



House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

DAIRY ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

Inquiry on skills and labour in the dairy industry

Key messages from Session 1

APPG members Simon Hoare MP, Sheryll Murray MP, David Simpson MP, Tom Elliott MP, Lord Grantchester

In attendance Justin Young (Cotteswold Dairy), Pauline Hogg (Arla Foods), Mike King (RABDF), Sian Davies (NFU), Caroline Leroux (Dairy APPG)

- Promoting the dairy industry as a career-rich sector;
- Getting farmers into schools and school children onto farms to foster dialogue;
- Government support to promote vocation awards celebrating British values, skills and artisanship;
- Unlocking funding to support the development of SMEs.

- 1 Dairy farming jobs are not perceived as particularly sexy and appealing jobs. Production jobs have a slightly better reputation.
- 2 Some processing plants can have unique or complex technology. It's important to have proper mentors and resources to train new entrants. Programmes such as Reaseheath have very beneficial long term benefits as they help companies grow their own talents.
- 3 Although 5,000 apprenticeships are available, it can be hard to fill all seats. Dairy farming involves long and unsociable hours, working with large animals, difficult weather or working conditions. Another obstacle is access to housing / accommodation in rural areas.
- 4 Working with schools – the industry believes it is very important to educate children about food and farming in schools. Agriculture and food production tend to have a negative reputation in schools and there is a real need to change mind sets about food and farming. Dairy farming and processing require a very wide range of skills from farm to fridge. It seems that highly skilled jobs are easier to fill while low skilled jobs are much harder to fill. There is still a lot to do to promote dairy careers in schools.
- 5 Learning from others – Over countries such as New Zealand have excellent programmes in place to promote dairy jobs as a career of choice. The industry needs to change the narrative and promote dairy as a sector of leadership, entrepreneurship.
- 6 It is important to stem the flow of people exiting the industry and focus on new entrants from non-farming background.
- 7 There are many casual and seasonal job opportunities on farm. Many part-time jobs as well, allowing workers to pursue further education on the side. More colleges should offer agriculture courses. Many casual workers develop an emotional attachment to the

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companies, especially small businesses. They enjoy coming back and feel like they're an inherent part of the company.

- 8 Promotion of milk & dairy in schools – promoting dairy careers goes hand in hand with promotion milk and dairy products. If milk and dairy are part of the school day, children are more likely to grow up with a better understanding of dairy. The industry needs to challenge what people think of milk and develop positive terminology on dairy. It is also very important to ensure the EU school milk scheme is protected in the UK post-Brexit.
- 9 Promotion overall is very important and the industry needs to challenge negative media stories and encourage positive stories.
- 10 Other sectors are perceived as very appealing (IT, aerospace, cars), and food and farming should be portrayed in the same light.
- 11 Some jobs in dairy require transferable vocational skills which creates competition with other sectors. For example, a skilled candidate for a position in dairy marketing can be a good candidate for other marketing positions in other FMCG companies. Dairy must compete with FMCG which in turns competes with other sectors for highly skilled jobs.
- 12 Retention of talents is key for succession planning. Some positions in processing require non-transferable skills working with specific technology. This means investing in training for new staff. Therefore, retaining qualified staff is very important and helpful.
- 13 Figuring out what's available on farm in terms of jobs, skills and training can be confusing. A centralised portal with easy access to this information could be helpful.
- 14 Access to overseas labour and guarantees for foreign labour already present in the UK are major concerns for all sides of the industry. The industry is wondering whether its workforce is about to disappear. Casual workers usually stay anywhere between two to five years before moving back to their country. The industry wonders how hard it might become to get both these skilled and unskilled workers in the country post-Brexit. It is essential to provide a secure environment for staff. Brexit might also act as a deterrent for overseas people to come work in the UK as people have no guarantee how long or whether they could stay in the UK.
- 15 It can take up to ten years to train new entrants properly when trained foreign labour can be operational very quickly. The industry also notes that foreign workers can be more dedicated, more prepared for food and farming jobs, with a positive attitude and approach to the work.

Key challenges

- Education
- Rural planning – access to housing
- Adding value through processing
- Promotion
- Public sector procurement
- Challenging perceptions on health benefits
- Access to foreign workforce