

# Horticulture

For horticulture and potato members of the NFU

# MEDIA INFORMATION

**N**FU Horticulture has a well-earned reputation as the authoritative publication for the horticulture industry.

Published four times a year it is circulated nationally to the horticultural members of the National Farmers' Union.

These members are the top professional growers of field

vegetables, potatoes, protected crops, ornamentals, plant raisers, soft and top fruits.

As members of the NFU they tend to be the larger, progressive growers.

NFU Horticulture is more than the voice of NFU policy, each issue contains news, views and analysis across the sector plus interviews with

key figures and a balanced insight into the industry.

This publication is an exclusive benefit of membership and provides advertisers with an unparalleled opportunity to reach an exclusive cross section of the entire horticultural market.



It's the only magazine out there that covers the whole potato and edible and ornamental horticulture industry from a growers perspective, and it's current format means it gets passed around and read by several people in the business. It's good to have an informative publication that you can sit down and read, with a cup of tea, away from the computer screen

Guy Poskitt



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**Opinion**

**GUEST COLUMN**

**Soft robots get the grip of plant handling**

It's easy to understand why the horticulture industry has remained so reliant on human manual labour long after other industries have converted to automation and robotics. Car assembly is comparatively simple to automate because the components have been manufactured to known designs. But in horticulture, the picture is very different. Plant material is inherently variable in form and function. Even two plants of the same species can differ enough to 'confuse' a standard manufacturing robot. Couple that with constantly

Traditional robotic systems use highly-g geared, stiff motors to create movement in hard metal arms, grippers and so on to perform tasks. While making them fast and precise, it also means they're rigid and so potentially dangerous to people who may need to work alongside - many need guards - or damaging to produce. New 'soft' robotic systems are more forgiving, either because they include damper mechanisms in the robots' joints or are made of softer materials. Many mimic the behaviour of biological systems and aim to

On the other hand, handling heavy boxes is demanding for a human, but can be done all day by the robot. Deploying the two capabilities together would make a dispatch line far more efficient. Even more exciting is the potential for new ways to program robots without the need for expertise in computer coding - so-called programming by demonstration.

**Policy news**

**Inside our policy work**

A snapshot of the NFU's work and developments in the sector

**SCALE UP SEASONAL PILOT, SAYS NFU**  
The NFU is calling for the seasonal workers' pilot to be extended from 2,500 permits to 30,000 next year - and to become a fully-functioning scheme growing up to 70,000 visas from 2021. The scaling up would ensure systems are tested and that industry is prepared. The NFU also says that if there are 30,000 visas next year, they should be shared between 10 operators, a combination of labour providers and direct recruiters, with tendering to begin this September.

**SUPPORT FOR HORT**  
The NFU made a strong case for the UK develops its own agriculture policy when our experts joined the regular Edible Horticulture Roundtable. Speaking to Defra's productivity and food strategy teams, the NFU called for a new UK producer organisation scheme, improved access to grant schemes, and for recognition of the health and environmental benefits of fruit, vegetables, plants and flowers within government food strategy.

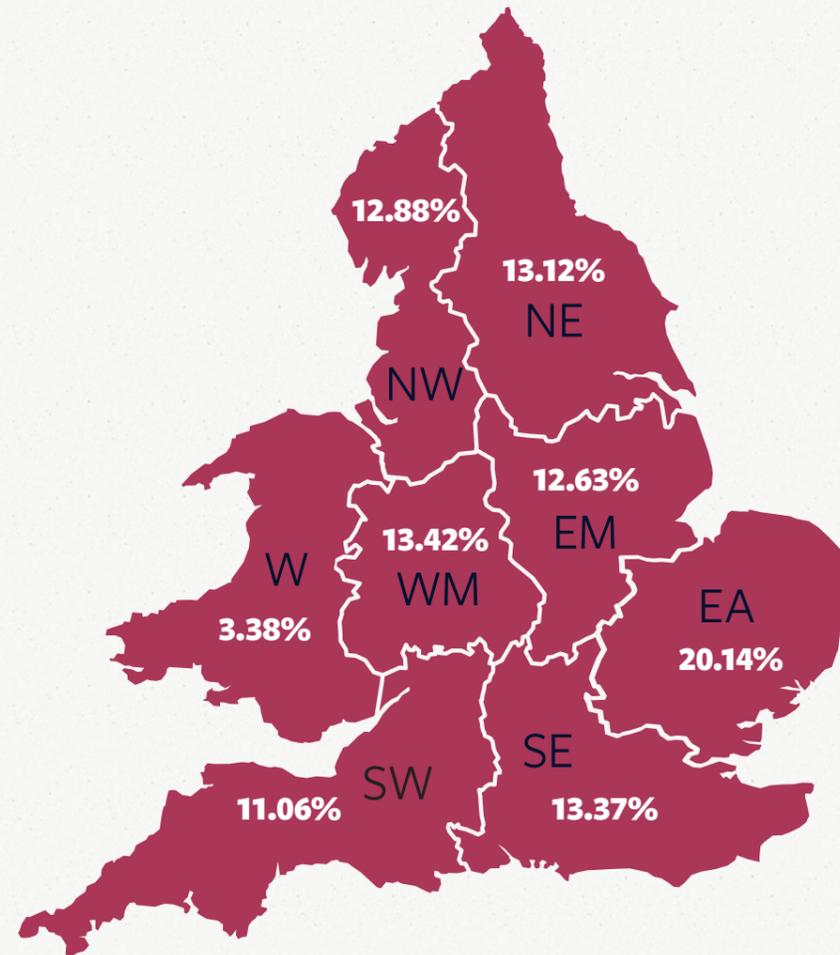
**PRODUCTIVE WORK**  
The second round of Defra's Countryside Productivity Small Grants Scheme features a wider range of eligible items - including a number of interest to the horticultural sector. Following NFU feedback, water treatment systems, chlorophyll and nitrogen sensors, ripeness spectrometers, hose readers, GPS, frost fans, thermal imaging and digital communications kit have been added. A total pot of £5 million is available, and growers can apply for grants of up to £12,000.

## HORTICULTURE MEMBERS BY SECTOR



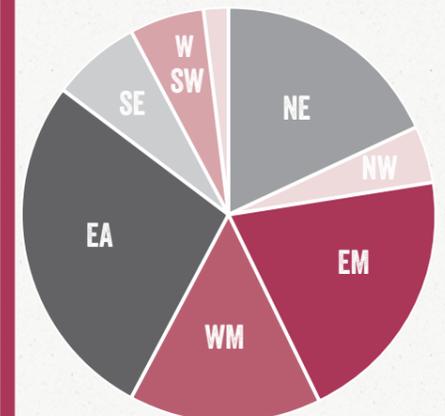
## NATIONAL COVERAGE

- MEMBERS BY REGION



## ACRES BY REGION

- NORTH EAST - 18.20%
- NORTH WEST - 4.54%
- EAST MIDLANDS - 20.21%
- WEST MIDLANDS - 15.06%
- EAST ANGLIA - 27.50%
- SOUTH EAST - 6.75%
- SOUTH WEST - 6%
- WALES - 1.74%



**“AS WITH SO MANY ISSUES CONNECTED WITH BREXIT, OUR AIM IS TO ENSURE UK GROWERS ARE NOT DISADVANTAGED”**

# 5,500

MEMBERS RECEIVE HORTICULTURE QUARTERLY

