted in further training events in the South West, East Midlands and East of England regions. The Farm Policy Team in partnerships with Defra, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) are in the pre-production stages of producing a two part feature Wildlife and Bio-security DVD which will focus on badger ecology and practical wildlife bio-security measures and will be made available to all training providers and hosted on the NFU, Defra, Animal Health and FERA websites from April 2011.

Agricultural colleges have also held specific training events over the past year where individuals and businesses can quickly and easily access training for their benefit. Harper Adams ran a dairy technology day on their dairy unit in 2010 which attracted over 1,000 participants and over 90 exhibitors. Harper Adams scientists were able to engage directly with those working in the dairy sector during this event.

Harper Adams also promotes close links with employers in both degree course curriculum development, and also undergraduate training through the use of a sandwich placement year where skills are developed in a working environment. This synergistic relationship provides bespoke training for students and reinforces the value of skills development to employers.

Lantra have re-designed and re-launched their website, with a business focussed emphasis. The tools available include CourseFinder to identify training solutions and FundFinder which is the first stage of a tool that will support the identification of funding streams. There is also information on different types of qualifications and frameworks such as the Apprenticeship framework, Vocational qualifications and the Environment and Land-Based diploma, as well as the Qualification and Credit Framework.

The National Federation of Young Farmers Club have led the development and delivery of innovative training, for example Tenancy Training, which has been supported by Defra and other industry bodies. Their website also has a dedicated Lantra page which provides information on training and Lantra LandSkills. NFYFC training which is available includes train the trainers; Advanced Train the trainer, Leadership Development, and a new training library aimed at providing young farmers' club members with fresh opportunities for personal and professional development. The Curve club training pack includes eight training modules with a combination of entrepreneurial and life skills that can be transferred into business and everyday life.

Objective 3: Use Skills development opportunities and professionalism to promote the industry as being an attractive place to work

3.1 Develop a better understanding in the industry of the value and importance of new entry routes and career opportunities

Apprenticeship schemes and programmes are now the Government's favoured route for training, with significantly increased investment and plans for apprentices to receive greater recognition on completing their programmes. This has been reflected in the activity undertaken by member organisations of the Agri-Skills group:

The NFU have undertaken a programme of work to highlight apprenticeship schemes. This has involved articles in British Farmer and Grower, complete with case studies outlining the benefits and importance of this entry route to the employee and also the employer. Press releases have also been issued welcoming the significantly increased funding from Government.

The NFU have also carried out a survey, during February 2011, to find out about the level of awareness and knowledge of apprenticeship schemes and the barriers to take up within agriculture and horticulture. Overall 150 respondents completed the survey. Full results and analysis from this survey will help to inform discussions with the Agri-Skills group and Government.

The NFU have also participated in a number of radio interviews, both national and local, to promote the industry and highlight the value and importance of apprenticeships and other entry routes into the industry.

City and Guilds Land Based services have also made a substantial investment into the apprenticeship programme.

City and Guilds Million Extra Campaign

As part of the wider City and Guilds group City and Guilds Land Based services are involved in the Million Extra campaign which was launched this year. This campaign aims to encourage commitment and collaboration from training agencies, employers and learners to achieve an ambitious target of one million people starting an apprentice by summer 2013.

City and Guilds Land Based services are, in particular, looking to support the industry to adopt the principles of taking on young learners and training them using the apprenticeship model. They have published case studies on the benefits of taking on apprentices and also provided information on how prospective employers would employ apprentices. City and Guilds are the UK's leading apprenticeship body and offer apprenticeships in agriculture and horticulture.

NFYFC also promoted apprenticeship week, providing information on their website to members. This detailed the benefits of taking on apprentices and Lantra activity during apprenticeship week. They also conducted a short poll which aimed to find out if their members were currently undertaking a land-based apprenticeship scheme, or whether employers were currently offering a land-based apprenticeship scheme and whether further information needed to be available on apprenticeships in order to improve take up.

During 2010 Lantra conducted research into apprenticeships in the land-based sector to identify how the programmes could be improved. They also promoted the benefits of apprenticeships during Apprenticeship week in 2010. Part of this campaign involved a visit with John Hayes MP to meet four apprentices and their employers and case studies were produced on the four apprentices for the Lantra website and local press.

Lantra also undertook a campaign during Apprenticeship Week in February 2011. This included features in trade publications including Farmers Weekly, and Hort Week, information on the Lantra website including eight case studies, and an article in Lantra Connect magazine. In Cornwall, Lantra are raising the awareness of apprenticeships as an entry route to the industry through the Cornwall brokerage programme, Business Forward.

Looking ahead Lantra plan to carry out research on apprenticeship delivery models and their success, especially where employment is shared (e.g. MoorSkills) and to also assess demand for level four apprenticeships. Lantra are also working with partners including the NFU having gained funding for a new project researching employers, apprentices and provider's perceptions of apprenticeship schemes.

Outside of apprenticeships Lantra have managed the Environmental and Land-based diploma consortium. Lantra maintained contact with the 79 consortia delivering the diploma and identified and managed 16 diploma champions to promote the Environmental and Land Based diploma.

The new Lantra website provides a wide range of information on qualifications available as well as the Qualification and Credit Framework. The QCF is the new way of recognizing achievement through the award of credit for units and qualifications across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It provides more flexible routes to gaining full qualification and enables progress to be achieved in smaller steps through the accumulation of credit.

Lantra has more than 11,000 records on skills manager from LandSkills RDPE programmes. This records small bite sized pieces of learning undertaken by agricultural and horticultural businesses. Training recorded ranges from business management to technology transfer events through industry specific training. For example, in Yorkshire and Humber, 60% of RDPE has been spent on the livestock sector, 34% on Beef and Sheep sector, 13% on dairy, 5% on pigs and 9% on poultry.

Defra has provided funding for National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs, who offer development activities for young people focussed on farming and land management activities, and Fresh Start.

Both of these help to promote the farming sector to young people and new entrants and encourage a positive image of farming as a potential career.

Fresh Start Initiative

Fresh Start is designed to help new entrants start their career in farming, and existing farmers build their business. It does this through establishing fresh start training academies on a national basis, which provide seminars and practical learning sessions offering business and management skills from industry professionals and mentoring for new entrants to the farming industry.

A number of fresh start academies have continued throughout the past year. A new academy launched at Brackenhurst in October, with an academy planned to re-launch in Hampshire at Sparsholt in January. Funding has also been granted to support three academies in Herefordshire.

Much of the work on Fresh Start from October has been focussed on launching a specialist pig academy in conjunction with Waitrose and BQP. With over 350 applicants this was successfully launched in January at Riseholme College in Lincolnshire. With the support of Waitrose and BQP this academy has not only been able to offer a learning experience for potential new entrants, but also an option within the academy of applicants taking on new business opportunity at the end of the programme with a guaranteed market if they are suitable and have access to a small area of land.

Harper Adams also work closely with the industry, through sandwich degree placements and other means, to promote career opportunities in the sector to their students. In November 2010 they hosted over 70 employers at a placement and careers fair, attended by many of their students.

The Harper Adams website also covers a wide range of other activities they have undertaken during the course of the last year and is a valuable means of promotion to potential entrants to the sector, industry and to the wider public.

3.2 Encourage further participation from industry in supporting learning and promoting careers

Harper Adams are a university partner in the new JCB Academy which is providing 14-19 specialist education for those seeking a career in the engineering sector (including agricultural engineering). Their work in this subject area also includes promotional activities for younger children interested in agriculture or engineering as a future career path, including school visits, residential programmes and their annual Higher Education Choices (HEC) event which promotes careers in the sector to around 350 participants.

Lantra have 18 agricultural ambassadors who help by promoting the business benefits of skills and help at careers and other promotional events. This programme is covered elsewhere in this report.

Richard Longthorp, chairman of the Agri-Skills management group represents the NFU on an IGD Skills and Employment Working group whose objectives are to create opportunities for individuals, help grow confidence and employability skills, raise profile and helping to promote food and grocery as a career of choice. This group are currently organising a Food and Grocery Skills and Employability Summit on Wednesday 22nd June 2011 at which the NFU president, Peter Kendall, will be speaking.

In order to support new opportunities such as the Diploma in Environmental and Land-Based Studies, FACE has produced a website resource for teachers involved in its delivery. Developed by practitioners for practitioners, the website Environmental and Land Based Resources (produced by FACE and funded by the NFU Mutual Charitable Trust) is designed to signpost practitioners and students to resources that will support teaching and learning across the environment and land-based sector. Practitioners from schools and FE colleges have identified resources that they have found useful to their own environment and land-based studies. It is intended to continue developing and adapting this resource in the coming year as the new national curriculum takes shape.

3.3 Promote the industry as professional and innovative offering a range of career opportunities

Harper Adams have engaged in a number of television and radio programmes over the course of the year, including in a special episode of Radio 4's Farming Today which was aimed at how to attract young entrants into the agri-food sector. This featured a number of their students.

They have also engaged with FACE to run programmes to develop awareness of agri-food industry career options with teachers and careers advisors that will be delivered locally across a network of land-based FE institutions, as well as at Harper Adams.

Central to FACE's core work is helping young people to learn about food and farming in a sustainable countryside. This is through its resources produced with industry partners (such as Why Farming Matters education packs for primary and secondary schools with the NFU); its website which receives 1.3 million hits per month; training for teachers and student teachers involving 54 sessions with 1150 attendees in 2010; and support for farm visits including accredited training for 1700 farmers to date.

In the coming year FACE will be continuing its role of raising awareness of the work of the industry through education and a series of accredited training sessions for primary school teachers in conjunction with Harper Adams University College.

FACE are developing an accredited training course for careers advisers and teachers in order to raise awareness of the many and varied careers available in the industry, where information can be sourced on the qualifications available. In addition, in partnership with Muller, they are piloting a 16-19 event on a dairy farm to highlight the business of farming and careers involved. They are hopeful that further events will grow out of this.

FACE are also working with the NFU to match schools looking to develop work related learning links with a farm. Schools have been contacted to gauge interest and to date over 100 schools have registered.

Over the past year Lantra ran eight careers events throughout England using industry to promote the sector to young people and career advisors. More than 150 advisors met industry representatives to discover more about the sector. Lantra have also developed career profiles with progression maps for industry roles in agriculture. A total of 53 Agricultural job profiles have been written for the beef, sheep, dairy, pigs and crop industries. These are posted on the Lantra website as careers information. The NFU has been involved with Lantra in mapping out career pathways and defining different job roles within the horticulture sector, with a view to highlighting potential careers for new entrants and the types of qualifications they need to carry out these roles.

The importance of training to increasing opportunities in the workforce is being demonstrated shortly on the interactive career Progression pathways in the career section on the Lantra website. This clearly identifies the entry route, and progression pathways in relation to the training required by an individual.

The NFU and Lantra have actively been involved in and are sponsors of the Grow Initiative which is a website developed with industry partners to promote horticulture to young people and to inform about the range of careers that exist within horticulture. The NFU have been working to strengthen representation on the production side of horticulture and potatoes on the website with supporting literature to promote the industry.

Defra has supported farmers who offer educational access as part of their Environmental Stewardship schemes which encourages school children to appreciate and understand the role of farms in society, food production and the environment

Objective 4: Provide Government with a strong and influential partner to meet the challenges of the future

4.1 Work with the AHDB and other major organisations representing the different parts of the industry to present a common voice on major skills-related issues to Governments and public

The AHDB draft corporate business plan 2011 to 2014 contains a number of key cross sector themes. One of these is the high priority the industry puts on the need for acquisition and application of new knowledge and innovation in primary production through research, development and Knowledge Transfer to deliver efficiencies, increase yield and improve profit potential. It recognises the need for an industry with the level of education necessary to enable it to maximise the benefits of the new information as well as the skills to use the ever more complex technologies in the field.

AHDB's work not only addresses the uptake of new technologies in the production of the various food and non-food products, but also in the sustainability of the businesses that deliver that food, and this work includes skills development in the marketing of product and dealing with price volatility and other business issues.

Defra has facilitated a shared understanding across departmental policy areas of the role of skills development in improving competitiveness and its role in the development of wider Defra agendas such as Better Regulation and the Fruit and Veg Task Force.

Agri-Skills stakeholders including NFU and Lantra have contributed to the Defra Fruit and Veg Task Force to ensure skills issues were incorporated into the report and subsequent action plan. The activities undertaken by stakeholders on the Fruit and Veg Task Force are explained elsewhere within this report.

Lantra have worked with the Agricultural and Horticultural industry to define business drivers and subsequent skills needs. The results have been incorporated into the Skills Needs Assessment published in December 2010. This document sets out the current and future skills needs for the sector.

Lantra also worked with Defra and Improve to host a conference on food chain issues on March 7th using Lantra's labour market information.

4.2 To encourage industry organisations to provide and maintain an adequate level of resource to enable a co-ordinated approach, reflecting the importance of the development of the new professionalism

The NFU have provided resource to help produce the agri-skills strategy and chair the Agri-Skills forum and communications working group. Resource is also provided to co-ordinate the Agri-Skills management group and to carry out the actions arising from this group.

The NFU have also developed a skills and training section on NFU Online and have kept the national Policy Board informed of the work on skills and training development. This work is highlighted elsewhere within this document.

Skills and training initiatives are also being developed in many of the NFU commodity boards. The Dairy sector has established the Next Generation Dairy Board who have the responsibility for training and skills within the sector. The Horticulture Board have a board member assigned with the responsibility for skills and training, and the NFU are represented on the Defra Fruit and Veg Taskforce which made recommendations on skills and training for produce and across the supply chain. NFU Sugar are also developing training initiatives in conjunction with British Sugar.

Sugar Industry Programme

The NFU and British Sugar formally launched the new Sugar Industry Programme on 15th February 2011. Spearheaded by the NFU and British Sugar a 15-strong group of younger growers and those closely linked to the industry will learn first-hand how the sector operates, and obtain some transferable skills in the process.

The group will participate in a range of 'away days' between February and May 2011, aimed at equipping the group with further knowledge about the whole industry. The programme will include briefing sessions to learn about lobbying activities in Westminster and Europe. It will also include a visit to Broom's Barn, the UK's national centre for sugar beet research. This visit will include briefings and discussions with Broom's Barn employees to learn how the industry science experts work on a range of crops and scientific disciplines. The programme will also focus on succession planning and training specific to the sugar sector which will reflect the importance of the new professionalism.

The UK Food Chain Alliance, which aims to develop ideas to promote a more productive, sustainable and profitable UK food chain, has also produced a discussion paper on increasing skills and innovation to result in tangible outcomes on managerial capability, commercial terms, and producer requirements. The NFU provided comments on the paper and attended a round-table discussion meeting in February to provide a consistent message on skills development and the Agri-Skills strategy.

Harper Adams have hosted a number of visits over the past year, including Ministers at which they have outlined the work they do in support of the agri-food sector, and the work they do in collaboration with other organisations. They have also responded to Government consultations relating to skills, research and outreach have been active participants in recent workshops organised by Defra on the recommendations of the Taylor Review and recent Integrated Advice Pilot project.

NFYFC have continued to promote the Agri-Skills strategy both through internal and external communication channels. This work has involved presenting papers and instigating discussions with NFYFC Officeholders, staff and council members. They have also included the aims of the Agri-Skills strategy in appropriate NFYFC press releases, website and other publications news stories.

Defra has promoted the Agri-Skills forum as one of the farming industry's early examples of the 'Big Society' in action and provided a case study for use in promotion of 'Big Society' delivery of Defra's activities.

Lantra have continued to promote the Agri-Skills strategy and the Agri-Skills forum in their media work. This has been highlighted elsewhere in this report.

Objective 5: Support Defra in its engagement with other Government departments

5.1 Defra actively and effectively influences relevant government initiatives that impact on the industry

With reduced public funding available in the mainstream skills system Defra has brokered conversations with Department for Business Innovation and Skills to help the farming industry explore opportunities and understand changes made to the mainstream skills system following the launch of the National Skills strategy in November 2010. Defra have also facilitated discussions between industry and BIS to ensure the shared agenda of skills development as a vital component of increased economic growth is understood by both Government and industry and that the wider contribution of agriculture to society is understood.

Defra has also initiated work to break down barriers to apprenticeships in the industry and formulate possible solutions – such as exploring whether Gangmasters Licensing Legislation is a prohibitive barrier to groups of employers sharing apprenticeships. This is being done with industry stakeholders including NFU and Lantra.

Lantra have been responsible for delivering Rural Development Programme skills activity within seven regions over the past year. Activity includes giving strategic guidance on current and future skills needs, developing sustainable skills provision by encouraging new delivery partners, acting as the accountable body to ensure funds can flow through to training providers, sharing best practice and monitoring and evaluating effectiveness of provision.

Lantra are currently working with Regional Development agencies and Defra to ensure smooth transition of the Rural Development Programme skills strand into Defra by 2011 and sharing best practice from the Lantra Landskills programme.

Harper Adams has engaged with a number of MPs and Ministers in other departments to ensure that they understand the issues that the UK must address in terms of skills developments in the sector. A principle focus has been with BIS, given forthcoming changes in higher education funding and the need to ensure that agri-food skills remain a focus for Government investment in higher education provision and applied research.

5.2 Defra ensures that its policies and programmes and those of the Defra ‘family’ actively support the development of enhanced professionalism across the sector

Defra wants to see a competitive, resilient, responsive food chain in Britain; one in which farmers and producers respond quickly to the demands of informed consumers and outcompete their international rivals by producing more efficiently. This is why the first priority within the Defra Business Plan is ‘support and develop British farming and encourage sustainable food production’. Skills improvement will make an important contribution to this vision, enabling farmers to be more competitive and adaptable to both market and climate change challenges whilst still contributing to maintaining the landscape, environment and biodiversity. Defra are committed to continue working in partnership with the Agri-Skills forum in furthering the strategy and vision for the farming industry.

Emerging Issues and Key themes

It is clear that the strategy has brought together all the major organisations responsible for representing the interests of agriculture and horticulture in order to address the issue of skills and training provision. It is important that this work continues to be industry led with a co-ordinated and structured approach.

The main sections of the report outlined the commitment and resource from those on the management and communication groups to progress the action plan. However it is also clear that while the action plan and objectives are still valid a number of key issues and themes have emerged over the past 12 months.

These emerging issues and key themes can broadly be identified as:

- Recognition and accreditation of flexible working within agriculture
- Communication on the benefits of training
- Ensuring there is easier access to training and skills development
- Flexible approaches to training that suit agricultural businesses
- Promoting apprenticeships and removing the barriers to uptake
- Consideration of wider Government and industry initiatives
- Growth and Innovation Fund

Industry must place itself right at the very centre of addressing these emerging and key issues if the forum is to achieve its vision of a professional farming industry characterised by a highly skilled, innovative and flexible farming workforce.

CPD and Professionalism

A key theme evident from the activity outlined in the report has been the work towards professionalism within the sector, with a focus on formally recognising the agricultural workforce through CPD schemes. The fact that the term 'professionalism' is now so widely talked about and referred to by the industry, and that individual sectors are working out how they might develop suitable mechanisms to demonstrate professionalism is testimony to how far we have come over the past year.

The trade and national press have increasingly covered this issue and the move towards professionalism and developing CPD has been right across the industry with the Institute of Agricultural Secretaries and administrators and the Institute of Agricultural Management developing and extending their own CPD offers. The demand within the Horticulture and Dairy sectors to develop CPD schemes to record training in a common and transferable way to help career progression and record lifelong learning perhaps indicates an area for future development in CPD around mutual recognition.

However there is more to do to work towards recognising professionalism within the industry. **While the development of CPD schemes in individual sectors need to be voluntary and demand led a key issue remains addressing how training can be recognised by accreditation organisations and Government.** Current Government recognised ways of recording skills is through formal full qualifications. They therefore fail to recognise much of the development that occurs within agriculture, such as learning methods based on flexible, small pieces of learning, specific to the business requirements and delivered through methods such as seminars, discussion groups, research and on-farm events. Without addressing this key issue it will be hard to demonstrate that the industry is a professional and progressive place to work to those considering a career in agriculture.

Benefits of Training

The benefits of training also need to be better articulated to businesses in order to act as a 'push' and incentive towards CPD and on-going training and skills development activity.

An emerging theme is the need to communicate the benefits of skills and training, linking this to competitiveness to generate further interest and demand for uptake. Actions for Agri-Skills members

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must include using evidence and research to demonstrate to those in the industry that skills are fundamental in helping to achieve the productivity, innovation and profitability needed to compete effectively, and for them to be seen as a business benefit, not an added cost.

Access to training

Part of the original vision for the strategy was for those working within the industry to have easier access to the training and skills needed to take the industry forward. This report highlights that there has been activity to progress the objective, with better signposting and information on the training, qualifications, assessment and funding available. However there is further work required to target the hard to reach and ensure that skills development is not accorded a low priority across the agricultural workforce.

A key issue is the need to develop further flexible approaches to training delivery. Further flexible approaches to training are needed, to enable businesses to engage with minimal disruptions to their operation. On line courses, assessment through electronic means, and training delivered on the farm are all pressing issues in meeting the objectives of the strategy and helping to increase the uptake of training for those living and working at a distance from the training venue and for those without transport in rural areas.

The complexity of the current skills system also needs to be reduced with further information and better signposting on funding available to farmers, published and communicated in a more accessible way. **Other key issues and emerging themes include the need for agricultural businesses to identify and work with training providers to ensure there are appropriate skills and training provision related to their needs and that training is delivered in a form they require with a focus on 'bite sized' learning.**

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are another emerging issue, highlighted throughout this progress report. It is clear that apprenticeships are the coalition Governments favoured route for training. The BIS Skills for Sustainable growth strategy announced they would significantly increase investment in apprenticeship schemes and working with business to deliver 100,000 more apprenticeships by 2014. During National Apprenticeship week in February 2011 the Government also announced that the budget for Apprenticeships would increase to over £1,400 million in 2011-12 and could support training for over 350,000 apprentices across business.

The agricultural industry has responded to these announcements by highlighting apprenticeships as a suitable entry route into the industry. The NFU, City and Guilds Land Based Services, Lantra and NFYFC are continuing to promote the benefits of apprenticeships and apprenticeship schemes. Research is also continuing and this will focus on the demand for Level 4 apprenticeships, with focus groups also being held to gather employer's views of current apprenticeship programmes. **Apprenticeships will need to be a key consideration for the Agri-Skills forum over the next 12 months, with a focus on removing the barriers to uptake.**

Wider Government and industry initiatives

A further emerging issue that needs to be considered is the activity and initiatives that are being undertaken across Government and other organisations across the food supply chain. For example many of the aims outlined within the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Skills for Sustainable Growth strategy will have an impact on the work of the Agri-Skills forum. Defra are working with BIS to increase awareness of the Agri-Skills strategy to seek recognition of agriculture as a priority and innovative industry.

There are also initiatives underway across the food supply chain. Joint events have been held between Lantra, Improve, Skillsmart Retail and IGD to identify collaborative working opportunities. A workshop, led by IGD was also held at Defra in March 2011 to discuss skills issues across the food supply chain following the Foresight report. **While the structure of agricultural businesses is unique in many respects, and therefore differs from other industries across the food chain, the Agri-skills forum will need to be aware of other initiatives to see if there are any transferable lessons that can be learned in addressing some of the key issues.**

Growth and Innovation Fund

Activity undertaken towards meeting the objectives of the Agri-Skills strategy, outlined in this report, has largely been done through goodwill and without any financial support from forum members. To address some of the key issues outlined above and to achieve the vision stated at the beginning of this report, the Agri-Skills forum may need to consider whether to seek available funding. The Growth and Innovation Fund, announced in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Skills for Sustainable growth document, is one possible route. This is a contestable fund which will be used to 'pump prime and pilot new initiatives' to increase the contribution that skills make to growth in different sectors.

A key element of the Growth and Innovation Fund is to support the introduction of new professional standards and the uptake of apprenticeships. There is an expectation that any funding received through the Growth and Innovation fund will need to be match funded by businesses. **The Agri-Skills forum will need to discuss whether this funding could be used in the agricultural sector and whether there is enough support from across industry to endorse and submit an application to the fund.**

Future Priorities

The Agri-Skills Management group considered future priorities at a meeting in February and these were further discussed at a meeting of the Agri-Skills forum in March. Forum members agreed that the following should be considered as future priorities over the next 12 months.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are considered to be a key area following the ambitions outlined by the Government in the BIS skills strategy. Although apprenticeships are available in agriculture there are only an average of 400 apprenticeship starts per year within agriculture livestock and crops. The Agri-Skills management group consider that a major priority is to promote apprenticeship schemes further throughout the industry to encourage take up. Due to the structure and make-up of the industry it is felt that further models such as Group Training Associations and Apprenticeship Training agencies should be considered to achieve the take up required.

- **Promote the delivery of apprenticeships through collaboration and joint working across the forum**
- **Identify and remove barriers to apprenticeship uptake through research and engaging with Defra and other Government departments.**
- **NFU in conjunction with City and Guilds Land Based Services and Duchy College to produce a Business guide on how to employ apprentices**
- **Case studies and communication to be promoted on the benefits of taking on apprenticeships.**

Careers guidance

With no one organisation, or Government department with responsibility for careers guidance and information there was a danger that the information available and being produced for agriculture careers could appear to be fragmented and uncoordinated. There was a need identified for forum members to work together to provide a more detailed picture on agricultural careers which would help progress towards the objectives of the strategy.

- **Agri-Skills members to produce a 'road map' to map careers information to provide a detailed picture on agriculture as a career.**
- **The Agri-Skills communications group should also promote the road map once completed**

Communicating the benefits of training and skills development

Actions are required to demonstrate to industry that skills are fundamental in helping business achieve the productivity, innovation and profitability needed to compete effectively. It is anticipated that through further communication and linking training and skills development to business competitiveness, more enthusiasm and comprehensive engagement for skills and professionalism in the industry will ensue.

- **Agri-Skills forum to gather evidence and examples demonstrating where farming business can link an increase in productivity and profitability as a result of training and skills development**
- **Conduct research or investigate existing research opportunities to try and measure the benefits of training and skills development. One proposal is to include further questions relating to skills and training within the Defra Farm Business Survey**
- **Agri-Skills forum members to provide further case studies and information on cost benefits as a result of training and skills development**

Growth and Innovation Fund

In order to address the issue of funding Agri-Skills forum members were in agreement to support Lantra in their bid to source extra funding through the Employer Investment Fund. If successful this may help to drive an industry wide bid under the Growth and Innovation Fund.

- **Agri-Skills management group to endorse and support a Lantra bid for EIF development funding**
- **Lantra to keep Agri-Skills forum informed of progress on a bid for the Growth and Innovation Fund**

RPDE Skills and training Programme

With the RPDE programme entering its final year and moving towards a more consistent national approach to delivery, members of the Agri-Skills forum saw this is a priority area. It was considered that Agri-Skills members would need to make clear the priorities for agri-skills RDPE funding so that the remaining skills funding is put to the best possible use.

- **Agri-Skills Management group members to meet with Defra and RDA representatives to steer priorities for agri-skills RDPE funding. There is also a need to focus on a more simplified and consistent approach as the current levels of bureaucracy involved could be putting off applicants or stifling initiatives**
- **The meeting should not only focus on the last year of delivery under the current RDPE programme but should also look to future years.**

Skills recognition

The recording and recognition of training and skills development is a key area of the strategy. Only by demonstrating the amount of training this is undertaken can the industry show that it is a professional and progressive place to work. Agri-Skills forum members consider the development of an appropriate method of recording skills and training development in every sector as a priority. There is also the need to ensure mutual recognition of these schemes, allowing for the transferability of skills across different sectors.

- **Members of the forum to communicate and better articulate to the market place what is on offer regarding training and skills development, and CPD schemes to help recognise the professionalism of the industry**
- **Members of the forum to encourage, facilitate, and guide sectors on CPD schemes where necessary and appropriate**

Annex 1

Communication

The following media grid outlines the publications and media channels that the Agri-Skills strategy and forum has been featured in since its launch in February 2010.

01/01/2010	British Farmer & Grower (South East Edition) {Main}	Skills strategy on launchpad
01/01/2010	HM Government report	Food 2030 - improving skills pg 38
04/01/2010	Scotsman, The {Main}	Ploughing investment into skills vital
04/01/2010	scotsman.com	Ploughing investment into skills vital
05/01/2010	Defra	Speech by Hilary Benn
15/01/2010	National Farmer	Benn calls for culture of professionalism and commends agriskills strategy
19/01/2010	Business Scotsman online	Ploughing investment into skills vital
10/02/2010	Parliament Today online	AgriSkills
10/02/2010	Farmers Guardian (web)	Government launches farm skills strategy
10/02/2010	NFU online	Skills to feed the world and revitalise farming
11/02/2010	FarmingBusiness.cc	£15M scheme to train hundreds in food security
11/02/2010	News-Medical.Net	BBSRC commits £15M to establish training for food security research and development
11/02/2010	News-Medical.Net	BBSRC commits
11/02/2010	fwi.co.uk	Minister backs calls for agricultural centre of excellence
12/02/2010	Farmers Weekly {Main}	Farm life the future of farming looks good
12/02/2010	Swindon Business Newsletter	£15m from research council to train in food security
12/02/2010	Horticulture Week {Main}	Benn to back the AgriSkills food production strategy
12/02/2010	Farm Business (web)	15M scheme to train hundreds in vital food security R
12/02/2010	Farmers Guardian {Main}	There's no substitute for skill
16/02/2010	The Journal (Newcastle) {Main}	Strategy is launched to boost skills of farmers
18/02/2010	national Farmer online	Benn supports launch of major new skills strategy
19/02/2010	Daily Telegraph, The {Weekend}	Cherish our farms, don't tie them in red tape
19/02/2010	Horticulture Week {Main}	Benn lends support to strategy aiming to promote horticulture professionals' skills
23/02/2010	Swindon Advertiser {Main}	£15m given to food security
25/02/2010	Dailyexpress.co.uk	Farmers never used to look like this
25/02/2010	Daily Express {Main}	Farmers never used to look like this
25/02/2010	Yorkshire Post online	Defra praise for farmer's role
28/02/2010	skynews	Fears Over Future Of Farming In UK
28/02/2010	Sky.com/skynews	Fears Over Future Of Farming In UK - inc interview with Richard Longthorp
28/02/2010	Actual News online	Young People 'Needed To Save UK Farming'
28/02/2010	Ananova.com	Young People 'Needed To Save UK Farming'
01/03/2010	British Farmer and Grower	Farm Skills strategy launched

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01/03/2010	Food Manufacture	Skills and training initiatives for trade gather momentum
03/03/2010	FoodManufacture.co.uk	Skills and training initiatives for trade gather momentum
05/03/2010	Farmers Weekly {Main}	Five key issues facing the new NFU line-up
05/03/2010	Actual Team online	Young People 'Needed To Save UK Farming'
01/04/2010	Landworker	New AgriSkills plan announced
01/05/2010	NFU British Farmer and Grower (South West)	The future is afoot Is the farming industry ready to respond to imminent challenges? IN
01/05/2010	NFU British Farmer and Grower (East Anglia)	The future is afoot Is the farming industry ready to respond to imminent challenges' IN
01/05/2010	Labour: a future fair for rural Britain document	Sustainable food, farming and fishing
01/05/2010	British Dairying	Next Generation Dairy Board to focus on skills and training At their first meeting of
01/05/2010	NFU British Farmer and Grower (South East)	Focus on TRAINING & CAREERS Are skills in the spotlight? The AgriSkills Strategy is the
01/05/2010	NFU British Farmer and Grower (South West)	Five minutes, five questions We talk to Richard Longthorp, AgriSkills strategy group chair What was
01/05/2010	NFU British Farmer and Grower (East Anglia)	Five minutes, five questions We talk to Richard Longthorp, AgriSkills strategy group chair What was
01/05/2010	NFU British Farmer and Grower (South East)	Five minutes, five questions We talk to Richard Longthorp, AgriSkills strategy group chair What was
05/05/2010	Farmers Guardian online	New RASE conference to focus on the next generation
07/05/2010	Farmers Guardian	uNrcKcNLfc: Who are the next generation of farmers and what support can be offered to
14/05/2010	Farmers Guardian	Next Generation Conference - what's on MONDAY, MAY 17 Conference Dinner 7pm Guest speakers include
28/05/2010	Farmers Guardian	Tell the world about the professionalism in farming RICHARD Longthorp, chairman of the group responsible
01/07/2010	NFU British Farmer and Grower (North East)	Noteworthy news VARIETY, A CHALLENGE, the chance to learn new skills; these are the things
01/07/2010	The West Hampshire Observer	Hampshire Farming Conference raises farming issues ie Over 80 delegates from rural industries converged on
01/07/2010	NFU British Farmer and Grower (East Anglia)	Communications NFU's Sharon Hockley on which issues have kept the press office busy for the
01/07/2010	NFU British Farmer and Grower (South West)	NFU's Sharon Hockley on which issues have kept the press office busy for the past
01/07/2010	NFU British Farmer and Grower (South West)	Next generation Shaping farming's future workforce With farming needing 60,000 new employees in the next
02/07/2010	Farmers Weekly	Training key to farming future EXCL IK By Caroline Stocks UK agriculture will struggle to
07/07/2010	YFC online	NFYFC News
31/07/2010	Cumberland & Westmorland Herald Series	Cumbrian young farmers win national award CARLISLE YFC members Steven Powley and Michael Nelson won

Annex 2 – Members of the Agri-Skills forum

Forum Members Include

Amy Proctor	University of Newcastle Upon Tyne
Andrew Clark	National Farmers Union
Andrew Counsell	Duchy College
Bill Graham	FACE
Bob Fiddaman	National Farmers Union
Cathy Meredith	Institute of Agricultural Secretaries and administrators
Celia Caulcott	BBSRC
Chris Moody	Landex
David Coakley	Health and Safety Executive
David Henley	Bicton College
David Llewellyn	Harper Adams University College
Denis Chamberlain	RASE
George Case	DART
Ian Russell	Defra
Jack Ward	City and Guilds Land Based Services
John Alliston	Royal Agricultural College
John Royle	National Farmers Union
John Wibberley	Royal Agricultural College Link
Julia Negus	Defra
Laura Biddick-Bray	Lantra Sector Skills Council
Lee Osborne	National Farmers Union
Madge Moore	Lantra Sector Skills Council
Martin Grantley-Smith	AHDB
Martin Wilkinson	Harper Adams University
Meurig Raymond	National Farmers Union
Nathan Raines	Poultec
Nia Huws	VETNET LLN
Peter Rudman	RUMA
Peter Martin	Lantra Sector Skills Council
Philip Lowe	Newcastle University
Richard Clarke	Institute of Agricultural Management
Richard Cooksley	Institute of Agricultural Management
Richard Longthrop	Agri-Skills Strategy Group Chair
Sarah Palmer	NFYFC
Tom Salmon	Grower

Annex 3 – Case Studies

The following are examples of some of the case studies have been used in various publications relating to the Agri-Skills strategy to promote the benefits of training.

David Hugill, of Raikes Farm,

“There’s a ‘hidden’ benefit in training that some might not realise - and enjoy - until they experience it themselves. Send anyone on a good training course and they will come back more motivated. They will be enthusiastic about what they are doing, what they have learned, and that will be passed on to other people.”

Tom Salmon of Hedon Salads

“Apprenticeships were always in my mind. I wasn’t born into horticulture and worked my way up. I realised if you work hard and get the right qualifications, you can progress. I wanted to get that principle into my own business - I wanted to empower the workforce.”

“Training raises self-esteem, gives people confidence, it helps them improve at work but also integration - the same applies to our workers wherever they are from. Everyone feels part of the business and output improves. For the team, training helps break down barriers, everyone works together, they help each other. We have a responsibility to give and get the best from our workforce.

For the business itself, the benefits if you carry out the training and assessments correctly are huge - you save costs, improve standards and ultimately you won’t need to employ as many people. You have greater consistency and quality, a well-trained and motivated workforce, turnover of staff falls, and they know the business cares for them.”

“We want people we can teach who are determined and make an effort to improve,”

Jackie Newman, HR Manager. PD Hook

“Training has always been important at PD Hook. We get people asking for training, they are proud when they achieve a qualification, they feel they belong more within the company, within their team, and we have given them something back,”

“We always have a presentation to celebrate successes and the MD James Hook, the son of the founders Patrick and Joan, leads by example. He is behind the whole training initiative here and keen to drive up the standards of the industry and get things moving forward.”

“One of our strengths is that we are good at changing and good at training. To encourage people into this business, training is paramount, as well as for animal welfare, biological security, health and safety etc.

“PD Hook was the first company to sign up to PMTI which has set minimum standards for different categories of workers. Traditionally families have followed each other into the business and we still have different generations working here. But we also want to bring in totally new people, so for example we started a scholarship scheme 18 months ago. Two students from Harper Adams Agricultural College will be coming in September for a year, working three months in each region before returning to their final college year. Then they come to us to work in the area of their choice. We are potentially looking for them to become our area managers, though we also need farm managers and other staff.

“We still have two scholarship places open this autumn. Young people are the future but that’s not to say that we wouldn’t be interested in talking to a 30-something coming from another industry...”

“There are lots of benefits of training for PD Hook, one of them financial because people will be more aware of what’s required of them, and doing their job better. The system is structured and follows set standards which will ultimately raise standards across the company.

“The industry will also be seen to be doing something about welfare which is bound to be positive. Here we already have our own welfare officer and take it very seriously. This is formalising everything.

“Our staff think PMTI is great. Many have already done NVQs and others have never taken an exam or got a certificate. If somebody gets an NVQ, they are really up for more training, it shows you take an interest in them and they take more interest in their work. If I was talking to you two years from now, potentially most of the staff would have an NVQ - all our farm and hatchery managers, assistants, supervisors and workers.

“We already have a lot of training running throughout the year. We have four apprentices half way through their three-year training with Poultec. Some of our staff started an Institute of Leadership and Management course in May because they need to manage people and situations as well as chickens, time management, project management and budgeting. Our accountancy staff also go through training with the AAT, Association of Accounting Technicians.

“In February we started rolling out our health and safety risk assessment training which will involve 400 staff over 12 months, and several managers have been trained to do ‘toolbox talks’, which are 15-minute tea break talks on subjects such as ladder safety, biosecurity and dipping feet. That’s more about learning than training, but it serves as a reminder and reinforcement of safety at work.

“For myself, I have done driver training to show me what advanced driving is all about, and some health and safety courses because I wanted to know what the trainers were teaching **the staff**. Training is always thought-provoking. It makes you sit back and take note of what you are doing and you ask yourself ‘should I be doing this?’.”

Sean and Alan Myers, Dairy Farmers

“Our apprentice is with us two or three days a week and spends the rest of the time with neighbouring farmers. The fact that we have been able to share him works well, as he gets plenty of experience and as farmers we can manage the demands of training someone from scratch.

“There’s more to being a trainer than you would think and in some ways we’ve had a steep learning curve but it is vital that we make the most of this opportunity to bring new people into the industry”

James Price, Oxfordshire Farmer

“I’d strongly advise young people to make the most of college to develop their skills. For me it was communication, which makes the everyday running of the farm a little easier when dealing with suppliers, customers and landlords. Post college, it is important to keep skills up-to-date, through courses and further qualifications.

“I truly believe that further education is the natural choice for all young men and women wanting to work in this radically changing industry, where qualifications are advantageous rather than necessary. Young people wanting a career in farming are in the fortunate position that they will learn new skills and competencies at college which better prepares them for the challenges ahead, and they can keep their parents’ skills up-to-date at the same time, ensuring the business stays as productive, efficient and profitable as possible.”