

GETTING STARTED CAREERS

Edited by Danusia Osiowy
01772 799 413
danusia.osiowy@fginsight.com

SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE'S NEXT GENERATION

Whether you are from a non-farming background or wish to progress an existing business model, Tesco's Future Farmer Foundation aims to help those individuals pushing forward in their agricultural careers.

Make a confident start in agriculture

Enthusiastic young farmers wishing to make their mark on the industry can gain recognition through Tesco's Future Farmer Foundation.

The retailer launched the Future Farmer Foundation last year to help talented and determined young people make a confident start in the world of agriculture; whether they are looking to take over the family farm, embark on a new farming venture, or have an

ambition to enter the industry for the first time.

This intake, the third for the foundation, will build on the programme which has helped about 100 young people already.

It aims to develop the business skills of the participants and build their understanding of the importance of an effective supply chain for a modern, sustainable farming business.

The initiative, project managed by Promar International, is a

12-month programme open to anyone aged from 20-35 on October 1.

Although the programme is free, applicants should be able to commit to a minimum of 12 days for participation.

Promar senior consultant Rebecca Lewis, who is involved with the programme on a day-to-day basis, says: "Applicants can be from any farming sector, can be new entrants, existing farmers or farm employees.

"While some participants are

farmer's sons and daughters, nearly 30 per cent have come from outside the industry but are making their mark in farming.

Range of topics

"The programme is designed to cover a broad range of topics, but the emphasis is on developing business and leadership skills.

"Participants will leave the programme with new skills and knowledge to apply within their business, a deeper understanding of the sup-

ply chain, a network of contacts from across the industry and the support of a group of like-minded peers, and critically the confidence to influence and make decisions, plan and execute their ideas."

Training is delivered by experts from across agriculture and is supported by food and farming businesses including ABP, Adams Foods, Anglia Free-Range Eggs, Arla, Bayer CropScience, Branston, Cranswick Country Foods, Muller-Wiseman, Noble

Foods, St Merryn Foods and Thanet Earth.

Future Farmers will also have the opportunity to apply for a Tesco International Scholarship, worth up to £5,500.

The closing date for applying for this year's intake is August 29.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on Tesco's Future Farmer's Foundation and how to apply, go to www.tescofuturefarmerfoundation.com

CHRISTINA HUTCHINGS, DEVON

After completing the programme, Christina Hutchings made the decision to return to the family farming business in Devon.

CHRISTINA helped her father at their farm in Witheridge, near Crediton, from a young age, before pursuing a separate, successful career working in the energy sector for 12 years.

But she decided she wanted to return to the family farm, which combines 210,000 broiler places, with an up to 250-head store cattle finishing enterprise.

Her role at the farm involves doing most of the office work including the accounts and all paperwork. She is currently designing her own cattle management software with an IT consultant alongside handling the cattle and helping with the poultry.

For her, the biggest challenge has been reintegrating with the sector after such a long absence, and learning about all the new developments.

She says: "Though I grew up on a farm, I had been enjoying a really good career away. I have always continued to help dad with the paperwork during



Christina Hutchings made a return to the sector after a long absence.

my absence, and came back to help on the farm at busy periods. About a year ago, I decided I wanted to come back to agriculture, and the prospect was really exciting.

Wider view

"When I heard about the foundation I thought it would help me get a wider view and ensure I could really help the business.

And so here I am, a year later, having learned a great deal and built a really strong network.

"Having been out of the sector for 12 years, the most important thing was to rebuild my confidence and to equip myself with the knowledge I needed to succeed. The sector has come on leaps and bounds and is so much more technical now.

"There are all sorts of considerations to bear in mind when future-proofing your farm, from the use of renewable energy to understanding, and getting benefit from, the latest precision farming equipment. In order to succeed you need to commit to continual learning, to growing your knowledge of the types of technology which can make your enterprise more efficient.

"Forming a strong network is crucial, allowing you to get out there and meet people who can help you learn about these sorts of subjects, attending meetings and workshops being run in your area. The intake from my year has set up a Facebook group to stay in touch.

"There were plenty of things I didn't understand when I came back, but it's about putting yourself out there and asking questions.

"To be honest, I'm delighted to be back. It's the best decision I could have made."

BETH BENNETT, SUFFOLK

New entrant Beth Bennett has used her time with the foundation to extend her knowledge as she fast tracks her career in poultry production.

FROM a non-farming background, Beth's career in farming started with painting barns when she was 13 and progressed through harvest jobs and egg collection before she decided while studying for A-levels she wanted to work full-time in agriculture.

After working in a local egg packing plant she took a job helping to look after a herd of pedigree Red Poll cattle for Harry Irwin, director of Anglia Free-Range Eggs, a business established in 2010.

In September 2012, when she was 19, she was offered the position of managing a 16,000-hen free-range unit and has been with the company ever since.

She says: "My job is about the day-to-day management of the flock, maintaining high welfare standards and ensuring we produce good quality eggs for customers.

"During my time on the programme, I have been able to build on my practical background and in particular have learnt a great deal about the financial aspects of managing a unit.

"That has included business planning and investment appraisal, as well as working on a business plan with my mentor Ben Chandler, who I work closely with at Anglia Free-Range Eggs.

"My plan looked at the costs of establishing and running a modern free-range unit, so was totally relatable to my current

role and will definitely help me and the business as I put into practice what I have learned."

Beth found one of the other major benefits of the programme was the exposure to the other participants.

"My role can sometimes be quite solitary, so it was great to meet people from different industries. The cross over between the other participants has been really useful as we share experiences and challenge each other's ideas."

Scholarship

Beth was also awarded one of two international scholarships presented by the foundation. Her proposal will focus on the challenge faced by the industry due to the proposed beak treatment ban next year.

"I want to look closely at better understanding the link between genetics and natural poultry behaviours to help minimise aggression in

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BETH BENNETT

commercial free-range layers, while ensuring the longevity and welfare of the hen and maintenance of the egg shell quality.

"My scholarship will allow me to look at how management, nutrition and genetics influence aggression. I plan to go to Germany and Holland with two genetics companies to understand how they produce a commercial hen and will spend time with Bristol University to further understand chicken behaviours."



Beth Bennett found meeting other participants really useful.

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