

Agriculture

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NEWSLETTER

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Now is the time to be thinking of a career in agriculture!

British agriculture must recruit 60,000 new entrants in the next ten years to maintain its current workforce. It looks like farming must recruit in excess of 6,000 a year for the next decade, of which perhaps 1,000 each year will be for salaried management roles.

The available statistics indicate that only between 50% and 70% of the recruits needed by employers are currently emerging from further and higher education, creating a shortfall in numbers coming forward.

The Royal Agricultural Society of England has commissioned a report on the issues surrounding new entrant recruitment into farming and related sectors. Report author, Alan Spedding, says: "Farming must get across to potential entrants that the industry is complex, technical, challenging and satisfying."

The report acknowledges that the NFU made a start through its Why Young People

The face of Welsh lamb

Hybu Cig Cymru, the Wales-based red meat promotion agency has chosen 26-year old Myrddin Davies, an Aberystwyth graduate who completed a BSc (Hons) degree in Agriculture with Business Studies, as its industry flag carrier – the first ever 'Face of Welsh Lamb'.

An independent panel of judges, which included the Michelin-starred chef Antony Demetre, selected him after sheep farmers from throughout Wales competed for the honour. He will now act as an ambassador for Welsh lamb across the whole of the UK.

Matter to Farming campaign launched in 2007 but agriculture in its broadest sense is unlikely to make a major impact as an industry unless all sectors – farming, agricultural engineering, agricultural science and all the support sectors upstream and down-stream from the farm, come together to promote their career potential.

Mr Spedding says that predicting the numbers of people the industry will require as new entrants is difficult but the figures calculated are not exaggerated since they do not take account of the managerial, skilled and unskilled jobs that will be created in ancillary and support industries such as agricultural engineering, crop and animal protection, veterinary, merchanting, retail and extension.

Commenting on the report, RASE Director of Communications and Marketing, Denis Chamberlain, said "Farming and its related sectors must attract the numbers needed to ensure that one of the biggest and certainly one of the most vital industries in the UK maintains its ability to produce more food, manage the environment, produce renewable fuels and play a significant role in coping with climate change."

'As a patriotic Welshman and part of a traditional farming community it is an honour to be able to promote Wales' world-famous lamb' says Myrddin, who farms 73 hectares (180 acres) with his parents, Gwynfor and Myra, near Conwy.

'I hope the public will find my passion for rearing top quality lamb infectious. Promoting a better understanding of this unique product and the crucial role Welsh farmers play in producing top quality food for the nation's dinner plates, while also looking after the environment, is an exciting prospect.'

IBERS ABERYSTWYTH

Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences

List of Courses

BSc Honours

Agriculture
Agriculture with Animal Science
Agriculture with Countryside Management
Agriculture with Marketing
Agriculture with Business Studies
Organic Agriculture (1 year top up)

Foundation Degree

Agriculture

Higher National Diploma

Agriculture
Agriculture with Business
Agriculture and Countryside Conservation

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Myrddin Davies

Sam achieves RABDF recognition

Second year Agriculture with Countryside Management student Sam Pearson was runner-up in the prestigious Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers / Dairy Crest Dairy Student of the Year Award 2009 in London in June.

Sam was one of 17 students nationwide nominated by their College or University on the basis of their dairying interest and abilities who attended an interview at Reaseheath College in Cheshire earlier on in the year. The candidates had to go through a process of being 'interviewed' by a panel for the post of Herd Manager at Reaseheath – having been provided with

production and financial figures for the herd and taken on a farm walk before being expected to outline their management plans for the herd if they were given the post.

The final four candidates each had to give a presentation on how a dairy farm could best meet the needs of processors and then faced tough questions from the assembled farming press at the Farmers' Club in late June, before judges picked out their winning student.

Although pipped for the award by Luke Thompson of Plumpton College, Sam acquitted himself very well, picked up a prize of £250 and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. 'Although it was a frightening experience to stand up in front of such important judges and the farming press, I

really enjoyed myself and the experience I have gained will help me with my final year studies next year and has prepared me well for the ordeal of job interviews to come.'

Lecturer Dr Mike Rose, who accompanied Sam to London said 'For a student who has only recently completed the second year of his degree course, Sam was a credit to the University and can be very proud of his achievements. The University is invited to nominate a candidate for this valued dairy industry award each year and it provides our students with a marvellous opportunity to pit themselves against the best students from all the other Universities and Colleges in a 'real' environment and to meet some very distinguished representatives of the dairy industry.'

Life is sweet

British Sugar Overseas (BSO) produces sugar in Europe (esp Poland), Africa and China. In October 2007 BSO formed a new joint venture in northern China where it currently produces 500,000 tonnes of cane sugar annually (total UK production is approx 1 million tonnes).

Ex-student Nick Neumann was selected to join the team after several interviews, a role playing exercise as well as an introductory trip to China last autumn.

Nick comes from a non-farming background but, being born in rural Pembrokeshire, quickly gained an interest in agriculture. "I have worked on farms from a very early age and gained a BSc (Hons) degree in agriculture from Aberystwyth in 2000," said Nick. "I feel very proud, privileged and honoured to be chosen from so many applicants all over the UK to take part in a great challenge to educate the Chinese people about Western farming practice and technology. We also aim to improve the quality of life and wealth for the local people in rural north-east China. It will be quite a difference from my everyday life as a herd manager in Pembrokeshire."



Environmental benefits of low input farming

The Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) has been awarded €226,000 to measure the environmental benefits that derive from farms in Less Favoured Areas.

The traditional image of the countryside is of rolling hills, blossoming hedgerows, soaring birds and idly grazing sheep and cattle. Over recent years, increasing emphasis on productivity and intensive lowland farming has inevitably diminished the biodiversity of such intensively farmed areas.

With more interest generally in sustainable ways of living, the Europe-wide BioBio Indicators for biodiversity in organic and low-input farming systems research project led by Dr Peter Dennis at IBERS will be looking at the value that is put on farming in what is termed Less Favoured

Areas – remote upland and hill farming lands across Europe, and measuring the benefits that derive from them, which on the whole are not appreciated.

Dr Dennis, an expert in biodiversity and grazing systems, said: "We as a group of scientists are suggesting a number of ways of measuring beyond agricultural production to look both at the health of the soils and ecosystems that support farming and the broader range of beneficial activities which farmers are carrying out in the countryside."

Ultimately, the project will put forward recommendations to the European Commission in relation to assessing agricultural sustainability and the contribution made by farming to the Commission's biodiversity and conservation objectives.

The results will also add to information that the public is receiving about the way that their food is produced, which could provide a marketing benefit for the farmers

concerned. They will be able to show that they are providing a healthy food product, but also one that is grown on land that is rich in nature, and where the richness of the countryside is not being depleted.



Dr Peter Dennis