



FUTURE FARMERS II

A guide to running a farm-based agroecological traineeship



This guide has been produced in partnership between the Groundspring Network, Organic Growers' Alliance, the Landworkers Alliance and Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming.

It also includes contributions from the Community Supported Agriculture Network and Pasture Fed Livestock Association (see back page for more information).

The document is also endorsed by the Soil Association, the UK's leading environmental charity and certification body promoting sustainable, organic farming.



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Excluding Tamarisk Farm, School Farm and Hindon Farm case studies, all photos by kind permission of Walter Lewis feedingbodyandsoul.com

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Tamarisk Farm

Rebecca Laughton is a tenant running a small horticulture business on an acre of Tamarisk Farm, a 600-acre mixed farm on the Dorset coast. Mostly using hand tools with an increasingly no-dig approach, she sells vegetables to three pubs, three shops and a small box scheme, and provides a traineeship.

While not working with a set curriculum, Rebecca provides books for supporting theoretical knowledge development as well as constant opportunity for discussion during working hours and over meals. Living on a mixed farm offers other learning opportunities such as grain milling, wildflower pasture

management and shearing. To ensure that all is harmonious with the close-quarters set up, Rebecca invites aspiring trainees to visit for a couple of days on the farm beforehand, while during the traineeship emphasis is put on clear communication and appreciation for the work they perform.



The structure:

- Runs for six months from April to September
- Work four hours in morning, five days a week
- No stipend provided but trainees have afternoon time available for local work opportunities
- Most food and full board is provided - accommodation is a gypsy wagon
- Includes visits to three to four local horticulture-based businesses



“*My traineeship at Tamarisk Farm took me from a position of having only grown at allotment level to one where if I had the land I feel like I could start out on half an acre this year and make a go of it. It has given me an irreplaceable grounding in organic techniques that has nearly all been field-based, and working hard all summer at the practical skills has made it easy to relate to winter learning from books and a short classroom-based course run by the Kindling Trust - a Manchester-based organisation catalysing social and ecological change through food. I also met a lot of brilliant people in the wider network of farmers and growers in the south west and feel far more orientated than I did before knowing that there are other people out there who think like me about farming.*”

Adam Crowe

Setting the scene

Sophia Campbell Groundspring Network

In one green-fingered hand, we hold the knowledge that Britain's rapidly aging farming population averages 59 years with less than 3% of farmers under 35. In the other, we hold the statistic that we have 100 years of productive harvests left in the UK.

Thankfully, the agroecological farming movement is experiencing a growing wave of people (many of them 'first generation') expressing a desire to work in the sector, although there is still a lack of on-farm training opportunities. Groundspring is a network to support and signpost new entrants - so this guide is both a call out and an aid for farmers to host trainees or apprentices. We need you! It is also an invitation out for inspired aspiring and beginner landworkers to plant your dreams in reality and get training...

Jonathan Smith Organic Growers' Alliance

The lack of younger farmers and growers in the UK has been, and still is, one of the biggest threats to the continuity of food production. It has implications for every aspect of rural life, including land management, rural housing, business innovation and rural communities. Over a long time the average age of farmers has remained high, but over the last decade or so there have been some positive changes.

In the organic growers community, which is represented by the Organic Growers Alliance (OGA), the average age of growers is distinctly lower than the UK average. While we don't have any statistics to back this up, you only have to attend OGA events, meetings and conferences, read comments on the website or articles in the magazine to see there are many men and women in their 20s and 30s who are engaged in growing organic vegetables for a living.

But why is this the case? We believe it's because the organic community in particular is characterised by people with innovation and drive, but also kindness and openness. This is a very attractive way of thinking and being to young people interested in food and farming. We see many young people coming in to growing through traditional routes, like horticulture courses, but also through complete career changes by re-training through apprenticeship and trainee schemes.

This movement alone isn't going to have a big impact on that average age of the UK farmer, but it does show a tried and tested method of getting more young people engaged on the land. Collectively we need to encourage more young people into farming and growing, and this booklet aims to be another tool in enabling that vision.

Kath Dalmeny Sustain

Farmers hold our true wealth – the health of our soils, climate, water and biodiversity, as well as the knowledge and skills to produce the good food we eat every day. There is much to be done to ensure farming and farmers thrive, long into the future, producing good food in a way that looks after land, animals and protects the environment.

Sustain is an alliance representing many organisations and campaigning on these issues; we would like UK and EU public subsidies spent in a way that supports agro-ecological farming; we want better food trading practices and fair prices, adopted by big buyers including supermarkets, and championed by community-led food traders, providing a decent income so better farming to thrive; and we want decent wages and conditions for farm workers.

Another vital strand is the subject of this guide – opportunities for new entrants into farming. We need to be ready to meet, as well as stimulate, the demand for more farming and training opportunities. Sustain previously published 'Future Farmers: a guide to running an urban food growing traineeship' (see www.sustainweb.org/publications/future_farmers_a_guide), based on our experience of championing new and existing urban farms. So we welcome this opportunity to support more traineeships on farms, in peri-urban and rural contexts. This guide provides farmers the chance to develop training to impart their knowledge and experience, as a vital part of securing a sustainable food and farming system fit for all our futures.

Chagfood Community Market Garden CSA

Chagfood Community Market Garden is a CSA on the north east edge of Dartmoor supplying 90 veg shares a week from around five acres of land. Chagfood started in 2010 with an initial grant from Big Lottery's Making Local Food Work programme and has

been financially self-sufficient since April 2012. In addition to hosting traineeships since 2011, Chagfood employs two full time growers who manage the day-to-day running of the market garden and are also supported by regular volunteers.



As well as practical experience, Chagfood follow a basic syllabus of theory in organic horticultural practice which aims to complement the day-to-day growing tasks. This is consolidated in a weekly hour long lunch meeting which is set aside for the apprentice to ask specific questions. This aspect of the traineeship is self-driven and has varied enormously from year to year. They receive around 30 applications each year, of which typically six are interviewed, with decisions based more on personality than experience.

For Chagfood, the most significant benefit is to be able to make the most of the resource they have - as a commercial and successful CSA - to give training and confidence to a new generation of aspiring growers.

The structure:

- Four days a week, eight hours a day
- Runs March – October
- Accommodation is a Gypsy caravan, a field kitchen in which to cook, and as much veg as the trainee likes from the fields
- Stipend of £50 per week

Introduction

What is an informal traineeship?

There are many different ways that people can train and gain new agroecological experiences such as college courses, WWOOFing and schemes like the Soil Association Future Growers or Biodynamic Apprenticeship. In this handbook we will be looking specifically at informal traineeships.

An informal traineeship is an exchange in which a new farmer learns from an experienced one. Key elements include:

- On-farm learning, typically six to eight months
- Provision of accommodation with access to suitable facilities such as shower, kitchen, internet
- A focus on practical learning 'in the field', covering all the topics a trainee might need to know to start their own project or take the next step
- Regular one-to-one discussion to assist self-directed learning by the trainee
- The traineeship may include a stipend (a fixed sum payment that is lower than minimum wage) as part of the agreement exchange, but this is not always the case. There may also be the option for some paid work, separate to the traineeship, once the trainee is of suitable standard.

Definitions: apprenticeship versus traineeship

In agroecological farming the terms traineeship and apprenticeship are often used to describe the same or similar exchange of work and knowledge. However, the UK government defines an apprentice as working for someone to learn a trade; the apprentice is remunerated for their working hours which are a minimum of 30 hours per week including training. In order to differentiate from the Government's apprenticeship structure some farmers use the term traineeship, to avoid confusion over the terminology, although many farms continue to use 'apprenticeship schemes' for training that does not meet the government definition..

This document will refer to 'trainees' undertaking traineeships' to cover all forms of the long-term exchange of work for knowledge that takes place on the farms. We will only use the term apprenticeship when referring to the more formalised Soil Association Future Growers scheme, Biodynamic Association schemes or Government-accredited apprenticeship courses.

Benefits of traineeships

Benefits for the farmer

Hosting a traineeship can be a great way for host farms to receive an injection of enthusiasm and company, as well as help with tasks on the farm in an affordable manner. Being reciprocal and intergenerational in nature, providing this opportunity can provide fulfilment in the knowledge they are contributing to the future of sustainable agriculture through passing on skills and knowledge to a keen learner. For some farmers, it can also be a way into share farming or succession options.

Benefits for the trainee

A season-long on-farm traineeship gives a taste of what it's like to be a farmer or grower through being immersed in the field (pun intended!) more than short term volunteering might provide. Learning from an experienced, knowledgeable farmer is an enlivening and inspiring way to gain knowledge and confidence to continue your journey into organic farming.

Benefits for the food and farming sector

Training more people through practical placements to gain the skills necessary to become competent farmers and growers, is both cost and time effective. In the long term this can help to bring the average age of farmers down, whilst bringing new enthusiasm, ideas and drive in to UK farming.



Existing programmes

There are a handful of agroecological training opportunities currently running in the UK. Payment, accreditation, training and contact times all vary; some are run privately and some are run by registered organisations.

Here are a few or see *Useful links* for more information.

- The **Biodynamic Association** offers an accredited work-based diploma in Biodynamic Agriculture over two years, consisting of practical training, week-long residential training units, farm visits, tutorials and self-study. The course commands fees, and there is no obligation of the host farm to pay a wage.
- **Nourish Scotland New Farmer programme** is a yearlong vocational training and work placement programme for those wanting to develop their food growing, local marketing and small business skills.
- The **Soil Association** run two non-accredited opportunities under their Future Growers Scheme - a six month traineeship or the two year apprenticeship. Host farms pay minimum wage or above for full time work and the trainee/apprentice pays tuition fees to the Soil Association, in return for regular one-to-one tuition, a programme of seasonal seminars, field trip weekends and farm tours.
- The **Scottish Crofting Federation** run short courses for new entrants and aspiring crofters.
- **WWOOF** (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) provide short and long term learning where volunteer labour is exchanged for room and board.

Both the Soil Association and Biodynamic Association schemes are highly regarded with a substantial curriculum and excellent seminar and peer support networks. Various other accredited agroecological courses exist including, increasingly, those run by agricultural colleges. See www.soilassociation.org

In addition there are some farms that advertise residential on-farm learning experiences, which they may call 'long-term volunteering', 'internships', 'apprenticeships' or 'training', without an accompanying qualification, with or without wage or stipend.

There are also formal government-linked agricultural apprenticeship and traineeship schemes which are run and accredited for those aged over 16 years for apprentices and 16 - 24 for traineeships. For more information visit www.gov.uk

Should traineeships be paid?

It is generally agreed that farm workers deserve a fair remuneration for their work, and businesses are compelled by law to pay their employees at least the national minimum wage. The question of wages for trainees is one that people within the sector of sustainable food and farming have begun to discuss, and here we set out some of the views for and against, in order for you to make the decision and indeed add to the debate.

Some feel that non-waged labour (i.e. stipend or voluntary) hides the true cost of food which we should be demanding and that it could be seen as exploitation and at odds to the organic value of fairness. Arguments in favour of waged labour are that by paying, this recognises increased responsibility, and the skills and knowledge required for farming and growing.

The counter argument is that by providing opportunities to engage people on the land through unpaid training, this help farms where paying a trainee minimum wage would put financial strain on the business, or simply be financially impossible. Some also feel that unpaid traineeships provide opportunities for those with less experience who may not be ready to take on a paid role, and want to focus on learning new skills, and trying out a variety of tasks. The view on whether unpaid traineeships are exploitative is countered by the fact that some choose to pay fees to learn through structured courses, while others choose to learn on the job through these unpaid opportunities.

The fine line between exploitation and non-exploitation is linked to the extent to which the host is aware and active in caring for the welfare of the trainee, the quality of education and overall experience that the trainee receives in exchange for their labour and stipend.

Visit www.foodandlabour.ca for more information regarding the debate of waged/ non-waged labour for traineeships.

A trainee's experience

Chagfood Community Market Garden CSA

In 2015 I was the trainee at Chagfood CSA. I was there from the end of March until the end of October, arriving just after the potatoes had gone in the ground and leaving not long after they'd all been lifted. I worked alongside Ed and Nicky, the main growers, in all areas of the CSA, from preparing ground, to sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, packing boxes and sending newsletters.

I had a brilliant time and learnt so much about seeing a season through, and what it means to work a piece of ground which you're tied to with emotions and practicalities, as well as a lot of useful things about how to grow good healthy vegetables. My biggest regret is not recording my experiences in enough detail. Future trainees: write daily notes! And take all those photos. Weekly ones in the same place are good as it's hard to imagine what midsummer looks like when it's early spring.

When looking for a host farm, I was clear that I wanted to go somewhere that had hosted apprentices before and with welcoming friendly people! I wanted to learn about how to use horses as part of a modern farming system – Chagfood is the only horse powered CSA in England. Also, I'm used to working at a community gardening scale of food production, and wanted to experience somewhere bigger as well as somewhere I that could get about by bike and not feel (too) isolated.



Other top tips: Have a concrete idea of what you're going to do after you've finished your traineeship. Have a good background knowledge of horticulture theory before you go, or read as much as you can whilst you're there. Help out! Try not to wait till you're asked. Ask as many questions as you want to (whilst being sensitive to the situation) and don't be embarrassed about it. Have a 'project' of some kind to focus on– I wanted to learn about weeds and organic fieldscale tactics for working with / around / against them.”

Melanie Hall

School Farm CSA

Jenny Gellatly, Mellisa Harvey and Laura Creen at School Farm CSA provide a share in the harvest for 67 members from June through to December, grown on three rented acres. All of the produce is grown on site using minimum tillage organic techniques, and they also offer training, courses, volunteer days, and events. Building each year from 2013, they now offer two Trainee Grower positions as well

as a Community Engagement trainee. The aim of the traineeship is for the trainees to develop skills, knowledge and experience in order to feel confident to move into employment in the sector. It helps to bridge the gap in experience between completing a vocational horticulture course and being confident to work in the sector. Simultaneously trainees contribute ideas, energy and time towards the

project. School Farm encourage trainees to feel part of the team and the bigger picture of the farm.

The structure:

- Four days a week, eight hours per day
- Runs April to September
- Expenses of up to £100 a week
- Accommodation was in bell tent and will be replaced by a log cabin



“ Although I had previous experience of studying and working in horticulture, my traineeship with School Farm CSA gave me a platform to apply my skills and knowledge with a focus that I had not yet experienced - to provide a diverse range of delicious, organic vegetables for 50 families every week, for nine months of the year. Tasks included sowing salad, potting on tomatoes, thinning carrots, co-ordinating volunteers, saving coriander seed. I lifted crates of cucumbers and boxes of onions and cartons of tomato feed – I don't think I quite won the 'Biggest Bicep Competition', but I am proud to say I was close! I was well supported to make the most of my time with the CSA and their collective knowledge, whether it was learning about the legal structures of a Community Interest Company or having sole responsibility – from seed to fruit – for the tomato crop. I am now much more confident in my abilities as a grower, but also more secure within a community of people (growers, consumers, volunteers, friends) who are interested in local, organic and sustainable food, which is priceless.”

Cat Hess, trainee grower in 2015

Key considerations

Key considerations for hosts

When thinking about taking on a trainee there are many things to consider. Here are some questions to help you weigh up whether it is right for your farm.

- **Duration:** how long will your traineeship last? It may be that you only need help for six months of the year, or that the accommodation you provide is only suitable for summer months.
- **Knowledge and diversity:** Do you have sufficient knowledge and experience of running a successful agroecological enterprise to make a trainee's commitment to learn from you worthwhile? This includes business management, record keeping and planning farm activities. It might also extend to knowledge of regulations in your farming sector (e.g. animal movement), knowledge of the farming subsidy system, marketing skills and community engagement skills. Do you have enough work and diversity of work? A successful traineeship should offer the trainee opportunities to learn about all aspects of running a farm business. If not, could you consider 'sharing' your intern (and the associated costs) with a neighbouring farmer? Do you consider yourself a person who enjoys teaching others?
- **Practical arrangement:** Could you provide comfortable accommodation for a trainee, and additional provisions including food and internet? Are you happy to potentially share your home? If sharing a home it might be worth keeping rooms private for you and your family, and giving space for both yourself and trainee to relax and socialise both together and separately. Ensure that you can provide the right equipment and clothing for their placement or that the trainee arrives with it. Could you provide a stipend in exchange for their help with your farm? Legal considerations for this are covered later in *Employment law*.
- **Time:** Will you be able to work alongside your trainee for some hours each week, and will your trainee have company during/after work? It may be too much to ask them to work alone all day. Do you have sufficient time (and patience!) to explain the reasoning, techniques, health and safety etc. behind a task, without it taking too much from your valuable time? Bearing in mind that your trainee may be enthusiastic but inexperienced. We recommend making time each week to sit together and discuss some of the paper work behind running your farm (e.g. crop planning, animal movement forms) if possible.

- **Bigger picture:** Having an awareness of activities outside of the farm for your trainee to participate in - or a wider community to join - might provide a richer experience.
- **Stepping up:** After some time, could you offer roles where your trainee can take on responsibility, for example running a market, or coordinating harvesting? Offering challenges and some independence to your trainee will help engage and encourage them, and give you more time to attend to other parts of your farm. You also need to consider at what point your trainee is taking on a role that should be paid.

What to look for in a trainee

Potential farmers can come in all shapes and sizes but there are some qualities that you can look for in a trainee:

- **Team work:** Can they work in a team but are also motivated to work on their own?
- **Reliability:** Are they reliable, committed to the opportunity and the hard work it entails, and enthusiastic? Some hosts suggest that personality is as important, if not more important, than experience in apprentice applicants. Ideally you want to find someone who you can chat to & get on with for hours on end while working in the fields - if they can maintain their sense of humour after hours of thinning carrots in the rain then so much the better!
- **Physical Health:** Have they got a good level of health and fitness to take on the physical challenges of the traineeship?
- **Level of experience:** Have they got relevant experience? For example having done some volunteering on farms, or jobs that entail physical labour. Also will they benefit from the traineeship? Applicants may already have a wealth of experience and knowledge and therefore may not gain as much as others, be aware that a completely fresh trainee might take time to explain all the basics.
- **Personal goals:** Do they have an idea of what they want to do after their traineeship e.g. continue studying within a two year apprenticeship, work on other farms or run their own business? If possible arrange for potential trainees to visit to get a richer sense of the match.

Cae Tân CSA

Cae Tân is a biodynamic Community Supported Agriculture project based on four acres of land on long term lease on The Gower Peninsula, South Wales. Established in early 2015 by Tom O'Kane, Cae Tân supplies 50 households a week from July to January, and will be supplying 100 households by Summer 2016 due to an extensive waiting list.

Alongside growing food with and for their members, Cae Tân coordinate volunteering and training for students with special needs/ hard to reach groups, and school projects including their famous grow your own pizza project! This activity provides diversity of work and extra income streams.

Their first trainee placement was funded by Just Growth Wales for six months. After the funding came to an end they continued to employ her as an essential member of the project two days a week in the winter and five days a week in the summer. Tom aims to host future traineeships although issues with planning and on site accommodation means the idea is on hold.



The traineeship involves all aspects of Cae Tân: in addition to food production the the trainee works with youth groups and volunteers, hosts the members veg collection point on a weekly basis, and stands in for the main grower in absence. Having a trainee created more social dynamic which has brought in more volunteer involvement and was an essential helping hand in year one of the project.

The structure:

- Five days a week
- Ran April - October
- Trainee was paid a wage of £6.50/hour
- Accommodation was off site, provided along with food by the trainee

It's also worth considering what you want in a trainee. For example, you could choose someone with relevant experience who is reliable, competent and easy to train - 'a safe bet'. But you could also choose to take on someone who brings in different skills from a different background. This person may require more initial training, but bring other benefits, such as a fresh take on marketing, customer engagement or even some artistic input. And after all, everyone has to start somewhere...

Key considerations for trainees

Before you embark on a traineeship it is good to reflect on your motivation, goals and practical situation. To start you might want to consider:

Are you passionate and enthusiastic about working sustainably on the land?

Have you got experience of working outside every day doing what may be physically demanding work? Think about whether or not you could sustain several months with less financial input, be happy living in a rural area and in what could be quite basic accommodation.

Are you sufficiently engaged by farming to make the most of a traineeship by reading around your subject, and attending events and farm walks?

What to look for in a host farm

When applying for a traineeship, start by thinking about what you want to learn from it and make sure that the placement covers training and experience in those areas. Are you an animal or vegetable person, or more suited to Community Supported Agriculture or care farming? Do you like food processing/ value added products? Will it set you up for the 'next step' in your journey?

Visit the farm and host before you commit, to confirm that it is what you expected, and that you get on with the host. It is important to make sure the traineeship is going to give you everything you need.

Tell your host about the things you are especially interested in, or the skills you particularly want to learn - don't ask, don't get!

It's important that by the end of the traineeship you have planned your next step so you can put your hard work into practice, so it is good to have the longer term plan in mind when taking on your traineeship.

Other considerations

Employment Law

The legalities of hosting an informal trainee differ depending on if a stipend is included as part of the traineeship.

If paying a stipend:

According to ACAS, an employment law advice organisation, if your traineeship involves a stipend payment you may be exempt from paying National Minimum Wage under the "family member exemption". For this exemption to apply, "workers must either be a member of the employer's family, or live in the employer's family home". For farmers hosting an traineeship, this may apply if the trainee resides in the family home - or caravan/ outhouse etc - and is "not a member of that family, but it treated as such (in regards to the provision of living accommodation, meals and the sharing of tasks and leisure activities)". Of course this will be dependant on your exact situation.

If you are not paying a stipend:

The position is voluntary and as such volunteers are not entitled to national minimum wage. However if there is a contract of employment, even if not written, this requires minimum wage to be paid. Care should be taken for a voluntary traineeship not to sway into employment and to ensure that the relationship with the trainee recognises their voluntary position. Practical ways to minimise the risk of a contract situation:

- *review language:* using language that does not indicate employment such as 'traineeship agreement' rather than 'contract', 'trainee role' rather than 'job description', 'expectations/intentions' rather than 'requirement/ obligations'.
- *reimburse expenses only:* any paid work should be arranged separately as employment/self employment

Unpaid traineeships won't affect any state benefits that trainees might receive.

While the information in this section aims to give basic advice, employment law is a fast changing legal area and we recommend checking your legal position with ACAS (see *Useful links* section).

Hindon Farm

Hindon Farm is an award-winning 1500 acre organic farm on Exmoor, with sheep, cattle and pigs. There is a strong emphasis on conservation, and the land is owed by the National Trust. Owners Roger and Penny Webber have hosted at least 20 apprentices/trainees over many years. Often these have been 16 or 17 year olds, although apprentices at this age can be problematic due to a lack in experience and work ethic.

However many of the apprentices have stayed in agriculture and were a real pleasure to have on the farm, whilst also being keen to learn. One even came back to work at Hindon and stayed for 15 years. The key to success is the apprentice having a good attitude to work, being keen to learn, and being prepared to work hard. Unlike an employee, the apprentice/trainee is there to learn and interact with the host to a large degree.



“**Apprenticeships offer a potentially great opportunity for young people to learn and gain experience at the same time, something quite unique.**”

Roger Webber

All apprentices at Hindon do some basic work experience on the farm before going on to an ‘apprenticeship’. Apprentices have lived on the farm in the past, but more recently they’ve preferred to find young people living locally who can commute. They are paid a subsistence wage and work alongside other members of staff. They all do both basic and more complex jobs, giving them a good insight in to what it takes to run a farm. You cannot become a farm manager without having done the basics first!

The structure:

- Four or five days a week, 8:30 - 5:30 (occasional weekends)
- Varying duration
- No accommodation provided as they target locals who can commute
- Pay is at least minimum wage

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 place duties on companies and individuals to make sure that adequate provision is made for health and safety at work. Employers must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees and any others who may be affected by what they do. However, if there are less than five employees you don't have to have a written plan.

As farmers and growers, you use management systems to make sure that crops and animals are kept healthy and productive, and to enable you to stay in business. Managing health and safety is no different – it ensures that you, your workers, family members and others are kept safe at work. This advice is aimed at directors and managers but should also help supervisors and owners of small businesses.

For more information visit www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg270.pdf

Insurance

As a minimum requirement you must have Employer's Liability insurance for your farm business. In the eyes of insurers a volunteer, trainee, apprentice or employee are all effectively employees. If in doubt discuss your requirements with a specialist agricultural insurer, such as NFU Mutual or Cornish Mutual, who are very familiar with the insurance needs of farmers and growers.

Communication

We reap what we sow. It is important to cultivate a good relationship between the farmer and trainee and ensure that both feel they can be heard, and that any issues are 'nipped in the bud'. While respect and appreciation is important, clear communication is the key. It starts before the traineeship begins and should be kept throughout the traineeship with regular catch ups, addressing any problems when they occur.

Investing time up-front to set clear expectations of the traineeship is paramount. This could include everything from sometimes unpredictable long stretches of hard physical labour through the week, to policies about visitors, to when's the best time to ask questions. Checking in on a regular basis, such as weekly informal meetings, forestalls misunderstandings. Meetings may consist of the host laying out a plan for tasks to be performed during the next week, offering feedback from the previous week, discussing any concerns or frustrations, and addressing questions.



Writing an agreement

An agreement between host and trainee is necessary to ensure terms, conditions, expectations and other important information is clear. This is not a contract as this would imply employment rights and responsibilities (see Employment law section), but sets out the expectations of each party in advance and can be referred back to in check-ups or if problems arise.

Trial period

Having a trial period (e.g. one month) is good practice for both the trainee and the host, and being clear that if the partnership is not working for either of you, then the trainee may have to leave at the end of it and the position re-advertised. However open communication may resolve issues without the trainee leaving. Have a review meeting at the end of the trial, and if you both decide to continue, consider ways that it might be improved for the benefit of all. Be clear in your advert or terms about what will happen if the trainee is asked to or decides to leave further down the line, for example this might include a notice period. Also recognise that as the traineeship is not a legal contract the farmer may not be able to hold the trainee to their obligation, especially if they are offered paid work.

Trill Farm Gardens

A 2.5-acre market garden run on a 300 acre farm, Ash and Kate mainly sell to local restaurants around East Devon and West Dorset. They take WWOOFers three days a week and two part time employees as well as a trainee. At the beginning of the season Ash and the trainee discuss what they both wish to get out of their experience

and whether the trainee has a particular interest. Self-directed theoretical learning follows a curriculum and is aided by books that Ash provides. There is much opportunity for discussion in each other's company on the field, although due to the pressures of summer work there is little one-to-one time.

The structure:

- Three to four days a week, eight hours per day
- Runs for around eight months from April to November
- Stipend of £50 per week
- Most food and full board is provided – accommodation is a static caravan



“ I came as an an aspiring farmer to Trill Farm Gardens from a city job with a lot of WWOOFing experience but little long-term experience. Being at Trill satisfied my yearning to be immersed in sustainable, innovative land work in the country – the hard, dedicated work was balanced with the satisfaction of gaining new skills and being part of a vibrant work culture. The clear communication and feedback during my time was essential. Doing a traineeship has given me the confidence to produce food on four acres at a collective growing project in the farm I now live on.”

Sophia Campbell, Tinkers Bubble Farm

The selection process

Advertising the post

Working out where you advertise is dependent on whether you want to get the most eager gardeners or would like to bring in people from as many different backgrounds as possible. If you are looking for a wide range of people then advertise in local shops, library, community centre or job centre. Other places to advertise include Groundspring Network for beginner farmers, the Soil Association Organic Marketplace, OGA Growers' Forum, Landworkers' Alliance and WWOOF UK, Pasture Fed Livestock Association forum, Community Supported Agriculture network, Permaculture Association, Project Dirt (see *Useful links* section) or the various Sustain networks.

Scoresheet

After the closing date, applicants should be judged on how well they meet your criteria. The easiest way to do this is by using a score sheet (see Appendix 3 for an example). Make sure the criteria you use here matches any preferences or requirements specified in your advert. The score sheet will help you to decide who is suitable to interview and select the best if oversubscribed.

Interviews

Top tips for interviews are:

- Write open questions as opposed to yes/no questions to encourage candidates to tell you about themselves. Tailor your questions to your particular circumstance, (see Appendix 4 for sample questions).
- Have at least two people interviewing.
- Avoid spending too much time writing in the interview as it can stifle the conversation.
- The interview can take 20 to 30 minutes but it is good to have discussion or reflection time after each interviewee.
- You can make your initial decision before conferring with the other interviewers so you are not influenced by them.
- Inform interviewees how long it will take to make your decision (and allow yourself enough time).

Timeline

- Leave at least three weeks from the day you first advertise to the closing date for applications so enough people will see your advert and apply.
- Give at least a week between this closing date and the interviews themselves so people have time to make arrangements.
- Allow one calendar month between the interviews and the start of the traineeship so that people can give a month's notice to other commitments that have.



Making a traineeship syllabus

Creating a 'curriculum' to frame the essential knowledge you think a trainee should cover during the year might be useful. This can include knowledge learned in practice and in theory, and can be tailored to suit your holding. The table below highlights topics could include:

Horticulture	Livestock and dairy
Site selection and suitability	Raising livestock from birth to slaughter
Soil health and fertility building	Pasture rotation and management
Crop rotation	Animal health and nutrition
Cultivation	Animal welfare
Propagation	Operating farm machinery
Crop production	Milking and milk processing
Green manures	Record keeping
Weeds	Business management
Pests and diseases	
Harvesting/packing	
Record keeping	
Cropping plan and business management	

A sample horticulture syllabus is available in Future Farmers I: a guide to running an urban food growing traineeship (www.sustainweb.org/publications) and on Groundspring's website (www.groundspring.wix.com/groundspring).



Community Supported Agriculture UK (CSA)

If you run a CSA farm then you may want to cover other aspects involved in running such a scheme as well as providing your trainees with training related to food production. These may include:

1. Getting started: the why, who and what of establishing a CSA:

- Different CSA farm management systems
- Planning a CSA production system for livestock/crop
- Risk management, trading, community requirements, quantifying demand, resource assessment

2. Engaging communities and facilitating sustained community involvement in CSAs:

- Developing farmer/consumer relations
- Communicating with members, giving updates and receiving feedback

3. Education and awareness raising:

- Greater consumer contact with farms – ‘putting the farmer’s face on the food’
- Promoting the consumption of local seasonal foods
- Increasing local, regional and national food security
- Introducing children to farming and local foods

4. Legal structures and governance:

- Writing the business plan and deciding an organisational and legal structure
- Role of a board and the governing document
- Operational procedures and staff and committee roles and responsibilities.

5. Finance and funding:

- Funding options available (shares, subscriptions, loans, grants, donations, crowdfunding)
- Importance of planning and budgeting
- Financial viability for the farmer

These ideas are based on *Community Supported Agriculture - A Teaching Programme for Degree Students in Agriculture and related subjects* Prepared by: Soil Association, Plumpton College, University of Brighton, Tablehurst Farm CSA.



Other learning methods

As well as practical tasks based on the holding, some trainees may also be interested in incorporating some more formal technical education and learning. Distance learning agroecological courses include:

- **The Advanced Training Partnership** runs regular modules in sustainable and effective livestock production (www.atp-pasture.org.uk)
- **The Organic College in Ireland** runs courses in organic fruit, vegetables and herbs and necessitates attendance at their Practical Days for full certification (www.organiccollege.com)
- **Scotland’s Rural College** provides a three year part time MSc in Organic Farming including a few weekend tutorials and a short study tour (www.sruc.ac.uk)

It is good to suggest resources to support the trainee’s self-directed theoretical learning. The Groundspring Network website has a growing list of resources for beginners to reference (www.groundspring.wix.com/groundspring).

Lending books that have been useful for you may also help, as well as making time for the trainee to attend relevant events, any other available training and local farm walks. This will benefit them and your holding as they will bring more skills, knowledge and ideas. You might want to consider contributing financially to support their learning.

On top of working alongside your trainee and their self-directed learning, it is useful to make regular time for one-to-one chats for questions and to check in with the trainee.

Next steps

For anyone considering or ready to take on a trainee, this document provides a start but there are other organisations and resources that can help. It is helpful to contact other farmers, networks and organisations involved and to find out more contact the Groundspring Network or the Organic Growers Alliance or visit one of the website in the *Useful Links* section.

Useful links

The National Apprenticeship Service

www.apprenticeships.org.uk

This is funded by the Skills Agency and provides information on formal apprenticeship training.

Soil Association

www.soilassociation.org

The Soil Association is UK's leading membership charity campaigning for healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use. They run an organic certification scheme and an informal training programme with trainees and apprentices placed on commercial organic farms around the country for six months or two years.

Biodynamic Association

www.biodynamic.org.uk/training

The Biodynamic Association runs practical farm and horticultural trainings supplemented by guided study and seminars. The trainings started in the early 1990s and has been certified since 2010.

WWOOF

www.wwof.org.uk

WWOOF UK is a membership charity, teaching people about organic growing and low-impact lifestyles through hands-on experience in the UK.

Employment Law

ACAS provides up to date advice on employment legalities www.acas.org.uk. Find your local solicitor at <http://solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk>

Insurance

www.nfumutual.co.uk

NFU Mutual

Case studies

Tamarisk Farm

www.tamariskfarm.co.uk

Chagfood Community Market Garden CSA

www.chagfood.org.uk

School Farm CSA

www.schoolfarmcsa.org.uk

Cae Tân CSA

www.gowerpower.coop/caetan

Hindon Farm

www.hindonfarm.co.uk

Trill Farm Gardens

www.trillfarm.co.uk

Appendix 1 - advert content

The advert should include the following information:

- Name and address of farm
- Brief introduction to host farm and people living/working there
- Types of activities the trainee will undertake
- Skills and experience you expect the trainee to have when they arrive
- Skills and experiences the trainee can expect to learn/have when they leave
- Duration of placement, start date, hours of work, days off, holiday time
- Type of accommodation, remuneration and other benefits (e.g. food) being offered
- Specific commitment from host detailing contact hours and/or one-to-one training
- Application process (e.g. CV and cover letter), closing date (if applicable), contact details, trial period

Appendix 2 - sample interview questions

1. Why would you like to do this traineeship?
2. What experience do you have growing food?
3. Can you tell us about any practical DIY skills you have?
4. What do you understand about the aims of [our organisation]?
5. How do you feel about the physical work involved in gardening and harvesting all day and working outdoors in all weathers?
6. Part of the traineeship involves learning to lead the volunteers at our market gardens. Could you tell us about any experience you have had leading a team or organising other people?
7. The traineeship involves commitment. You would need to attend XX day a week throughout the XX months, working in the garden in the day and packing in the evening. How do you feel about making such a commitment?
8. What qualities do you need to be able to run a market garden?
9. How do you think you will benefit from this traineeship?
10. In the long term do you see yourself growing food as an income or as part of your income?
11. Have you got any questions you would like to ask us?

Partner organisations

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Network helps promote and support CSA projects throughout the UK. Community Supported Agriculture is a partnership between farmers and consumers in which the responsibilities, risks and rewards of farming are shared. CSA helps to address increasing concerns about the lack of transparency, sustainability and resilience of our food system. It is one of the most radical ways that we can re-take control and ownership of our food system. Farmers receive a more stable and secure income and closer connection with their community, and consumers benefit by eating fresh healthy local food, feeling more connected to the land where their food is grown and learning new skills.

www.communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk
@csanetwork

Groundspring Network is a grassroots network

organised by new entrants to connect, support and signpost beginners in agroecological landwork. Groundspring volunteers spread support resources through our new website, social media and a packed quarterly newsletter. Groundspring is the new entrant wing of the Landworkers Alliance, a producer-led organisation and spokesbody of agroecological small scale farms and family farmers that aims to raise awareness about the role of small scale farming and the obstacles they face.

www.groundspring.wix.com/groundspring
www.landworkersalliance.org.uk
@groundspringuk

Organic Growers Alliance exists to support, represent and promote the work, livelihood and development of organic horticultural producers throughout the UK. It has a membership of around 250 organic growers, has an active website and forum, and produces a quarterly magazine The Organic Grower. Engaging more young people in organic horticulture is, and has been, a specific aim of the organisation. Many of its members already take apprentices and trainees on their holdings.

www.organicgrowersalliance.co.uk

Pasture Fed Livestock Association is a community of UK farmers championing the virtues of pastoral farming by providing a distinct identity for meat from animals that eat only grass and forage crops for their entire lives, without the use of cereal grains. The association's Pasture for Life certification mark guarantees that meat has been 100% grass-fed, giving consumers looking for tasty healthy meat the assurance they are seeking. It also guarantees the wider environmental and animal welfare benefits that pastured livestock systems can represent.

www.pastureforlife.org
@PastureForLife

Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming, advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity.

We represent around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level and hundreds more involved in our projects. We also run a network of food growing spaces in London, including peri-urban farms.

www.sustainweb.org
@UKSustain
www.capitalgrowth.org
@capital_growth

FUTURE FARMERS II

A guide to running a farm-based agroecological traineeship

A joint Groundspring Network,
Landworkers Alliance,
Organic Growers Alliance
and Sustain publication
March 2016

Groundspring is the new entrant wing of the Landworkers Alliance, a producer-led organisation and spokesbody of agroecological small scale farms and family farmers that aims to raise awareness about the role of small scale farming and the obstacles they face.



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sustain

the alliance for better food and farming

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming

www.sustainweb.org

@UKsustain