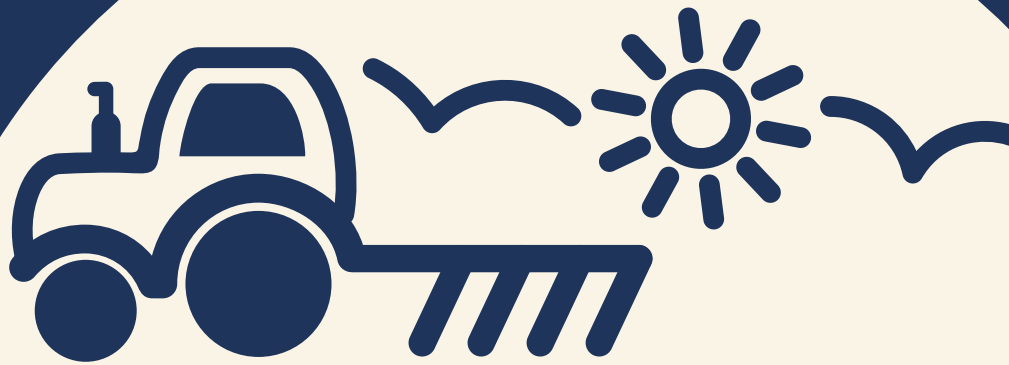


# AGROECOLOGY PATHWAYS ARABLE

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



Careers in arable farming in the UK usually consist of the cultivation of crops such as cereals, grains, legumes, pulses and oats



# AGROECOLOGY PATHWAYS



ARABLE



HORTICULTURE



DAIRY/LIVESTOCK



This document outlines the agroecological career pathway for the arable 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. This can take the form of volunteering days or intensive periods from a few weeks to a whole 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 further training, get an accreditation, paid work as a Seasonal Worker 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. Some arable farms across Wales, Scotland

& England offer regular volunteering days while others 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 arable production
- ✓ Build confidence on the land
- ✓ Develop a relationship to Nature
- ✓ Gain skills relevant to jobs and further arable 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
- ✓ 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?

There are ways to find arable production and processing volunteering opportunities around the UK, but as agroecological businesses and projects are few and far between, it requires a little digging.

### Short-term or ongoing volunteering opportunities

- Head to your local farmers market to speak to local bakers directly and find out about who their suppliers are – they may be local!

- 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](#) and [Soil Association](#) to get signposted to their members volunteering opportunities, some of which integrate or grow arable crops
- The [Gaia Foundation's Seed Sovereignty Programme](#) has a whole host of information on grain growing, heritage grains, machinery use and much more. They have a wealth of knowledge of [grain growing specifically in Wales](#), but have links around the UK too and are keen to help new entrants into heritage arable production
- [Llafur Ni](#) is a Welsh grain network that would be worth checking out if you're local to Wales
- [Hodmedods](#), named BBC best food producer, work with farmers across the UK on the production of grain, flour, pulses and more. This is the [link to the farmers they work with](#) so you could contact them directly or search for their farms online to find out if they have volunteering opportunities



- [Grown in Totnes](#) are a great place to get linked into if you are based in Devon
- [E5 Bakehouse](#) in London works with farmers who share their vision of an 'Agrarian Renaissance', and they are committed to using heritage grain. Contact them to find out more about their suppliers and if they have volunteering opportunities
- [Wakelyns farm](#) in Suffolk is another great place to look at for volunteering opportunities as they grow wheat and lentils agroecologically and are a very outward facing farm. They also have a [bakery that offers workshops and courses](#)
- [Slade farm](#) produce Welsh Flour and so are worth contacting for their [work experience opportunities](#)
- [Gothelney Farm and bakery](#) in Somerset is also a great place to reach out to as they grow heritage varieties of grain
- The [Heritage Grain Trust](#) and [Heritage Grain Alliance](#) are good networks to get linked into if you are looking for any agroecological arable opportunities
- As well as [Llafur Ni](#) in Wales, there are other grain networks around the UK that would be worth getting in touch with to find opportunities in your region – [South west grain alliance](#) and [South East grain alliance](#), [Northern grain alliance](#), [East Anglian Grain Alliance](#), [Cotswold Grain Network](#)
- [Scotland the bread](#) works on agroecological grain production across Scotland
- [Rye and Roses](#) are an amazing small scale business in West Wales who grow their own grain and bake heritage bread
- The [Sheffield Wheat Experiment](#) are also worth checking out if you are in the North of England
- [COCA CSA](#) in Wales produce grain and have been a part of heritage grain trials in the UK

### 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. Hosts across the UK and around the world usually offer you accommodation and food in return for your labour. Placements range from 1 week to a few months depending on the project. Check out the website to find projects that suit you.
- [HelpX](#) is another site offering longer term volunteering opportunities in agriculture



# TRAINING



Training opportunities in arable farming take the form of connecting with informal networks and undertaking non-accredited courses offered via distance learning, classroom learning or a mix of on-farm and off-farm learning.

Traineeships, internships and apprenticeships on agroecological arable farms do not yet exist.

**Experience needed:** Some experience in arable production is advantageous to enable more engaged learning within informal networks

**Qualifications needed:** None, but would be advantageous in your ability to engage in informal networks in a constructive way

**Skills needed:** None

**Qualifications gained:** None, these trainings are not accredited trainings

**Pay/benefits attached:** None

**Where does this lead me?** Accessing informal training networks and undertaking a non-accredited course can lead to further opportunities in volunteering, accreditations or qualifications, further training, paid work as a Seasonal Worker or the opportunity to start your own business. You may also gain access to seed via these informal networks and so if you have access to land at home or in your community you could test and trial your own small plot.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER:

### Informal networks and non-accredited training

Accessing training via informal networks or non-accredited courses allow you to:

- ✓ Gain relevant skills at any stage of your career in agroecology
- ✓ Access valuable expertise
- ✓ Engage in a focused learning environment
- ✓ Meet like minded people and build on regional and national networks
- ✓ Gain access to useful skills
- ✓ Access in-depth knowledge in arable production
- ✓ Identify gaps in the market you may be able to fill with your own business idea

### Navigating these spaces

It is advisable to simultaneously explore all avenues to learning about arable production via volunteering, training, networking, accreditations and qualifications due to the lack of formal opportunities and career progression pathways.

Due to the informal approach to learning in this industry there is no guarantee in the standard or quality of learning and it will be up to you to work out the best exchange in a way that works for both you and the

trainer. If you are looking for formal training in arable production via an accredited course then please refer to the 'Qualifications and Accreditations' section of this pathway.

### Upcoming agroecological training opportunities

The [Gaia Foundation's Seed Sovereignty Programme](#) is actively working on breaking down the barriers to accessing training in agroecological arable production, particularly in grains, and so are currently developing a formal training programme along with the [UK Grain Lab](#). Make sure to keep up to date with their communications to find out when this goes live.

The [Heritage Grain Trust](#) is also in the process of creating formalised training programmes in regenerative arable production, so also keep an eye on their communications channels.

### Sources of support

It is acknowledged that accessing informal networks can be daunting and difficult, especially if you are from a non-farming background or Minoritised community. Testing and trialling with available seed is only an option for those who already have access to land or outdoor space and feel comfortable doing this, which is not always the case. Organisations like the [LWA](#), [LION](#), [Ubele](#), [Shared Assets](#) and the [Gaia Foundation's Seed Sovereignty Programme](#) work to break down these barriers for new entrants from all backgrounds, particularly those less represented in land based work. Reach out to these organisations and join many new entrants like you who experience barriers in entering land based industries, particularly in the arable industry.

## HOW TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES?



### Informal Arable Networks

It is worth taking a look at the links in the 'Volunteering' section of this pathway to find out about farms and businesses that operate in agroecological arable production and to reach out to them for potential training opportunities and exchanges

- There are many gatherings, events, workshops, networks, alliances and meet ups across the UK that may be useful for you to attend and connect with when trying to access knowledge and training in arable production. Some places to check out are the [UK Grain Lab](#), [South west grain alliance](#) and [South East grain alliance](#), [Northern grain alliance](#), [East Anglian Grain Alliance](#), [Cotswold Grain Network](#), [Llafur Ni](#) in Wales, The [Heritage Grain Trust](#) and [Heritage Grain Alliance](#)
- [Groundswell](#), The [Land Skills Fair](#), [Oxford Real Farming Conference](#) and the [Wales Real Food and Farming Conference](#) are not arable specific but will have farmer attendees, workshops and events relevant to arable production

### Non-Accredited Training Courses and Workshops (arable/processing)

- This short course in [Organic Arable farming](#) may be useful to get a basic level of understanding in the specifics of organic arable production
- Emerson College, Tablehurst Farm and Fermento Wood-Fired Bakery offer a 4 day [From Seed to Peasant Bread 2023 Residential](#)
- E5 Bakehouse offer classes in [bread making](#)
- The Sourdough School in Northamptonshire offers courses in [sourdough bread using heritage flours](#)



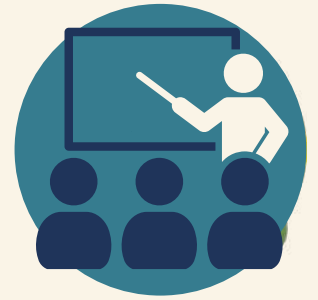


- This one day course in [Applying Soil Health in Arable Systems](#)
- Farm Ed offer courses in [Herbal Ley Establishment & Management](#) (in partnership with Cotswolds Seeds) and [Regenerative Farming: Improving Your Arable Rotation](#) (in partnership with Niels Corfield)
- [Wakelyns farm](#) grow wheat and lentils agroecologically and have a [bakery that offers workshops and courses](#)
- [Gothelney Farm](#) and [bakery in Somerset](#) grow heritage varieties of grain and offer baking workshops that integrate knowledge about their heritage grains

### **Non-accredited courses in regenerative practices (non-arable)**

- Organic Growers Alliance offer a [Farm planning programme](#)
- FarmEd offer courses in [Holistic Ecological Monitoring & Land Planning](#) (in partnership with 3LM), [Regenerative Farming: Soil & Crop Health](#) (in partnership with Niels Corfield), [Regenerative Farming: Soil Health Fundamentals](#) (in partnership with Niels Corfield), [Leadership for a Sustainable Future, Wellbeing & Communication](#) (in partnership with the The Farming Community Network (FCN), [Holistic Financial Planning](#) (in partnership with 3LM), [Holistic Management Fundamentals](#) (in partnership with 3LM)
- The Agroecological Way offer this short course in [Agroecology](#)
- [Plumpton College](#) offer many short courses
- [Chagfood CSA](#) offers a course in [Setting up and Scaling up CSA](#)

# QUALIFICATIONS AND ACCREDITATIONS



Gaining a qualification or accredited certificate in arable production via online or in-person training

**Experience needed:** Some courses may require previous experience in arable production

**Qualifications needed:** Accredited courses usually require a minimum of a GCSE or equivalent in Maths and English (or Welsh if learning in Cymru)

**Skills needed:** A good level of written and spoken English or Welsh (depending on where you take your course), ability to lead self study, capacity to undertake coursework as well as carry out practical tasks and a good level of organisational skill

**Qualifications gained:** This will range from college level certificates to undergraduate and postgraduate university degrees

**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 an accreditation or qualification you are able to pursue opportunities in volunteering, further training and accreditations at a higher level, paid work as a Seasonal Worker, Arable Farmer or Farm Manager and start your own business

## THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Accreditations and qualifications can:

- ✓ Validate your commitment to arable farming and building a career or business 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 arable production, agroecology or running a land based business
- ✓ Give you the opportunity to meet people in the industry

Undertaking an accreditation or qualification in arable production can be time and money intensive and so each course should be considered carefully and weighed up against the other opportunities available to you.

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? We would advise reaching out to the networks, organisations and alliances linked in both the 'Volunteering' and 'Training' sections of this pathway to chat to people in the industry to find out about the best options for your particular interests and circumstances.

## Navigating these spaces

Accreditations are a great way to access knowledge in arable farming however these currently only operate through conventional or semi-conventional farming education centres (some of which may promote the use of pesticides, chemical inputs and intensification). Some of the knowledge taught on these courses is transferable and can be applied to agroecological contexts – so they are definitely worth looking into should this be the route you wish to take.

If you are new to agroecology you can also take a course in agroecology alongside any in conventional or semi-conventional arable production to ensure you get a good understanding of how this knowledge can be applied in this context.

## Funding, access and sources of support

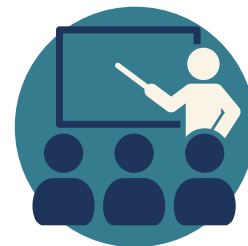
It is important to note that conventional agricultural spaces can also feel quite overwhelming if you are not familiar with these industries or from a farming background. Reaching out within the [LWA](#), who support identity-based organising can be hugely beneficial. They have an LGBTQIA+ working group (called Out On The Land), a BPOC (Black and People of Colour) working group (called REAL), as well as 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 agroecology but are unable to access traditional routes.

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

Many education centres will offer support in finding funding for your course.

## HOW TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES?

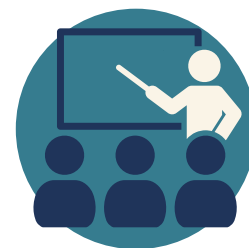


### Levels 1-6 / College level certificates in Biodynamics and regenerative practices (non-arable specific)

- The [Apricot Centre](#) offer a [Level 3 in 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 – they do not specify arable production but you could enquire about placements on arable farms or farms with arable crop integrated into their farming systems

### Higher level qualifications in agroecology or regenerative practices (non-arable specific)

- [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](#)

### **Semi-conventional accredited courses (arable)**

- This course in [Organic Arable Farming](#) would be a good place to start
- This [MSc in Organic Farming](#) has elements relevant to arable production
- SRUC PgCert in [Organic Farming](#) with arable course elements
- BASIS Foundation award in [Organic Farming](#) that has course elements in arable production and agronomy

### **Conventional Accredited Courses (arable)**

Please note that these courses may include the promotion of the use of pesticides, chemical inputs and intensification, however much of what is learnt will be transferable to the agroecological sector.

- CPD [Innovation in Arable Farming](#)
- [A Beginners Guide to Arable Farming](#) run by Artis
- Level 3 course in [Arable Pathways](#)
- ACS Distance Education offers online courses in [Agronomy: Grains](#), [Agronomy: Legumes](#), [Agronomy: Oil Crops](#), [Associate diploma in Agricultural Crop Production](#), [Diploma in Agronomy](#)

# WORKING



Working on an already established arable farm in exchange for money

**Experience needed:** A good level of knowledge and experience in arable production (usually gained via ongoing or long term volunteering, accreditations or qualifications)

**Qualifications needed:** Not all jobs in arable production will expect an accreditation or qualification, however it is a benefit to have one to prove your level of knowledge and understanding of this sector

**Skills needed:** Ability to carry out heavy lifting and intensive, repetitive practical tasks around the farm, capacity to use initiative and take the lead on tasks, an ability to 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 farm including tool and machinery usage

**Qualifications gained:** None

**Pay/benefits attached:** The national minimum wage or more

**Where does this lead me?** Paid work can lead to further training and mentoring opportunities as you progress your arable knowledge on the farm. From here many will go on to start their own arable businesses or become Farm Managers. 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 training networks
- ✓ Gain experience on the job (offering financial support whilst you learn and progress your arable skills)
- ✓ Learn from your wider team members and farm managers
- ✓ Glean experienced knowledge
- ✓ Deepen your understanding of arable industry
- ✓ Give you the opportunity to develop your interests in certain areas of arable 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 and opportunities in the agroecological sector are few and far between, particularly in the arable industry.

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 projects 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).

### 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?

Many opportunities will come via word of mouth and will be available to you if you are linked into the sector via the networks and alliances as outlined in the 'Volunteering' section of this pathway. However there are some ways of finding opportunities online.

### Jobs in the agroecological or regenerative sector

Jobs in the agroecological arable sector are hard to come by but it is worth looking into the links below and keeping your eye on these networks to find suitable positions should they come up:

- 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 work
- [Roots to Work](#) is a job site in good food that sometimes advertise paid farm work opportunities as well as work in other supporting areas of agroecology such as campaigning, policy work etc.
- [Environment job](#) posts work in both the on-farm and off-farm agroecological sector
- [Agroecology Europe](#) is a great place to look for EU based positions
- Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media channels are a great way to find paid work opportunities directly from organisations – so make sure to follow all prospective work places
- Also visit the websites of prospective farms (outlined in the 'Volunteering' section of this pathway, to find out about upcoming work opportunities.



### Jobs in the conventional arable sector

- Check out job sites such as [Jobs in Agriculture](#), [Farming UK](#), [Farmers' Weekly Jobs](#), [Agricultural and Farming Jobs](#), [4XtraHands](#) and [Indeed](#). Jobs via these pages will be useful if you wish to learn on the job and then transfer this knowledge into your own agroecological project.
- [Careers Wales](#) is a great resource for finding work in Wales

# STARTING YOUR OWN BUSINESS



Setting up your own arable business

**Experience needed:** It is essential to have a good amount of on-farm practical knowledge and experience before starting your own business, usually gained via volunteering, test and trials, paid work, accreditations or qualifications. Qualifications needed: No qualifications are needed but they will be advantageous to your level of knowledge.

**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 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 an arable farm including tool and machinery usage, marketing or promotional skills or willingness to learn.

**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 arable production and processing from pulses and grains to flour, bread and alcohol.
- Expansion and diversification into other industry sectors and land based practices such as horticulture, 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 including tool and machinery sharing networks
- 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
- Linking in with networks and alliances that want to do research into agroecological arable production

## THINGS TO CONSIDER?

As the agroecological arable sector is so underdeveloped you would play a key role in developing networks, skill and tool sharing, training, mentorship and other opportunities for other people entering into the sector and play a key role in defining how arable production has huge potential to have a positive impact on both our communities and our environment.

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
- ✓ Build on an area of agroecological production that is in need of development

### Accessing machinery

Much of our small-scale arable machinery has been lost from the UK due to the increase in the scale of production over the last few decades. As a result, opportunities to grow, harvest and process agroecologically (usually on smaller land plots) are

few and far between, because this gap in harvesting and processing machinery presents a barrier to smaller scale projects starting up – but these machines do still exist! And there are a growing number of tool and machinery sharing networks across the UK. Take a look at the alliances, organisations and networks laid out in the ‘Volunteering’ and ‘Training’ sections of this pathway to find out about opportunities.



### 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](#).
- [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
- [Grown in Totnes](#) offer a toolkit in grain processing
- As there is now limited access to smaller scale machinery to process arable crops in the UK, it is worth looking into older kit for processing, via vintage farming clubs, farming groups and vintage fairs – many farmers with this kit will be pleased to find a working use for their beloved old machinery!
- [OF&G](#) offer consultancy work for larger organic grain growers
- [Organic Arable](#) help with organic arable marketing if you become certified organic



### 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
- 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 arable business

# 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 both arable and non-arable regenerative/agroecological practices in anything from a Foundation certificate to 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 into a managerial position, 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, education and other supportive work streams that share the stories and knowledge you have gained from running your own business or working on the land. This is especially relevant to you if you have successfully started and are ready to scale up an agroecological arable farm business as you will be pioneering the way in the UK.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER?

### Progressing your career

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

- ✓ Progress in your career
- ✓ Learn new skills

- ✓ Develop processing techniques and products from arable production
- ✓ 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 an arable 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
- ✓ Help to save and produce heritage grain and seed

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 routes, courses, accreditations and qualifications as well as 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 in seed production, saving and grain processing
- Rural Support offers support in [Progression Planning and Succession](#)
- 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 [NFU](#) offer support for businesses and career progression information

- Also see the 'Further Resources' page for other links to support and resources that you may find helpful when progressing your career or business

### Business Progression

- There are some specific support opportunities available to you should you already own your own arable business and are looking to diversify into agroecological 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](#), [Organic Arable Farming: Information for farmers considering conversion to organic production](#)
- 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](#), [National Arable and Grasslands Awards](#)
- There is now [governmental support in England](#) if you wish to transfer your arable or non-arable farm into organics
- [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.

- Also see the 'Further Resources' page for other links to support and resources that you may find helpful when progressing your business



# FURTHER RESOURCES / PLACES OF SUPPORT

- [Cover crops for organic arable](#) – Soil Association
- [Organic Arable Production: Weed Control](#)
- [Organic Arable Production: Rotations](#)
- [Organic Arable Production: Pest & Disease Control](#)
- [Managing weeds in arable rotations – a guide](#)
- [Integrating leys in arable rotations](#)
- [Undersowing of leys in arable crops](#)
- A short course in [Agroecology](#)
- The [Land Skills Fair](#) is a great place to go and network with like minded agroecological farmers, growers, foresters and fibre producers
- [Groundswellis](#) a great place to go and network with like minded regenerative and agroecological farmers and growers
- [Grown in Totnes](#) offer a toolkit in grain processing
- Organisations offering wider support are [LWA](#), [PFLA](#), [OGA](#), [LION](#), [Ubele](#), [CSA Network](#), [Permaculture Association](#), [Soil Association](#), [Social Farms and Gardens](#), [Sustain](#), [Shared Assets](#) and the [Biodynamic Association](#)
- [New Entrants to Agroecological Farming: Example Business Start-up Costs and the Case for Public Support \(2021\)](#)
- [New Entrants to Agriculture and Land Based Work: Survey Results \(2020\)](#)
- [Supporting the Next Generation of Farmers \(2019\)](#)
- [Planning Barriers Faced by New Entrants to Horticulture \(2019\)](#)
- [Hand on the Land: New Entrants in Agriculture \(2017\)](#)
- [DEFRA Future Farming Blog \(England\)](#)
- [Ten years to Agroecology in Europe \(Soil Association\)](#)
- [An Agroecological UK 2050 \(FFCC\)](#)
- [Transitions to Agroecological Systems: Farmers' Experience](#)
- [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 \(LWA\)](#)
- Farmer's Weekly ['Know How'](#) guides to farming
- [Barriers to Building a Heritage Grain Production and Supply System in the UK – A Video by Oxford Real Farming Conference](#)
- The Heritage Grain Trust offer some [resources](#)

# FURTHER RESOURCES / PLACES OF SUPPORT

- The Land Magazine article on [Arable production under permaculture principles](#)
- The [Oxford Real Farming Conference](#) is a 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
- 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](#)
- The Crop It Like It's Hot podcast has an episode on [Paving your way into arable farming](#)
- Youth Employment UK have this useful resource in [beginning a farming career](#)



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