

AGROECOLOGY PATHWAYS HORTICULTURE

for startups and scale ups
as a part of the new entrant
support scheme



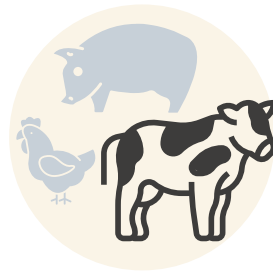
Careers in horticulture are diverse and can include the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, seeds, herbs, mushrooms, seaweeds and non-food crops such as ornamental plants and flowers.



AGROECOLOGY PATHWAYS



HORTICULTURE



DAIRY/LIVESTOCK



ARABLE



This document outlines the agroecological career pathway for the horticultural industry and offers information, tips and links to resources and further sources of support.

This is a PDF version of an interactive pathway located on the LWA website and was made to support new entrants planning to start up or progress their agroecological businesses, as part of the Defra funded New Entrant Support pilot.

VOLUNTEERING



Volunteering is unpaid time working on a farm or market garden. This can take the form of regular volunteering days (weekly, monthly) or intensive periods from a few weeks to a whole growing season.

Experience needed: None

Qualifications needed: None

Skills needed: None

Qualifications gained: None

Pay/benefits attached: Many farms offer lunch and refreshments on the day of volunteering and longer term opportunities often offer food and/or accommodation in exchange for labour

Where does this lead me? After volunteering you will be eligible to go on to get further training, an accreditation or qualification, paid work as a Seasonal Worker/Grower or start your own business.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Short term or ongoing volunteering opportunities

Volunteering can be useful to you if you have the time and resources to support yourself whilst taking on an unpaid opportunity.

It is a very open and flexible way of gaining skills as

you can choose how often you attend volunteering sessions. Many farms and market gardens across Wales, Scotland & England offer regular volunteering days on a weekly or monthly basis while some offer longer-term opportunities.

Volunteering is a great way to:

- ✓ Gain hands-on experience
- ✓ Network with people with similar interests
- ✓ Get a feel for the different areas of horticulture
- ✓ Build confidence on the land
- ✓ Develop a relationship to Nature
- ✓ Gain skills relevant to jobs and further horticultural opportunities

Longer term volunteering opportunities

Longer term opportunities are more intensive ways to gain access to skills and experience on the land. They usually require a set amount of time commitment to living and working on a project (usually from a week upwards) and work on the basis of a work exchange i.e. your time and labour exchanged for on-farm accommodation and/or food. This minimises your outgoings during this period.

Longer term opportunities can be great for anyone with the resources to support themselves during this time and offer:

- ✓ An intensive understanding of running a farm business/market garden

- ✓ A high level of responsibility in a short time
- ✓ Access to a large variety of tasks
- ✓ An immersive experience of living and working on the land

Sources of support

We recognise that starting work on the land can be a daunting prospect for those who have had little access to nature and outdoor spaces previously and that many do not have the time and resources available to engage in unpaid opportunities.

Organisations like the [Landworkers' Alliance](#), support members who are often marginalised in landwork and have unequal access to opportunities. Members organise a LGBTQIA+ working group (called Out On The Land), a BPOC (Black and People of Colour) working group (called REAL) and a youth arm (called FLAME).

[LION](#) or Land In Our Names are a Black-led collective who also work to support those looking to get into landwork but are unable to access traditional routes.

[Ubele](#) also offers sources of support and empowerment for Black and Minoritised communities in the UK.

[Shared Assets](#) work to reimagine what we can do with land and support communities to gain access.

HOW TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES?

Short-term or ongoing volunteering opportunities

Many horticultural farms and market gardens around the UK practising agroecology or other ecologically-based practices such as organics, biodynamics or permaculture, will offer volunteer days on a weekly or monthly basis. We have outlined some information on how to gain access to horticultural volunteering opportunities below.

- Go to your local farmers market and speak to farmers/growers directly to find out about any opportunities they offer – this is a great way to meet like minded people in your area and express your interest to learn locally
- Search online by typing in your location followed by 'agroecology' 'farms or market gardens' or 'regenerative'. Take a look at websites or social media accounts that come up because they will often advertise any available opportunities via these channels. You could also email or direct message them to express your interest if it is not clear from your online search.
- Signing up to local facebook groups will often point you in the direction of local farms/market gardens practising agroecology – the [Landworkers' Alliance](#) has regional Facebook groups linked here: South West England, North West England, South East England, East Anglia, Cymru/Wales, Midlands
- You can also sign up to newsletters and visit the websites of relevant organisations such as the [Landworkers' Alliance](#), [CSA Network](#), [Permaculture Association](#), [Soil Association](#), [Social Farms and Gardens](#) and [Sustain](#) to get signposted to their members volunteering opportunities
- [Social Farms and Gardens](#) have a directory of their members across the UK who offer volunteering opportunities
- Here is a list of a few farms and market gardens around the UK to get you going: [Parc Y Dderwen](#) (Llangolman, West Wales), [OrganicLea](#) (London, England), [Growing Communities](#) (London, England), [Granville community kitchen](#) (London, England), [Eves Hill Market Garden](#) (Aylsham, England),



[Aweside Farm](#) (Arlington, England), [East Neuk Market Garden](#) (Fife, Scotland), [COCA CSA](#) (St. Davids, South Wales), [Kindling Trust](#) (Manchester, England), [Henbant](#) (Caernarfon, North Wales), [Cae Tan](#) (Gower, South Wales), [Moss Valley market garden](#) (Sheffield, England), [Platt Fields](#) (Manchester, England), [Myco Manchester](#) (Manchester, England), [Lauriston Farm](#) (Edinburgh, Scotland) and many more!



Long-term volunteering opportunities

- If you are looking for more intensive, longer term volunteering opportunities, [Wwoofing](#) (see [Wwoof UK](#)) is a very common entry point for those working in agroecology.
- [HelpX](#) is another site offering longer term volunteering opportunities on horticultural projects around the UK and internationally

TRAINING



Training opportunities can take the form of non-accredited courses, traineeships, internships and informal apprenticeships on a farm or market garden. Offered via distance learning, classroom learning or a mix of on-farm and off-farm learning. Training opportunities can be anything from a day to 18 months long.

Experience needed: Traineeships require experience in a range of the day-to-day activities involved in a career in horticulture such as weeding, planting, sowing, irrigation, mulching, composting etc. Some courses have no prerequisites whereas others also require a level of previous practical experience.

Qualifications needed: Training opportunities will vary on entry requirements, many do not require a qualification, however an entry level qualification in horticulture would be advantageous (see the 'Qualifications and Accreditations' section of this pathway). Most courses have no prerequisites.

Skills needed: A commitment to learning about horticultural production methods and skills in the day to day running of a market garden are essential. Many training opportunities will also require skills such as an ability to work well within a team, using initiative, managing diverse workloads and good organisational and practical capabilities.

Qualifications gained: Many opportunities will offer a certificate on completion of your course, traineeship, internship or informal apprenticeship but

be aware that these certificates are not formally accredited certificates and are simply an acknowledgement of your training (Please see the next section 'Qualifications and Accreditations' for more details on formally accredited learning).

Pay/benefits attached: Some training opportunities will offer a small wage or stipend, on-farm as well as classroom based training, food and/or on-farm accommodation.

Where does this lead me? After completing a course, traineeship, internship or informal apprenticeship you can go on to undertake further training in a specific area of horticulture such as seed production, gain a qualification or formal accreditation or get paid work as a Seasonal Grower or Horticultural Worker on a farm or market garden. Many also go on to start their own land based businesses.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Traineeships, internships or informal apprenticeships

On-farm or mixed training via a traineeship, internship or informal apprenticeship is a great way to:

- ✓ Level up your volunteering experience
- ✓ Gain valuable skills and knowledge in agroecological horticulture
- ✓ Live (in some cases) and learn on a successful land based business

- ✓ Take on many of the day-to-day responsibilities
- ✓ Learn practical aspects of running a market garden
- ✓ Gain understanding in the business related tasks involved in running a market garden from ordering and planting plans to processing and selling
- ✓ Understand and gain experience in the diversity of tasks involved in a whole growing season

Because traineeships, internships and informal apprenticeships are not accredited, the level, type and quality of training provided will vary from farm to farm. Make sure to do your research into the farm before applying to make sure it is the right opportunity for you. You could even ask the farm or market garden to speak to previous or current trainees about their experiences and what to expect.

Funding, access and sources of support

Training opportunities are useful to you should you have the time and resources available to take on an unpaid exchange or low waged opportunity. Some training opportunities are grant funded and can therefore offer a wage, however these are hard to come by and are extremely competitive. The majority of training opportunities of this nature will offer a small stipend, on-farm accommodation and/or food on top of the training in exchange for your time and labour commitment, so your outgoings during this time are usually kept to a minimum.

We understand that this is often not enough to support many people to take up these opportunities and so organisations like the [LWA](#) and [LION](#) work to support those looking to get into agroecology but are unable to access these traditional routes.

Non-accredited training courses

Courses (from a day to a year long) are a great way to get access to:

- ✓ Gain relevant skills at any stage of your career in agroecology
- ✓ Access valuable expertise in a focused learning environment
- ✓ Gain access to useful skills quickly
- ✓ Learn in-depth knowledge of a particular subject
- ✓ Get skills and experience to put into practice immediately



Courses are paid for training opportunities and so it is not an option for many without the resources to learn in this way. Some courses are offered for free, have funding available or are offered on a sliding scale payment option so what you pay reflects your income band. Email the course leader or provider if these opportunities are not apparent on their website.

HOW TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES?

Traineeships, internships and informal apprenticeships

- Traineeships, internships and informal apprenticeships are usually offered directly through the farm/market garden and so joining your local Facebook groups and searching online for agroecological farms and market gardens near to you will be the best way to direct you to their current opportunities. Start by typing in your location followed by 'agroecology' 'traineeship' 'internship' 'farm or market garden'. Most opportunities are advertised at the end of the year before the next season starts. Check out these Landworkers' Alliance regional Facebook groups as a good starting point: South West England, North West England, South East England, East Anglia, Cymru/Wales, Midlands

- Many farms and market gardens will advertise their opportunities on mailing lists and online notice boards or forums, so signing up to the newsletters of organisations and networks like the [Landworkers' Alliance](#), [CSA Network](#), [Permaculture Association](#), [Soil Association](#), [Social Farms and Gardens](#), [Biodynamic Association](#) and [Sustain](#) is a great way to find opportunities across the country in one place.
- Some places currently offering on-farm traineeships and internships are: [Abby Home Farm](#) (Cirencester, England), [Growing communities](#), (London, England), [OrganicLea](#) (London, England), the [Garden Museum](#) (London, England), [Schumacher College](#) (Totnes, England), the [Fold Farm](#) (Bransford, England), [Centre for Alternative Technology](#) (Pantperthog, West Wales), [Chagfood CSA](#) (Newton Abbot, England), [Câe Tan CSA](#) (Gower, South Wales), [School Farm CSA](#) (Totnes, England), [Biodynamic Agricultural College](#) (multiple locations), [Eves Hill Market Garden](#) (Norwich, England) (Sheffield, England), [Tamar Grow Local](#) (Cornwall, England), [Mach Maethlon](#) (Machynlleth, Wales), [LESS](#) (Lancaster, England).
- The [Farmstart](#) network is a fantastic training opportunity for you if you are considering starting your own farm business. You are given a small plot of land attached to a larger farm business and join an incubator programme which allows you to kick start your own farm business whilst getting support, training and mentorship in the first 1-2 years of your business.
- [Roots to Work](#) is job site in good food that often advertises traineeship opportunities around the UK
- Mentoring is also a valuable tool for knowledge transference in this sector. The Landworkers' Alliance offers [mentoring opportunities](#) which will be made available to members.
- You could also reach out to farmers or landworkers in your area to ask if they would be willing to teach

you the specific skills and/or knowledge you are looking for via an exchange.



Non-accredited training courses (online, on-farm or mixed learning)

There are courses available in many aspects of agroecology and horticulture around the UK.

- The [Apricot Centre](#) offers courses in an [Introduction to Agroforestry](#), [Permaculture Design](#) and more.
- The [Biodynamic Agricultural College](#) offers a course in an [Introduction to Biodynamic Agriculture](#)
- [Chagfood CSA](#) offers a course in [Setting up and Scaling up CSA](#)
- Ben Law offers a course in [Sustainable Woodland Management](#)
- [Schumacher College](#) offer a [Practical Residency In Sustainable Horticulture](#)
- [Black Mountain College](#) offer a range of short courses
- [FarmEd](#) offer many short courses particularly useful for farm managers or if you are looking to progress your skills for your own land based business, including [Holistic Management Fundamentals](#) (in partnership with 3LM), [Herbal Ley Establishment & Management](#) (in partnership with Cotswolds Seeds), [Market Gardening: From Soil to Sales](#), [Unearthing Earthworms](#), [Holistic Financial Planning](#) (in partnership with 3LM), [Wellbeing & Communication](#) (in partnership with the The Farming Community Network (FCN)), [Leadership for a Sustainable Future](#), [Regenerative Farming: Soil Health Fundamentals](#) (in partnership with Niels Corfield), [Regenerative Farming: Soil & Crop Health](#) (in partnership with Niels Corfield), [Winter Fruit Tree Pruning](#) (with

Andy Howard of the Heritage Fruit Tree Co.), [Fruit Tree Grafting](#) (with Andy Howard of the Heritage Fruit Tree Co.), [An Introduction to Care Farming](#), [How to Set Up a Care Farm](#), [Orchard Design](#) (with Andy Howard of the Heritage Fruit Tree Co.), [Fruit Tree Maintenance](#) (with Andy Howard of the Heritage Fruit Tree Co.), [Summer Fruit Tree Pruning](#) (with Andy Howard of the Heritage Fruit Tree Co.), [Holistic Ecological Monitoring & Land Planning](#) (in partnership with 3LM)

- Feed Bristol offer a [Grow Leader Course](#)
- Fresh Start Land Enterprise offer a course in [Fresh Start Academies](#)
- Horticulture Correspondence College offer a [Organic Gardening Course](#)
- Organic Growers Alliance offer a course in [Starting a sustainable Horticulture Business](#) and a [Farm planning programme](#)
- Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh offer a RGBE Certificate in [Practical Horticulture](#)
- Small Woods offer an [Introduction to Woodland Management](#) and [Introduction to Hedge Laying](#)
- Soil Association offer the [Future Growers](#) course
- The Real Food Garden offer a course on [growing your own veg](#)
- Trill Farm offer courses in [Improving soil health on horticultural operations](#), [Pruning and grafting apple trees](#), [Intro to Market Gardening](#), [Salad growing all year round](#)
- The CSA Network and Cae Tan in South Wales offer a [Grow your own CSA](#) course
- Plumpton College offer many short courses
- The [Centre for Alternative Technology](#) offer many short courses

- The Kindling trust offer the [Commercial Growers Course](#)
- The Lynbreck Croft offer short courses
- The Gaia Foundation's [Seed Sovereignty Programme](#) and wider seed networks offer training specifically in seed saving and seed production for those already working in horticulture
- This short course in [Agroecology](#) can be useful for the fundamentals in agroecological practice
- Emerson College offers a practical course in [Biodynamic Gardening](#)



QUALIFICATIONS AND ACCREDITATIONS



Gaining an accredited certificate or qualification in horticulture via online, in-person, practical or mixed courses (offering both on and off farm learning) or via a formal accredited apprenticeship.

Experience needed: The experience required for these certificates will vary depending on the level of the certificate, however some ask for previous on-farm work experience (paid work or volunteering) to show a basic understanding of the type of tasks involved in horticulture

Qualifications needed: The requirements for each certificate will vary and some have no prerequisites, however you are usually required to have a minimum of a GCSE or equivalent in maths and English (or Welsh if learning in Cymru). This is related to the coursework and examination elements of the accreditation. If you are looking at getting a Masters or PhD certificate then the qualification requirements are much higher.

Skills needed: The level of skill needed for each certificate will vary, however most will require proficiency in written and spoken English or Welsh (depending on where you take your course), ability to lead self study, capacity to undertake coursework and examinations as well as carry out practical tasks, a good level of organisational skill and an interest in horticultural practices

Qualifications gained: This will vary depending on the level of course you choose. This can be anything from an introductory Level 1 in Horticulture, to a higher level NVQ certificate, to an MA, MSc or PhD

Pay/benefits attached: Accredited training will be provided at a nationalised standard and quality and will be internationally recognised

Where does this lead me? After gaining a qualification many go on to further their training via on-farm placements and courses in other areas of agroecology and horticulture (see previous 'Training' section), get paid work as a Seasonal Grower, Horticultural Worker or Head Grower or start their own business.

THINGS TO CONSIDER?

Accreditations and qualifications can:

- ✓ Validate your commitment to horticulture and building a career in this sector
- ✓ Certify a certain level of knowledge, skill and experience
- ✓ Level up your skills
- ✓ Offer invaluable, in-depth insight and expertise into specific elements of horticulture, agroecology or running a land based business
- ✓ Give you the opportunity to meet like minded people

Undertaking an accreditation or qualification in horticulture can be time and money intensive and so each course should be considered carefully.

Is it going to teach you what you want to learn?
Is there a way you can learn practical skills alongside your course if it doesn't offer this opportunity? Is this the best way to learn the skills you need? Are there any grant or funding opportunities available to you?

Funding, access and sources of support

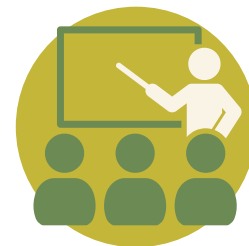
Many education centres will offer support in finding funding for your course and a few offer them at a low cost or even sometimes free for those unable to access them otherwise. The [Landworkers' Alliance](#), [Ubele](#) and [LION](#) are sources of support for accessing land based opportunities particularly for Marginalised and Minoritised communities.

HOW TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES?

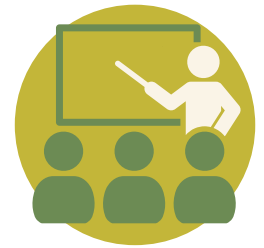
There are not yet many specific agroecology based accredited apprenticeships in the horticultural sector in the UK, so we have added some accredited opportunities based in organics, biodynamics and regenerative practices to the list below. We have also included accredited courses and qualifications via more conventional colleges, education bodies and centres (who may promote the use of pesticides or chemical inputs), however this is with the understanding that this knowledge can be transferred into the agroecological sector. It may be worth considering a short course in agroecology or regenerative practices alongside any conventional horticultural course (see the 'Trainings' section for other non-accredited learning opportunities).

Some accredited on-farm apprenticeships in agroecology are currently being developed so it is worth keeping up to date with organisations in the sector who are likely to notify their members and subscribers via newsletters and social media channels: [Landworkers' Alliance](#), [CSA Network](#), [Permaculture Association](#), [Soil Association](#) and [Social Farms and Gardens](#).

Levels 1-6 / College level certificates



- The [Apricot Centre](#) offer [Level 3 Regenerative Land Based Systems: Food and Farming](#) and [Level 4 Regenerative Land Based SYstems: agroecology](#)
- The [Biodynamic College](#) offer a [level 3 Diploma in Biodynamic Farming and Growing – work based training](#), as well as accredited [work based training programmes](#) similar to an apprenticeship
- [Organiclea](#) offer courses in [Food Growing level 1](#), [Practical Horticulture level 2](#), [Work-based Horticulture level 1](#), [Work based horticulture level 1 and 2](#), [Level 2 Horticulture \(Extended Certificate\)](#)
- [Eves Hill Market Garden](#) offer [Level 1 courses in Garden Design, Organic Veg Growing and Kitchen Gardening](#)
- [Black Mountain College](#) offers a course in [Level 2 Regenerative Horticulture, Nature Recovery](#)
- [FarmEd](#) offer many non-accredited courses and this accredited course in [Wellbeing & Communication](#) (in partnership with the [The Farming Community Network \(FCN\)](#))
- [Plumpton College](#) offer [Level 3 Crop Technician \(market gardening\)](#) and accredited [apprenticeships in Horticulture](#)
- [School Farm CSA](#) offer [Level 1 and 2 Practical Horticulture](#)
- [Kindling trust](#) offer [level 2 work-based Horticulture](#)
- Across the country offer courses with some sustainable elements in [RHS Level 2 Principles of Horticulture](#), [RHS Level 3 Certificate in Practical Horticulture](#), [RHS Level 3 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth, Health and Applied Propagation](#), [RHS Level 3 Diploma in the Principles and Practices of Horticulture](#).



Higher level qualifications (Undergraduate and Postgraduate)

- Schumacher College offer courses in Sustainable Food and Farming Enterprise, Regenerative Food and Farming, Regenerative Food, Farming and Enterprise, Engaged Ecology, Ecological Design Thinking, Regenerative Economics and Movement, Mind and Ecology
- Black Mountain College offers a BA (Hons) Sustainable Futures: Arts, Ecology and Systems Change
- Centre for Alternative Technology offer post graduate certificates in Sustainable Food and Natural Resources, Sustainability and Ecology,
- Harper Adams offer a postgraduate course in Agroecology
- Coventry University (CAWR) offer a MSc in Agroecology, Water and Food Sovereignty
- Eden Project Learning offer courses with some sustainable elements – FdSc in Horticulture and BSc in Horticulture (Plant Science)
- Royal Agricultural University offer a course in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security

WORKING



Working on an already established horticultural business or market garden in exchange for money

Experience needed: A reasonable level of knowledge and experience in horticultural practice (usually gained via ongoing or long term volunteering opportunities, on-farm traineeships, apprenticeships or internships, practical accreditations or qualifications)

Qualifications needed: Not all jobs in horticulture will expect an accreditation or qualification, however it is a benefit to have one to show your level of knowledge, skills and understanding of the sector

Skills needed: Ability to carry out heavy lifting and intensive, repetitive practical tasks around the farm or market garden, capacity to use initiative and take the lead on tasks, in many cases you will be working with volunteers and so an ability to manage people and work within a team as well as alone, ability to manage competing workstreams, good organisational skills and knowledge of all day to day running activities of a market garden including tool and machinery usage

Qualifications gained: None

Pay/benefits attached: The national minimum wage or more

Where does this lead me? Paid work as a Seasonal Grower, Horticultural Worker or Head Grower can lead to further work and training opportunities as you progress your agroecological and

horticultural knowledge. From here many will go on to managerial positions or to start their own horticultural businesses. Possible sideways moves into other sectors/ adjacent careers are also available, for example campaigning, farm advisory positions, research, teaching, business development/support, policy and advocacy work, community engagement etc.

THINGS TO CONSIDER?

Finding paid work is a great way to:

- ✓ Put all of your previous skills and learnings to use
- ✓ Gain access to many skills and responsibilities not otherwise available to you via volunteering or on-farm training
- ✓ Gain experience on the job (offering financial support whilst you learn and progress your horticultural skills)
- ✓ Learn from your wider team members and farm/ market garden managers
- ✓ Gain experienced knowledge
- ✓ Deepen your understanding of agroecological and horticultural practice
- ✓ Give you the opportunity to develop your interests in certain areas of horticultural production
- ✓ Give you an in-depth understanding of how to run a farm business

Whilst paid work is beneficial in many ways, finding relevant paid work is highly competitive as opportunities in the agroecological sector are few and far between. It is hard to make a land based business work to support paid staff and so many small-scale projects and businesses rely on volunteers and by offering traineeships.

Even if you cannot find a paid position on an agroecological farm, perhaps starting with a larger organic farm who may have more resources to support paid staff is a great place to start. This knowledge will be transferable to the agroecological sector.

It is also the case that many growing projects will keep on volunteers as paid staff when the opportunity arises. So having your foot in the door at a local project that you feel passionate about is a great way of eventually finding paid work (check out the 'Volunteering' section of this pathway to find aligned projects near you).

Accommodation

Another thing to consider is that accommodation on the farm or close to your place of work (particularly in rural areas) can be a challenging find and especially on a relatively low wage. If you don't already live in the area of your new work position, make sure to speak to your manager to find out about accommodation opportunities either on the farm or nearby. Some farms will offer accommodation with the job for a reduction in your wage. However if they do not then be sure to check out local accommodation options before making the move as this can sometimes be a barrier to working, particularly in rural areas with limited options.

HOW TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES?

- The [Landworkers' Alliance](#) often advertise paid work opportunities via their newsletters and membership communications

- The [GREAT project website](#) is also a good place to find paid landwork
- [Roots to Work](#) is a job site all about good food and so often advertises paid farm work opportunities as well as work in other supporting areas of agroecology i.e campaigning, lobbying, policy work, farm advisory positions and more.
- [Environment job posts](#) adverts for work in both the on-farm and off-farm agroecological sector
- [Careers Wales](#) is another resource for finding work in Wales
- [Agroecology Europe](#) is a good place to look for EU based positions
- Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media channels are also a good way to find paid work opportunities directly from organisations as they are likely to advertise on all their online channels – so make sure to follow all prospective work places
- Signing up to the newsletters of the [Landworkers' Alliance](#), [CSA Network](#), [Permaculture Association](#), [Soil Association](#) and [Social Farms and Gardens](#) will also lead you to opportunities
- Make sure you regularly visit the websites of prospective farms/market gardens (found via the 'Volunteering' and 'Training' sections of this pathway), to find out about upcoming work opportunities if they do not have active social media channels



STARTING YOUR OWN BUSINESS



Setting up your own agroecological horticulture business

Experience needed: A reasonable level of knowledge, skill and experience in agroecological horticulture production, usually via ongoing or long term volunteering placements, on-farm traineeships, apprenticeships or internships, practical accreditations or qualifications. Qualifications needed: No qualifications are needed but they will be advantageous to your level of knowledge and understanding of the running of an agroecological market garden or horticultural farm business

Skills needed: An understanding of how to run a business and of UK business requirements e.g tax, health and safety certificates, insurance etc., entrepreneurial thinking and operating, a high level of flexibility and adaptability, ability to manage customers, staff and volunteers, basic accountancy, ability to carry out heavy lifting and intensive, repetitive practical tasks, capacity to use initiative and take the lead on tasks, ability to manage people and work within a team as well as alone, ability to manage competing workstreams, good organisational skills and knowledge of all day to day running activities of a market garden including tool and machinery usage, marketing or promotional skills or willingness to learn and a good working knowledge of agroecological principles and practices

Qualifications gained: None

Pay/benefits attached: You will be in charge of your profit margins and therefore your own wage

Where does this lead me? Starting and establishing a business can open up a world of opportunity into:

- Many areas of agroecological horticulture production such as fruit and veg to seaweed and mushrooms.
- Expansion and diversification into other industry sectors and land based practices such as arable, dairy, livestock, poultry, forestry and woodland management, conservation, rewilding and much more.
- Community/social based enterprise structures and land management models
- A diversity of processing and product design opportunities that go beyond your raw product offerings
- Carrying out specific agroecological training via courses
- Participating in knowledge exchange networks with other similar businesses for local or national support
- Expanding your career into creative media, policy, advocacy, campaigning and other supportive work streams that share the stories and knowledge you have gained from running your own business
- Joining land based networks, unions and movements that advocate for better land working conditions

THINGS TO CONSIDER?

Setting up your own agroecological business offers you the opportunity to:

- ✓ Put all of your skills, knowledge and expertise into practice
- ✓ Have a positive impact on the land and community around you
- ✓ Help build the food sovereignty and agroecology movement in the UK
- ✓ Learn whilst you work
- ✓ Deepen your relationship to the land
- ✓ Experiment, play with and explore agroecological practices
- ✓ Offer your community healthy, nutritious food
- ✓ Support others to get into the industry
- ✓ Add an experienced voice to wider social and political conversations around our food and farming systems in the UK

Seeking Business Support

Before you embark on setting up your business, reaching out to business support schemes is a great place to start, as they can offer you advice and support in writing a business plan, choosing a business and land model, finding land, funding and routes to market, planning promotional and marketing activities and generally offering guidance in all aspects of your business idea to ensure your business is viable.

Community / Shared Business and Land Models

The task of setting up alone and getting your business off the ground can be long, arduous and lonely, so sharing this responsibility and passion with others is often the

best way to start a successful business. There are many business and land models you can choose from such as partnerships, community interest companies, stacked enterprises, leasing land and share farming. Finding the right one for you from the beginning is important as it will be directly related to the success of your business.



Accommodation

Another thing to consider is that accommodation on the farm or land plot (particularly in rural areas) can be a challenging find and especially on a relatively low wage. Organisations like the [Landworkers' Alliance](#) and the [Ecological Land Cooperative](#) campaign for access to affordable, location appropriate housing in landwork.

HOW TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES?

New entrants experience a multitude of barriers in setting up their own market gardens and land based business, however there is an increasing amount of resources and support out there for you should you be looking at taking this next step in your career in agroecology.

Land and Finance

- The [Ecological Land Cooperative](#) supports access to setting up smallholdings for ecological agriculture use. They have a [call out for land for sale or rent](#) and a whole host of amazing [resources](#) on their website. Their lease agreement is one of the most accessible and innovative models in the UK so they are certainly worth checking out
- Land sharing is one of the most accessible ways to get access to land for any new business so it is worth considering this model when developing

your business idea. Examples of Land Sharing are: [Biodynamic Land Trust \(UK\)](#), [Earth Trust – Farm Step Programme \(England\)](#), [Soil Association Land Trust](#), [Big Meadow CSA](#), [Stream Farm](#), [Farm Ed](#)

- [Shared Assets](#) support the development of new models of managing land. They have some very useful information here on [supportive land share agreements](#) and [sharing assets](#), as well as some good [case studies](#) and [toolkits](#).
- [CLAS](#) – Community Land Advisory Service have some very useful resources, including their [heads of terms templates for community groups wanting to lease land](#). Sadly their services are no longer being funded in England and Scotland, though it continues in Wales.
- [The Scottish Crofting Federation](#) offers support in land access and funding in Scotland
- [One Planet Development \(Wales\)](#) is a government supported, innovative land use model that supports you to start your own agroecological business and build agricultural buildings and your own dwelling in a low impact way.
- The [Land Mobility Scheme](#) works to find [collaborative land opportunities](#) (Northern Ireland)
- [Access to Land](#) facilitates land access and works with local authorities (EU)
- The [NEWBIE Network](#) offers support in land and finance (UK)
- The [Farmstart Network](#) is a fantastic starting point opportunity for you if you are considering starting your own farm business. You are given a piece of land attached to a larger farm business and join an incubator programme which allows you to kick start your own farm business whilst getting support, training and mentoring in the first 1-2 years of your business (UK)

- The [Loans for Enlightened Agriculture Programme \(LEAP\) \(UK\)](#) is a great place to find funding for agroecological food and farming businesses



- Check out [Wakelyn's farm](#) to learn more about enterprise stacking
- The [Community Farmland Purchase](#) resource is there to help you with looking, finding and securing land in the UK
- [Shared Assets](#) support the development of new models of managing land. They have some useful information here on [supportive land share agreements](#) and [sharing assets](#), as well as some good [case studies](#).
- You could also contact your city or area council / local authority to find out about land opportunities as they often arise

Business Support

- Business start up support is available from all governments in the UK and so is a good place to start: [Wales](#), [Scotland](#), [England](#)
- [Farming Connect \(Wales\)](#) can help with access to land, business advice, progression support and mentorships. They also have grants available to help you learn in your sector once you have an established business. On top of this they help to facilitate some interesting match-making services for joint ventures. In particular they have a [Venture Handbook](#) which is a useful starting point for those considering a joint venture, much of which is relevant for those outside Wales too.
- [Tenant Farmers Association \(UK\)](#) has a lot of support for tenant farmers leasing land

- [Tyfu Cymru](#) is a good place to look for resources to help with your business if you're based in Wales
- The Landworkers' Alliance offers and facilitates business support which can be found [here](#).
- The Scottish government is working towards [farming Opportunities for New Entrants](#) (Scotland)
- The Farm Advisory Service also offers support via a [New Entrant Programme](#) (Scotland)
- The Landworkers' Alliance has done a lot of work on agroecological business planning – [Agroecological business planning guide](#) – and direct sales and short supply chains – [Direct sales and short supply chains](#)
- [Skillshare](#) offers a free one month trial during which you can learn about marketing, social media, video editing and many more digital skills that will help with the success of your business
- Organisations like the [Landworkers' Alliance](#), support members who are often marginalised in landwork and have unequal access to opportunities. Members organise a LGBTQIA+ working group (called Out On The Land), a BPOC (Black and People of Colour) working group (called REAL) and a youth arm (called FLAME).
- Also see the 'Further Resources' section of this pathway for other links to support and resources that you may find helpful when setting up your own horticultural business



Other Support

- [LION](#) – Land in Our Names is a Black-led collective that works for land reparations and supports those from BPOC communities to begin working and living on the land, they have a whole host of resources and support available
- [Ubele](#) also offer support, advice and finance for BPOC communities setting up enterprises across the UK

BUSINESS & CAREER PROGRESSION



Business & career progression is for those seeking to expand, diversify or build on their existing career or business

Experience needed: A paid working or equivalent level of knowledge and experience is necessary to access some further training opportunities and certain types of business support.

Qualifications needed: If you are looking at progressing your skills and knowledge in the way of getting an accreditation then the minimum level of qualifications needed are usually a GCSE or equivalent in English (or Welsh if studying in Cymru) and Maths. But entry requirements will vary depending on the level of accredited training you are seeking.

Skills needed: A paid working or equivalent level of skill is required for accessing advanced progression opportunities

Qualifications gained: If you choose to progress by gaining an accreditation or qualification then you are able to gain a certificate in anything from a Level 1 NVQ to a Postgraduate Masters or PhD

Pay/benefits attached: Progression, expansion and diversification can lead to higher level job opportunities which usually equate to increased wages or increased business profits. You will also be gaining more knowledge and skills to practically apply agroecology.

Where does this lead me? Whether you are progressing your career in agroecology, expanding

or diversifying your agroecological business or progressing your current business into agroecology, then this can lead to a diversity of outcomes:

- Advancements in your experience, knowledge and expertise, business offerings, level of responsibility, financial incentives, skill set and support for biodiversity and community wellbeing
- Expansion into other sectors in the wider social and political spheres of your work including creative media, policy, advocacy, campaigning and other supportive work streams that share the stories and knowledge you have gained from running your own business or working on the land/a market garden.

THINGS TO CONSIDER?

Progressing your career

If you are currently working in a paid role in horticulture, expanding your knowledge and skill set in agroecology can be a great way to:

- ✓ Progress in your career
- ✓ Meet and network with like minded people working in similar areas to you
- ✓ Gain a deeper understanding of what it takes to manage/work the land in line with agroecological principles
- ✓ Access a higher level of responsibility at work

- ✓ Increase your ability to apply for more senior roles as you will have a wider environmental and sustainable application in a time of changing agricultural policy in the UK
- ✓ Access information, knowledge, skills and expertise relevant to starting your own business (please also refer to the 'Starting your own business' section of this pathway)

Progressing your business

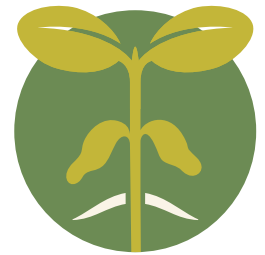
If you already run a horticulture business then expanding and diversifying your agroecological knowledge and practice is a great way to:

- ✓ Ensure adaptability in changing markets
- ✓ Access more routes to market
- ✓ Advance your skills, knowledge and expertise in agroecology
- ✓ Advance your access to a consumer market that is more climate and community conscious than ever before
- ✓ Grow your profits
- ✓ Grow your social and community impact
- ✓ Grow the biodiversity on your land
- ✓ Safeguard for future generations

Progression, expansion and diversification can be costly and time consuming so you need to ensure you are at the right stage in your career or business where taking on further training or business development opportunities will be beneficial and not lead to burn out. Running a business and working on the land is hard work and so consider whether this is the right time for you before embarking on something new. Many progression opportunities are available on an ongoing basis and so you will be able to find something you are looking for when you are ready.

HOW TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES?

Many of the resources available in each section of this interactive pathway will be relevant to your progression needs, for example in accessing further training, courses, accreditations and qualifications and business support, so please refer to each of these sections to find out more detail about the progression opportunities available to you.



Career and business progression

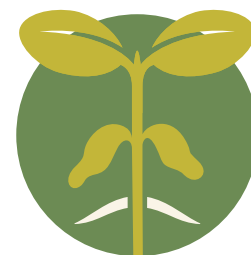
- [The Gaia Foundation's Seed Sovereignty Programme](#) and wider seed networks offer training specifically in seed saving and seed production for those already working in horticulture
- The Soil Association has lots of [technical information](#) available on their website for farmers and growers
- These [resources](#) from Agroecology are a great place to get practical, technical and theoretical information if you are already in the industry
- The Agricultural Recruitment Specialists have information on [career progression in farming](#)
- The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board also offer [support and advice in business and career progression](#)
- The RHS offers [career progression information](#)
- The Chartered Institute of Horticulture also offer [career progression information](#)
- ACS Gardens offer [career advice](#)
- Seed Your Future has great [resources for all career levels in horticulture](#)
- ACS Distance Learning offer courses for [professional development in horticulture](#)

- This resource from Pearson is useful in looking at [career progression routes](#) in Horticulture
- The OGA have a lot of [technical support and resources](#) for growers

Business progression

- The LWA offers a lot of resources to new entrants to horticulture and farming including; New Entrants to Agroecological Farming: Example Business Start-up Costs and the Case for Public Support (LWA, 2021), New Entrants to Agriculture and Land Based Work: Survey Results (LWA, 2020), Supporting the Next Generation of Farmers (LWA, 2019), Planning Barriers Faced by New Entrants to Horticulture (LWA, 2019), Hand on the Land: New Entrants in Agriculture (LWA, 2017), Start Up Case Studies: Horticultural Units on Larger Farms (LWA, 2017), [The Attraction of Agroecology and the barriers faced by new entrants pursuing agroecological farming and land work](#) (LWA), [Agroecological business planning guide](#) (LWA), [Direct sales and short supply chains](#) (LWA), [Whole farm agroecology scheme](#) (LWA), [Improving small farm productivity](#) (LWA)
- The Ecological Land Cooperative offer [resources and support including their Community Farmland Purchase Toolkit](#)
- Shared Assets have great [resources, toolkits, case studies and more info](#) on sharing land and resources
- [Farming Connect](#) (Wales) can help with access to/securing land, ongoing business advice, progression, expansion and diversification support and mentorships/knowledge exchanges. They also have grants available to help you progress your learning once you have an established business. On top of this they help to facilitate some interesting match-making services for joint ventures which may be a route you are considering should you already

run your own business. In particular they have a [Venture Handbook](#) which is a useful starting point for those considering a joint venture, much of which is relevant for those outside Wales too.



- You could consider entering your farm business into a farming award which will widen your customer reach and validate your practices: [British Farming Awards](#), [BBC Food and Farming Awards](#), [Farmers Weekly Awards](#), [Sustainable Food and Farming Awards](#), [NFU Community Farming Hero Awards](#), [ORC Young Organic Farmer/ Grower of the Year Award](#)
- Rural Support offers support in [Progression Planning and Succession](#)
- There are also some specific support opportunities available to you should you already own your own horticultural or non-horticultural business and are looking to diversify into agroecological horticultural production. Here are some links to resources and further reading that you may find useful in this transition: [Food, Farming and Countryside Commission](#), [Transitions to Agroecological Systems: Farmers' Experience](#), [Sustainable Farming Incentive](#), [Environmental Land Management Scheme](#), [Agroecological business planning guide](#) (LWA), [Direct sales and short supply chains](#) (LWA), [Linking Environment and Farming](#), [Nature Friendly Farming Network](#), [DEFRA update on government actions to incentivise transitions](#)
- Also see the 'Further Resources' page for other links to support and resources that you may find helpful when progressing your career or business

FURTHER RESOURCES / PLACES OF SUPPORT

- Organisations offering wider support are: [LWA](#), [PFLA](#), [OGA](#), [LION](#), [Ubele](#), [CSA Network](#), [Permaculture Association](#), [Soil Association](#), [Social Farms and Gardens](#), [Sustain](#), [OF&G](#), [Shared Assets](#) and the [Biodynamic Association](#)
- [New Entrants to Agroecological Farming: Example Business Start-up Costs and the Case for Public Support](#) (LWA, 2021)
- [New Entrants to Agriculture and Land Based Work: Survey Results](#) (LWA, 2020)
- [Supporting the Next Generation of Farmers](#) (LWA, 2019)
- [Planning Barriers Faced by New Entrants to Horticulture](#) (LWA, 2019)
- [Hand on the Land: New Entrants in Agriculture](#) (LWA, 2017)
- [Start Up Case Studies: Horticultural Units on Larger Farms](#) (LWA, 2017)
- [Training Case Studies: Courses and Apprenticeships](#) (LWA, 2017)
- [DEFRA Future Farming Blog](#) (England)
- [Ten years to Agroecology in Europe](#) (Soil Association)
- [An Agroecological UK 2050](#) (FFCC)
- [Transitions to Agroecological Systems: Farmers' Experience](#) (Organic Research Centre)
- [Agroecology traineeship programme](#) (LWA)
- [The Attraction of Agroecology and the barriers faced by new entrants pursuing agroecological farming and land work](#) (LWA)
- [Agroecological business planning guide](#) (LWA)
- [Direct sales and short supply chains](#) (LWA)
- [Whole farm agroecology scheme](#) (LWA)
- [Improving small farm productivity](#) (LWA)
- A short course in [Agroecology](#) at Tamrisk Farm
- The [Land Skills Fair](#) is a great place to go and network with like minded agroecological farmers, growers, foresters and fibre producers in the UK
- [Groundswellis](#) a great place to go and network with like minded regenerative and agroecological farmers and growers in the UK
- The [Oxford Real Farming Conference](#) is an annual gathering of people working in the food sovereignty movement
- The [Wales Real Food and Farming Conference](#) is another annual gathering based in Wales
- These [resources](#) from Agroecology are a great place to get practical, technical and theoretical information
- The Soil Association has lots of [technical information](#) available on their website for farmers and growers

FURTHER RESOURCES / PLACES OF SUPPORT

- The [Jumping Fences report](#) by LION, the Ecological Land Cooperative and LWA is an amazing insight into understanding and addressing the barriers to access to land for agroecological farming for Black people and people of colour (BPOC) in Britain.
- Support for [Farmers and Growers in need of mental health support](#) RHS offers [careers information](#)
- The Chartered Institute of Horticulture offers [careers information](#)
- The OGA have a lot of [resources and technical information](#) on their website



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