

PR1382 – 29 July 2010

Value of land-based workers

The environmental and land-based sector offers a huge range of hands-on roles, both paid and voluntary. Whether you want to work in a living environment, care for animals and wildlife, nurture and grow plants and trees, be creative, or want to repair and maintain equipment, there is something for people of all ages and abilities.

Agriculture is the world's biggest business, and is at the core of the rural economy in Northern Ireland. It plays a central role in making sure the UK has enough food to eat and sustaining the environment. Greater emphasis is being placed on healthy eating, and a desire for a diverse diet impacts on the demand for organic and free range produce. There have been other technological developments too. Today's land managers use an array of high-tech machinery to reduce manual labour, optimise production and minimise waste. Farming is a skilled profession; it has a very strong demand for highly trained, educated and well motivated people to enter its ranks and offers excellent opportunities.

Production horticulture (which incorporates the production of edible crops, ornamental production and garden centres) has also moved on; while the use of machinery has reduced the labour requirements to harvest certain crops, others require an influx of seasonal labour that needs to be project managed, supervised and trained by skilled people.

Highly skilled land-based service engineers, capable of using computerised diagnostic equipment to troubleshoot problems, are required to maintain the complex range of machinery used by a wide range of industries.

The benefits of well-designed gardens and urban spaces are being increasingly recognised so cultivating the next generation of landscape and garden practitioners is crucial. Our green spaces contain all the facets of horticulture, requiring groundsmen/greenkeepers for sports surfaces, arborists for trees, hard and soft landscapers for town and gardens, and conservationists to ensure preservation.

David Seffen, Lantra's Partnership Manager said: The contribution of the land-based and environmental industries to the economy is pivotal; indeed occupations within the sector have weathered the economic downturn much better than those in the construction or service industries. Given the westernisation of diets, the forecasted increase in the world's population, and the ageing workforce in the sector, the replacement demands for those retiring or exiting the sector is high. This will provide an opportunity for high calibre individuals to enter many of the aforementioned occupations.

Lantra is responsible for supporting the training and skills needs of each of the industries it represents and is working to ensure that they receive sufficient support. For more information about Lantra, or to find out how Lantra can support your business, please visit www.lantra.co.uk, telephone 0845 707 8007 or email connect@lantra.co.uk.

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EDITORS NOTES:

" Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector is licensed by the UK government to drive forward the new skills, training and business development agenda for the sector.

" Lantra represents 17 industries: agricultural crops; agricultural livestock; animal care; animal technology; aquaculture; environmental conservation; equine; farriery; fencing; fisheries management; floristry; game and wildlife management; land-based engineering; horticulture, landscape and sports turf; production horticulture; trees and timber and veterinary nursing. For more information see www.lantra.co.uk

" In Northern Ireland, Lantra represents the interests of approximately 19,000 businesses which employ around 63,000 employees (approximately 9% of the workforce).