

NEWSLETTER UPDATE

AGRI-HORT SKILLS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Newsletter Date 02 Sept. 2020



A new professional body - The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture

What a challenging year 2020 is proving to be and yet the industry has once again shown it has phenomenal resilience. The ongoing Covid 19 pandemic, extremes of weather, a looming Brexit, and the prospect of a recession at a time of major policy change all point to yet more turbulence for farmers and growers.

The national employment landscape is likely to change dramatically as we look ahead and, while this will be tough for society, it does present an unprecedented opportunity for agriculture and horticulture to position itself as a great place to work and reach out to a potential new workforce.

Against this backdrop, there could not be a better time for us to set up a new professional body to provide clear direction for all on skills, standards, and career routes in the industry.

Progress made

Our aim is for the new Institute to transform the industry so that it is universally capable of creating profit, protecting the planet, and building a workforce fit for the future. Great progress has been made on this ambition thanks to the extraordinary support we have had from stakeholders, combined with the work of the Agri- Hort Skills Leadership Group (SLG).

Since we last reported back to industry, we have agreed a name for the new professional body. It will be called the Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture (TIAH) and its core purpose will be to lead a new skills strategy for everyone working in primary production in England. The Institute will be a coordinating force, working alongside the wealth of excellent training providers and stakeholders to drive a positive change towards people development and lifelong learning.

Planning and scoping work is now underway for the interactive virtual space, which will carry key information, careers advice, CPD and links to training providers. The virtual space will act like a shop window of content and resources for those already working in agriculture and horticulture and for new entrants who know very little about the industry and want guidance.

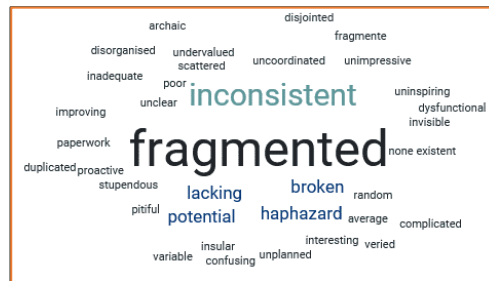
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Engaging with stakeholders

At the Oxford Farming Conference 'Future of Farming' Fringe event session, attendees described the approach to skills and training in the industry today moving to how they would like the industry to be viewed in the future:



Where we are now



Where we want to get to

Two key meetings have been held with stakeholders in the last six months. One was in the House of the Lords, chaired by The Lord Curry of Kirkharle CBE, which was very successful and resulted in the decision to recommend that a consultation group should be set up to help shape the design of the Institute going forward.

The second meeting was held virtually to establish the consultation group made up of training providers, trade bodies, retailers, universities, and other interested parties. These supporters have agreed to help shape the future of the professional body and influence the business case, the delivery model, membership plans and standards.

The Institute has strong support from the NFU. The NFU Policy Board recently approved the proposal to establish the Institute and we have Tom Bradshaw, the vice president of the NFU, and Rachel Chambers, the NFU Skills Manager, working with us.

Government interest

The most striking change in recent months has been the progress made in engaging with government. The importance of a focus on skills to improve competitiveness and sustainability for the industry was featured in a House of Lords debate around the Agricultural Bill recently. Both the Secretary of State George Eustice and the Agriculture Minister Victoria Prentis are fully aware of developments and supportive.

A summary of the business case has been well received by Defra and we are now working hard with economists from the department to explore further to write a full business plan, including a cost benefits analysis for funding. Defra seed funding is required to enable the creation and ongoing running of the Institute for the first few years. It is also needed for the building of a virtual digital space, which will be the public facing part of the Institute.

Visit the website

For more information, click [here](#)

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AHDB support

The AHDB has already committed to maintain its ongoing backing for this work by funding a full-time project manager, administration, and other personnel support. The levy board sees the role of the Institute fitting well with its new strategy and working closely with its knowledge exchange and farm performance team in future.



The industry should be proud of the way it has come together in a united way to get behind the development of the Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture. This is game changing collaboration which will play a crucial role in helping agriculture and horticulture reach its potential in the years ahead.

Leadership in developing the Institute

We have been fortunate in the quality of our leadership for this project. To kickstart the concept of a professional body Helen Woolley, the former Director General of CLA, chaired the Skills Leadership Group (SLG). The SLG was made up of a group of volunteers from across industry and it is enthusiastically supported by The Lord Curry of Kirkharle CBE who has led on most of the industry liaison work. Now that we are moving from the concept stage to developing the Institute, we need to formalise the governance.



David Fursdon, TIAH Development Board Chair

A new Development Board will replace the SLG and will drive the initiative forward to its next stage. We are delighted to announce that David Fursdon will chair the Board and some of the former SLG members will join him alongside new recruits. David, who is chairman of Beeswax Dyson Farming Ltd and a National Trust trustee, brings a wealth of experience to the project. Alongside extensive commercial experience, he has championed new entrants to the industry, chairing the Government-sponsored Future of Farming review. The Development Board will first meet in November.



Janet Swadling, TIAH Project Director

Janet Swadling, who was one of the founders of the SLG, and author of the Swadling Report on workforce development, has been appointed as Project Director for the new Institute. Janet is a former Deputy Principal and Chief Executive of Scotland's Rural College and she is passionate about skills for the industry. Janet's report and information about the skills strategy is available here:

<https://ahdb.org.uk/future-skills>



Partnerships

The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture is keen to partner with other organisations in driving forward its work and rolling out an exciting new skills strategy for industry. If your organisation has not already been in touch with us and wants to be connected, then do get in touch with us by contacting: Samantha Crocker, SLG Project Manager at Samantha.Crocker@ahdb.org.uk