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The Landworkers' Alliance

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AFTER A-LEVELS: NEW REPORT SHOWS ATTRACTION OF A CAREER IN AGROECOLOGY

- New report by The Landworkers' Alliance today: "[The Attraction of Agroecology, and the barriers faced by new entrants pursuing agroecological farming and land work](#)".
- The report highlights a lack of training and paid work opportunities for young people keen on agroecological farming, which holds solutions to food and climate crises.
- The LWA urges UK Governments to include nature-friendly farming in school curriculums and careers advice, and support more training and apprenticeships.

The Landworkers' Alliance is urging UK Governments to incorporate agroecological farming and food production into school curriculums and careers advice so that young people – including those who have just received A-level results – are able to consider this rewarding and skilled career when making decisions about their life.

It's part of a set of recommendations in the LWA's new report, released today, *The Attraction of Agroecology: and the barriers faced by new entrants pursuing agroecological farming and land work*. Full report [here](#).

The report is based on interviews with people currently working or hoping to work in agroecology, who explain why they are attracted to it and the barriers they face. The average age of a farmer in the UK is 59 years old, but agroecology attracts a younger workforce with three quarters of LWA members under 50 years of age, and half of them under 40.

Agroecological farming practices aim to work with wildlife, mitigate climate change and give power to farmers and their local communities to create systems best suited to their needs. It is already a fulfilling and rewarding job for the few that know about it, and applies many of the sustainable farming practices that UK governments are heralding as part of their post-Brexit agricultural transition plans. But the UK urgently needs to scale up this kind of farming for ecological resilience, long-term food security, to create and support new jobs and revitalise rural economies.

Jo Kamal is a community food activist and grower working in London who took part in the research. They said:

"Farming and food growing weren't really options for me growing up, they just never seemed like a possible route. I don't know if it was because of my family or maybe wider societal

factors and expectations of success. When I was younger, success didn't look like food growing, but it does now – I've decided what success looks like for me."

"It's important to me to have a positive effect on the land that I'm working with, rather than against it. It's also important to have opportunities to develop and have a rewarding career path. So many land work opportunities are voluntary, and that's really hard, particularly if you are working class."

Jo is a rare example of a new entrant who found paid entry-level work through the Government-funded Kickstart Scheme, but this scheme has now ended. Much more needs to be done to create and fill new jobs suitable for people at the start of their career, especially for those not considering further education.

The LWA's report highlights the lack of government support for new entrants in England in particular, and the Government's failure thus far to address real barriers including access to land, employment opportunities and access to finance.

The New Entrant Support Scheme - the pilot phase of which is being launched this year, currently focuses on boosting business and entrepreneurship skills, but LWA believe that future phases of funding will need to focus on addressing the full range of barriers identified in this report.

Holly Tomlinson, LWA's New Entrants Policy Coordinator, said:

"Contrary to the widespread view that today's young people are not interested in farming, many are really attracted to the dignified, varied, skilful, team-based land work that is found in agroecological farming systems. The goal of producing sustainable, healthy food and restoring soil health and biodiversity is a key motivation for people who have grown up facing the climate crisis.

To grow this crucial sector, we need direct financial support and training for new entrants at all stages of their journey, alongside broader system changes that would not only support agroecological new entrants but also help create a more sustainable, vibrant and localised food system."

The report's main recommendations are:

1. Build skills and knowledge by incorporating agroecological farming and food production into school curriculums and careers advice, supporting on-farm apprenticeships and accredited training programmes and investing in mentorship schemes and incubator farms.
2. Enable access to land and housing through the introduction of government funded land-matching and share-farming services, the provision of low-interest loans for land trusts, and reforming planning laws to accommodate small farming enterprises including new dwellings for landworkers.
3. Provide direct financial support for new businesses and remove area-based thresholds for agricultural subsidy payments.

4. Support resilient local supply chains through the introduction of schemes such as dynamic public procurement.

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Notes to editors:

- Images available here with caption and credit information: <https://bit.ly/3QQUXjm>
- Interviews can be arranged with Jo Kamal and Holly Tomlinson - contact Press officer Joanna on 07740 932466 or Holly on 07737 970229 or holly.tomlinson@landworkersalliance.org.uk
- The Landworkers' Alliance is a grassroots union of farmers, foresters and land-based workers in the UK. It is part of a global movement representing 200 million small-scale farmers under the umbrella group La Via Campesina. <https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/>
- Farming is a devolved issue with different policies in each UK nation.