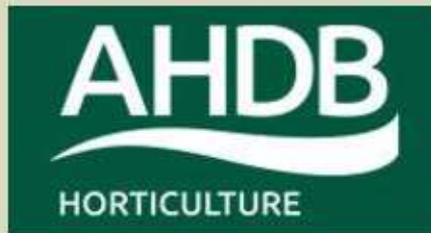




**A Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust
Report**

Award sponsored by

ADHB Horticulture



**A multi-solution approach
to addressing labour shortages in the
Agriculture and Horticulture Industries**

Laura Savage

August 2016

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A Nuffield (UK) Farming Scholarships Trust Report



*"Leading positive change in agriculture.
Inspiring passion and potential in people."*

Date of report: August 2016

Title	A multi-solution approach to addressing labour shortages in the Agriculture and Horticulture industries
Scholar	Laura Savage
Sponsor	ADHB Horticulture
Objectives of Study Tour	To look at ways of recruiting, retaining and succession planning to meet the ever changing and demanding labour requirements of the horticulture and agriculture sector in the UK.
Countries visited	Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Austria, America and Australia
Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi-solution approach is required to build a sustainable workforce using a combination of: Recruitment, Retention, Training and Development, Management Styles, Company Culture and A willingness to look at things differently • Ways to reduce the labour demand need to be explored such as reducing waste of food and imperfect produce; the impact of this would be a reduced demand for labour • What does a good employer look like? Lots of time is spent analysing the right employees required for businesses, how much time is spent ensuring your business is somewhere your "ideal" candidates want to work? • There is a clear need to ensure that incentive-to-work schemes tied to permits, visas, contractual or other need-driven reason are absolutely still required and need to be used in combination with retention strategies.

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DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in this report are my own and not necessarily those of the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, or of my sponsor, or of any other sponsoring body.

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1.0. Introduction



Figure 1: The author, Laura Savage

During my Scholarship I have lived in Warwickshire and the Lake District, and have just recently moved back home to Ruthin, North Wales. I live there with my husband Adam and two dogs Harry and Oliver. I originally moved from Wales to Warwickshire in 1998 to study Equine Business Management at Warwickshire College, graduating in 2002.

I worked at Warwickshire College for 10 years in a business development role for the land based industries. From the employers I met in this role I discovered a specific interest in the horticulture and agriculture sector: in particular education, training and succession planning. I was amazed just how many opportunities these industries have to offer people as a career path. During my time there I worked with numerous employers, discussing their business needs and designing training programmes to meet them.

These ranged from small “one man bands” through to large national companies and during this time I set up the first National Horticulture Apprenticeship programme for The Garden Centre Group.

After leaving Warwickshire College in 2011 I moved on to work for HOPS Labour Solutions, the commercial arm of the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs. During my time at HOPS I became very aware of the issues our clients were facing in relation to labour, recruitment, training and new entrants into their businesses. HOPS was one of the two main operators of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS), placing approximately 11,000 people a year into our clients’ agricultural and horticultural businesses, using a mix of Polish, Lithuanian, Bulgarian and Romanian workers. The Bulgarians and Romanians were recruited using the SAWS scheme up until its closure in December 2014. I also sit on the DEFRA working party group relating to the future for growers after SAWS, and worked with colleges and Job Centres to raise awareness of the opportunities in the Agricultural and Horticulture sector.



Figure 3: Recruitment event in Worcester raising awareness of working in production horticulture 2014

Following on from my time at HOPS I left to work for Staffline Group Ltd and joined to help set up their agricultural recruitment division called Staffline Agriculture. Shortly after setting up this division we



were successful in being the chosen partner to work with Sainsbury's to set up and establish their supply chain Apprenticeship Programme.



Figure 4: logo for Staffline Agriculture

I then moved across to Staffline's training division to run their training company Elpis. This involved running Apprenticeships in Business Improvement Techniques and also incorporated the management and delivery of the Sainsbury's Agriculture and Horticulture Apprenticeship programme (mentioned above). I have had a number of position changes within the Staffline group and - following the purchase of A4E and Avanta - Staffline merged these companies including Elpis into a new company called PeoplePlus, established 2st January 2016. PeoplePlus is the largest company of its kind in the UK specialising in recruitment, training and welfare to work.

PeoplePlus focuses on training and recruiting current and future employees to meet the skills an employer needs for the areas they operate in and, up until recently, headed up their Academies Division. There were 8 Skills Academies across the country that supported recruitment requirements for a huge variety of companies such as DHL, Jaguar Land Rover, Mitie, VSG Security and National Express to name but a few. PeoplePlus Academies' philosophy is about identifying skills and recruitment shortages; then working with employers or industries to meet these requirements. We work with people not to just find them the ABC; not just A job but a Better job and a Career.

In May 2016 I was promoted to Head of Apprenticeships for PeoplePlus and am currently running this national division which covers approximately 2000 apprenticeships across England. We specialise in setting up apprenticeship programmes for employers and use apprenticeships and/or a blend of other training solutions to meet our clients' needs. We are currently working with companies such as the BBC, Pickfords, DHL and Sainsbury's.

We are preparing for the imminent arrival of the Apprenticeship Levy which is part of the biggest reform in skills training in this country for many years. Employers with a wage bill of £3 million or more annually will be required to pay 0.5% of this wages bill into a digital apprenticeship account in a similar way to PAYE where that money can only be used for apprenticeships. This is having a significant impact on all large employers and this will include those in the agriculture and horticulture sectors.



2.0. Background to my study subject

During my time at Warwickshire College working in the equine work-based training team, I noticed just how hard it was for students to find good jobs directly in the equine sector which would support them to develop a career and become sustainable options for their future. More people are trained to work directly in the equine sector than there are jobs available and I was surprised by the number of students who worked in stable yards for a few years and then ended up moving into different sectors. This is even more apparent in hairdressing. According to the Local Government Association in 2011, 94,000 people completed hair and beauty courses, despite there being just 18,000 new jobs in the sector. This meant five people to one job; once again, 1000s more students are trained in hair and beauty than there are jobs available for them (*data sourced from local.gov.uk*)



Figure 5: headline from Guardian newspaper

Colleges and training providers are mainly funded by the UK government via the Skills Funding Agency, with some also benefitting from European funding. Colleges and training providers are paid by learning aim: e.g. qualification. Depending on the provider some learners will study a number of learning aims at the same time. It depends on how the provider packages the training. Up until recently there was no incentive other than providers' own integrity to ensure they trained only the numbers of people each sector requires. This has resulted in providers training students in subjects students wished to study and was of interest to them. Equine and Animal Care are examples of highly popular courses within the land based sector, where their students subsequently flood the market. (Apprenticeships are different in the sense that students must already have a job to be an apprentice.) In the highly popular courses referred to earlier such as Animal Care or Equine, it's only when students take up a work placement, or finish their studies and are out

Up until recently there was no incentive other than providers' own integrity to ensure they trained only the numbers of people each sector requires.



looking for jobs, that they start to realise the lack of availability of jobs in their chosen sector and end up looking for employment out of sector.

Horticulture and agriculture however are very different to sectors mentioned previously e.g hairdressing and animal care. There is a far smaller uptake of students studying horticulture (in particular production horticulture) and agriculture than the jobs or work available in these sectors. When I moved across to work for the horticulture and agriculture side of the college, undertaking a similar role to the one I previously held for equine, the issue really became apparent and I was most intrigued to find out more. I took the time to meet with employers in both agriculture and horticulture to understand what they needed and looking into why they weren't getting the numbers, standard or quality they required. This resulted in some good employer engagement such as setting up growers' training events with Midlands Regional Growers and the instigation and setup of the first national Horticulture Apprenticeship Programme with The Garden Centre Group.

During my time working for HOPS I got to learn a lot more about the edibles sector of horticulture and its requirements in relation to labour and training. I worked alongside the NFU, GLA, ALP, NFU, City and Guilds, LANDEX and DEFRA, starting to look at sustainable solutions to ease the industry's heavy reliance on the SAWS scheme and migrant labour. I led the development of a UK training programme to provide an entry route into the industry for UK unemployed residents.

It became immediately apparent that something "different" needed to be developed to ensure farms had sustainable solutions available to them in relation to recruitment, employment and training.

2.1. Is UK Labour a solution?

During my time at both HOPS and Staffline Agriculture I spent about 18 months testing the recruitment and training of UK nationals to fill vacancies in the horticulture sector. To test the concept we took the time to explain the situation in relation to the current SAWS scheme and why the industry is reliant on migrant labour. Time was spent busting myths about pay, working conditions, career opportunities and the size and scale of the opportunities. Our flagship statement was that we had spoken to employers and they had committed to ring-fencing 200 vacancies specifically for UK workers. Subject to the successful completion of the training programme, these jobs were guaranteed.



Figure 6: UK workers in training at a grower's outside Boston

During the period of time piloting this initiative, 209 unemployed UK workers were offered a place on the specifically designed training course which educated them about the sector, career opportunities, growing, picking and harvesting produce and included elements of work experience on farms nearby. We had fantastic support from the likes of LANTRA, City and Guilds and farms who support trying this new initiative. Some quotes are shown on the next page:



"LANTRA is delighted to support the new HOPS scheme as it promotes the wide range of opportunities within the Horticultural and Agricultural industries to the UK workforce ensuring that those coming to work in those industries have the appropriate skills" said Madge Moore, LANTRA Director - England

"Our business needs a reliable supply of seasonal Labour, our efforts in the past to recruit UK Labour have not had the required levels of consistency. We are encouraged by this new approach and hope it will remove many of the issues". Strawberry grower, Hereford

"City & Guilds Land based Services is delighted to be part of this exciting initiative. Getting young people into work and getting them into production horticulture are two important goals. Equipping them with the right skills and knowledge and then helping them to gain a recognised and valued City & Guilds qualification should set them on the right path toward a successful and profitable career in the industry". Jack Ward, CEO City and Guilds Land based Services

"This extremely positive and innovative initiative demonstrates that, in addition to the reliable Labour provided by migrant workers, the horticulture industry is willing to do everything it can to encourage more of the UK unemployed into work." Hayley Campbell-Gibbons. NFU Chief Horticulture and Potatoes Adviser

Figure 7 : UK trainees discussing pick quality of apples





From the 209 who were offered a place on the course, 62% successfully completed the qualification and passed the interview and were given their guaranteed job offer. The length of stay of UK workers on UK farms was significantly lower than that for SAWS workers (27 weeks), and workers from Poland and Lithuania (20weeks). UK workers were falling short with over 50% dropping out after a matter of days, and the rest staying from just a few days and weeks to only a handful for the full season. The programme proved that UK workers were not a sustainable solution but could only be a small part of a multi-solution approach. This approach did, however, prove that education, challenging public perception and providing an alternative recruitment method did have more success and had better results than those of any other methods trialed previously to recruit and sustain UK workers.

Particular success stories include one British person who was homeless when we met him; he needed a job with accommodation and wanted to be given a chance. He successfully passed the course and worked the whole season at a brassica grower's in the midlands before heading down to work the daffodil season in Cornwall. After this he was able to buy himself a houseboat, and ended up setting himself up in a permanent role. Another has made their way up to irrigation manager on a farm in Worcestershire and another has become a harvest supervisor in Scotland. These were small pockets of success.

A handful of the UK workers are now still working on farms and have progressed up into team leaders and sector managers. The issue with this method is that it was driven by labour providers who could ensure that, through a mixture of the UK recruitment method and existing methods of recruiting migrant labour, it was possible to ensure that orders were filled if the UK programme didn't deliver. That, of course, was the primary concern for farms engaging.

This scheme wouldn't have had the few successes it had without SAWS as the programme was tied in with SAWS work cards for growers, where UK workers weren't there in volume or quality. It meant more farms were open to trying this type of recruitment due to the peace of mind of having a replacement should it not work out.

HorticultureWeek



Success of training programme shows need for seasonal scheme, says labour provider

But HOPS operations manager Laura Savage told Grower: "We couldn't have got it off the ground without SAWS and it will never replace SAWS - there's no way that it can get the numbers of people needed. SAWS remains vital for the UK produce industry because it gives growers the peace of mind that their crops will be picked."

She continued: "I would love to see a revised SAWS that requires a UK contingent" because this would make explicit the connection between migrant and permanent UK labour - a point she intends to make to employment minister Mark Hoban later this month.



2.1.i. Key messages used to explain about the industry to new entrants:

Managing expectations about the type of farms requiring labour is key and, using a basic crop timetable I devised as shown in figure 7, it's important to illustrate how it's possible to work across different farms and crops to sustain year round employment – a key barrier noted by potential workers.



Figure 7: Basic crop timetable to show how you can work at different seasons and remain in employment year round

It's also important to be realistic about the hard and physical work in various weather conditions:

“... you don't get paid to work in agriculture, you have to earn your wage...”



It's important to explain how supply and demand from buyers for produce varies, and the factors affecting this including: customer requirements, weather conditions, and time of year. Then explain how this can correlate with changing work hours, lower or higher hours - both prior to starting and whilst in work. It's important to be open about work colleagues, and explain about different cultures and backgrounds, why such employees have chosen to work in the UK and what they want to get out of their time here.

It's important to outline potential earnings and how to ensure wages are increased, including "tricks of the trade" such as choosing the line to pick on e.g. picking strawberries not under cover, the quality of crop on a row next to the farm track is likely to be poorer than one that has been protected from dust, grit etc, and when being paid piece rate how this can alter earning potential

Explain about accommodation costs, including accommodation offset allowance and standard charge, and how the correlation between work dropping below 15 hours a week means that accommodation cannot be charged. Also clarify holiday pay, average hours per week, pension contributions - where applicable - and compare to other industries including an explanation about the Agriculture Wages Board regulations.



3.0. My study tour

My study tour started in late 2013 and the countries I visited included Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Australia, Austria and California. I wanted to experience a real variety in the countries I visited, from those where migrant labour supporting the UK agriculture and horticulture industries comes from, to those more developed countries who also claim to have labour shortages.

At the start of my study I was apprehensive and excited about finding a perfect golden nugget solution to bring back to the UK with pride. Little did I know that actually my study was going to take me in a different direction!

3.1. Bulgaria, Romania, and Poland – Autumn 2013

I chose to visit these countries because I wanted to start to look at the countries the UK relied upon to source its temporary labour from. Why did residents from these countries want to work in the UK? and what was the calibre of individuals who came to the UK, be they SAWS workers on a permit or workers who had free rights to work in the UK but needed support to find suitable farms to work on. I wanted to find out how they found out about the jobs, and the general perception of working in the industry in the UK versus their home country. I wanted to find out how their governments supported this and I also wanted to meet with a number of recruitment professionals who were responsible for sourcing people to come and work over in the UK - and to get an understanding of how it worked and how they managed and recruited for these vacancies.

3.1.1. Poland

I spent my time with a recruitment professional who was responsible for recruiting personnel for jobs across England and Scotland, in partnership with a labour provider based in the UK. I spent time at recruitment events where roles were advertised and interested individuals were invited to attend presentations to understand more about both the opportunities and also to “myth bust” issues like



Figure 8: Recruitment Event Warsaw, Poland

payment for jobs, application process, working hours, pay, accommodation charges, working conditions, support whilst in the UK, and travel arrangement to and from farms. It became obvious after talking to some of the applicants that a lot of the presentation was about reassurance. Potential



workers were very keen to ensure their concerns - based on previous experiences and stories told by friends and family - were addressed by this labour provider. It led me to question what the reasons were that people came to work or wanted to come to work in the UK when there was so much uncertainty. Speaking to some of the attendees most had stories to tell about friends or family and were keen to ensure they were going to the UK with a reputable labour provider and going to work on reputable farms. It became clear that some UK farms were regularly asked for and requested by workers and considered the best farms on which to work. The main reasons quoted were accommodation, working hours, work type, management and management styles employed. This led me to consider how the on-farm experience for workers whilst in employment was just as important to consider in my study as attraction and recruitment.

I attended recruitment events in Krakow and Warsaw. These were advertised in the same way but it was very interesting to see the different type of individuals who came to these events. They ranged from the more rural inhabitants of the surrounding towns and villages on the outskirts of Krakow, to more city-type individuals coming from Warsaw and surrounding areas. My general findings were that those in Krakow from a more rural background, who had worked on farms in their own towns or villages, used the opportunity to work in the UK and increase their earnings. Those from Warsaw were individuals who were more highly educated than those from Krakow and were using the opportunity to increase earning potential and to then move on to other roles after their time in the UK. Admittedly this was only a small sample to base these opinions on, and whereas it cannot be used as a robust sample size, it certainly made me question more deeply an individual's reasons for wanting to work in the UK, and why these individuals had chosen this particular time to go to the UK bearing in mind free working rights had been granted back in 2004.

The stage of integration for a country like Poland post free working rights being granted, is a very interesting dynamic to consider and illustrates why the peaks and troughs in labour availability apply occur. I started to look at stages of integration to see how this may illustrate a different way of attracting and retaining staff depending on their stage of adoption. Polish people were granted free working rights to work in the UK in 2004 and this created an opportunity for forward thinking, dynamic and driven individuals, friends and families prepared to take a risk by moving countries, to explore the new opportunities working rights in the UK gave them. This is illustrated in Figure 7, below.

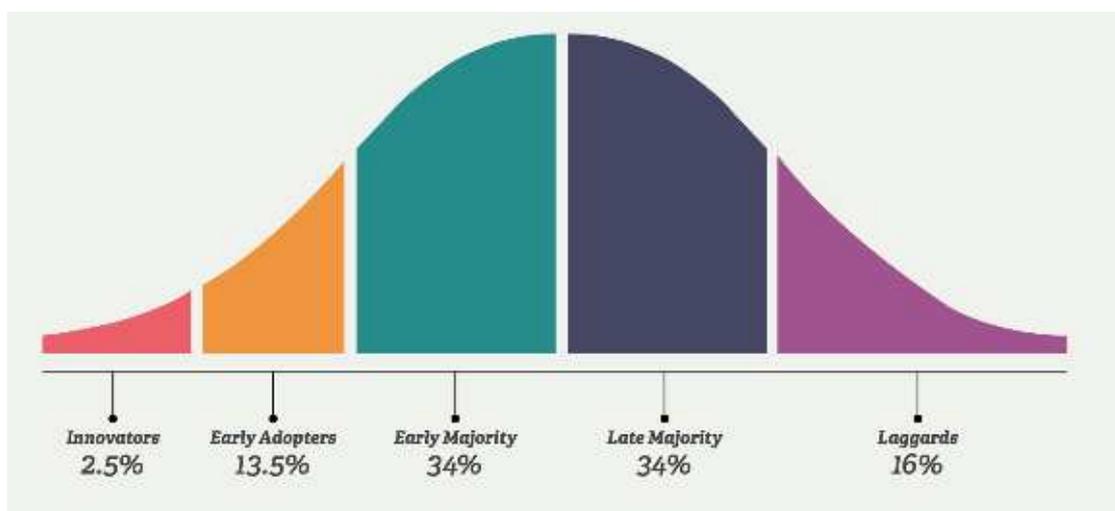


Figure 9: Innovation Adoption Curve (<https://relinquishment.org/>)



Length of time free working rights granted	Summary of workers' types by year	RAG rating in terms of quality, availability, length of stay and efficiency of labour from source country
Year 1	Highly motivated, dedicated workers, length of stay long, retention good, efficiency excellent and plentiful supply of good quality willing workers should additional labour be required	Green
Year 2	Very similar to year 1	Green
Year 3	Still no issue in terms of labour availability meeting the desired requirements of farms but starting towards the tail end of the season to find it more difficult to replace early leavers with the same quality of worker	Yellow-Green
Year 4	Worker availability still good but quality, length of stay, efficiency and retention of good staff becoming more challenging	Yellow
Year 5	Workers wanting to move to work in the UK show ever decreasing willingness to work in the agriculture and horticulture sector. Of those that do, the length of stay gets shorter and farms start actively seeking a different calibre of worker from other recruitment sources	Orange
Year 6 onwards	Repeat of year 5, lots of workers move away from farms to vacancies in other sectors with more consistent work, and most importantly distinct career development opportunities. Distinct reduction in workers willing to work in the sector and farms actively seeking alternative recruitment solutions	Red

Table 1: RAG Rating showing summary of workers and changes occurring post free working rights being granted. Author's observations from working for an agricultural recruitment company

The summary above raises more questions; length of stay and retention of staff is actually a bigger issue for UK farms than the recruitment of staff. The above chart related to Polish workers. If we apply the same principles to Bulgarians and Romanians, then we are currently in year 3 of the chart. Due to the population of Bulgaria and Romania being greater than that of Poland the model above may show we stay in the Green for another year - but, yet again, it demonstrates that the issue of retention of staff needs to be addressed.



Seasonal Agricultural Workers Schemes (SAWS) allowed workers who wouldn't normally have free working rights to work in the UK, access to do so. This is via a regulated and government-run programme which gives an entirely new dynamic to recruitment. Workers on schemes like these are given permits of up to six months per year to work in ring-fenced industries and provide employers with workers who are only able to work on farms that are officially approved SAWS farms, for a set period, in a set location, meeting exacting criteria. SAWS work cards are sought after by workers in eligible countries and farmers led me to see why these workers were in demand so much compared to workers from other countries such as Poland.

This led me to my next destinations to visit, Romania and Bulgaria, to understand the differences and see why these workers were so sought after.

3.1.2. Poland: lessons learnt and recommendations

- 1) **Retention** of staff is more of an issue to UK farms than actual recruitment
- 2) To keep focusing on recruitment of staff **won't solve the problem** on its own
- 3) Understand **why** people want to work in the sector
- 4) Start to consider what could be done to ensure we don't have to just keep opening up more schemes like SAWS to put a sticking plaster over the solution - as opposed to trying to **fix things at the root**
- 5) Learn from the efficiency patterns in the RAG rating chart and consider what can be done at the different stages to attract and retain staff
- 6) Consider the **background of workers** coming to the UK and why they may be interested. If we can understand what these different types of workers want can we adjust our engagement with them to see if this may alter length of stay?
- 7) Consider career planning and establishing **robust initial advice and guidance** to workers so briefings aren't just about informing workers about work on farms. They are also informing workers about work out of season, wealth management techniques, and also understanding what workers want to get out of the experience which would have an impact of retention. e.g. if workers want to earn a good wage, learn English and wants to become a manager how can we help them achieve or work towards all of their goals instead of just one?
- 8) **What does good look like?** When asking farms "What does a quality member of staff look like?" the most common answers are:
 - One that will achieve pick rate at all times
 - work consistently
 - stay for whole season
 - understand when picking availability decreases due to weather
 - not complain
 - be happy to share accommodation for 2-6 persons
 - work with all colleagues from all nationalities well
 - follow instructions
 - enjoy what they do
- 9) What about questioning **what a good quality employer looks like?** Will the two ever match? Is the balance between worker and employer in line?



3.2. Bulgaria and Romania in 2013

The SAWS scheme was established for Romanian and Bulgarian nationals to access in 2007 when they became members of the EU but did not become subject to Worker Registration Scheme regulations. Until 2014 Bulgarians and Romanians still needed a SAWS work permit in order to work legally in the UK, when the maximum extent (7 years) of this temporary measure allowed by the Treaty of Accession to the EU was reached. Work permit quotas required by UK agriculture were divided up between a number of SAWS-licenced operators with the two biggest being Concordia and HOPS. During 2013 circa 21,000 SAWS work permits were printed. The total number of workers required in production horticulture is circa 77,000, with approximately 39,000 employees full time and approximately 38,000 seasonal workers. (courtesy of migrationwatchuk.org).

SAWS changes through the years

Years	Changes Applied
2000	Quota was 10,000
2004	Quota increased to 25,000
2004	A8 Accession
2005	Quota decreased to 16,250
2005	Introduction of fines for employees who are caught employing illegally residing immigrants
2007	40 per cent of the quota allocated to A2
2008	SAWS fully restricted to A2
2007/2008	Labour shortages reported
2008	The MAC recommended an increase in the quota from 16,250 to 21,250
2009	The quota was increased to 21,250 with the suggestion of the MAC

Table 2: Changes to SAWS throughout the years – Courtesy of Sussex Centre for Migration Research

During my time in Bulgaria and Romania I took the opportunity to visit labour providers and universities, and attended a number of recruitment events. In Romania and Bulgaria, unlike the recruitment events visited in Poland, individuals had to be invited to attend these sessions. They were held across Romania and Bulgaria, usually in university premises. Events I attended had to be invitation-only due to the sheer demand for SAWS work cards and the opportunity to work in the UK. It wasn't unusual for 2000 plus attendees wanting to attend a 500 capacity recruitment event. All applicants had to have an interview and many who didn't show the right sort of dedication, and levels of English, and good reasons for wanting to do the job were turned down. This means that individuals who are offered a SAWS work card show similar qualities of



Figure 10: Recruitment Event Timisoara, Romania



motivation, drive, dedicated, enthusiasm and passion. This made me question what a quality worker was, and the definition.

The professionalism of the SAWS operator I spent time with in Romania and Bulgaria was unquestionable and absolutely key to the success of the operation.

3.2.1. What does “good” look like?

In the UK labour shortages and lack of quality workers are common concerns of growers and led me to want to further understand what made a worker a “quality” one? What does “good” look like to the grower? And to the workers? The common descriptors used by growers when describing quality workers are: reliable, consistent, hardworking, strong worth ethic, honest, driven, enthusiastic, flexible, compliant, non-demanding, understanding in relation to work hours and length changing, and willingness to live on site or nearby. Interestingly a quality agricultural job from a Bulgarian and Romanian perspective is one with good opportunity to top minimum wage up with piece rates, consistent work, good accommodation, good management/supervisors, regular work, fair pick rate pay, good picking conditions such as table top strawberries for instance, and good management of pick rate opportunities. E.g. if a yield is always better in one tunnel or area as opposed to another, ensuring opportunities for higher pick earnings are shared and managed well.

This encouraged me to question further what do workers want out of the relationship? Is it just money? Or are there further things to consider when managing a farm workforce? If the needs and wants of both farmers and workers are clear, well communicated and reviewed – what effect would that have on farmers and workers alike?



Figure 11: SAWS operative IBC owned by Anton and Galia Tonchev, Sofia, Bulgaria

When speaking to Bulgarian and Romanians at the recruitment events, their primary reason for attending the UK was to earn a wage to enable them to have a better lifestyle when they returned.



They were extremely clear about this, and it was a contrast to my experiences when in Poland, and talking to UK nationals. The Polish and UK criteria were still to earn a wage, but had a varied emphasis including exploring opportunities to source more permanent solutions for career progression and development, work and housing.

There were lots of similarities in discussions at recruitment events with Bulgarian, Romanian, Polish and UK individuals; such as goals of being able to build houses, support family members, purchase cars and other such items. Romanians and Bulgarians in particular wanted to take advantage of the difference in equivalent rates of pay in the UK. These can be as much as four to five times higher than minimum wage in their home nations. Polish and UK nationals wanted this too but were wanting more of a balance, taking into consideration working conditions, progression opportunities, living circumstances, career development and generally more consideration to longer term sustainable strategies.

When looking at the financial incentives and value for Romanian and Bulgarian workers it's clear these individuals are able to support a far higher standard of living from a UK wage than they can from the wages in their native countries. An average Romanian or Bulgarian worker would take home four to five times the salary when working in the UK compared to when in their native countries. If 20% of salaries were saved as part of this, a 20% saving of a worker's weekly wage would save approximately £50. On average, bearing in mind constantly moving exchange rates, £50 is worth the equivalent of 250 Romanian New Lei, equivalent to one and a half times the weekly minimum wage (164 Lei) at home. *(Courtesy of migrationwatchuk.org)*. Using the current national minimum wage - which for someone working full time in the UK is £13,104 and therefore £1092 monthly - this means that a Romanian or Bulgarian would be earning 4 times as much as at home. It's no surprise that, due to this wage the numbers of people wanting to work on farms during the SAWS period was significantly more than the permits available. Therefore, the most motivated, entrepreneurial, dedicated, hardworking and reliable workers were chosen to work on farms in the UK. This is in stark contrast to the British trial workers who were sourced from Job Centre Plus and provides an extreme comparison.

3.2.2 Bulgaria and Romania: lessons learnt and recommendations:

1. Working on a UK farm **initially provides a great opportunity for migrants** to establish themselves with the stability of accommodation, wages, NI numbers, and to understand the working environment in this country.
2. The quality and attributes of workers sourced under the SAWS scheme were considered as high quality by UK farms, and their **preferred workers** because of this. **This approach however isn't sustainable** unless further countries that don't currently have free working rights to the UK were granted a permit scheme. This isn't solving the issue of retention by creating more opportunities for recruitment.
3. Campaigning for the continuation of SAWS is prevalent throughout the UK production horticulture sector as the answer to the UK's labour issues. However, we must consider **how far east – in terms of geography - we want to go**. If these patterns occur once again, how do we provide a **sustainable solution**?
4. The financial reward for working in the UK meant the **highest skilled, dedicated, entrepreneurial, quick working individuals** from overseas were attracted to work in the UK



providing farms with a very high quality and dedicated workforce which was prohibited from working in other industries.

3.3. Australia – March and April 2014

Australia has scale, something the UK doesn't. With a broadly similar education system and culture in terms of education, I was keen to understand the problems Australia faced, how these compared with the UK and how they were addressing these issues. Australia has very different border controls to the UK's, with a points based system and also a structured visa system for different entry reasons. Australia also has a comparable education to that of the UK and heavily supports work based learning and apprenticeships. I was keen to understand how this worked in action and how they were looking to address the issues of labour shortages - which looked to be as prevalent as those of the UK.

Visa-tied agricultural and horticultural work

Australia has numerous visa types available for foreign nationals under strict entry criteria. One of the most popular is the Australian Working Holiday visa (WHV) which allows young people from eligible countries, between the ages of 18 to 30, to travel to Australia and experience its culture, and be able to undertake work to support their stay in the country. The visa lasts for up to 12 months but it can be extended for another year by undertaking regional work. The 2nd year Australian Working Holiday Visa Extension is available to people who can evidence that they have completed a total of 88 days of specified work in regional Australia while on their first Working Holiday visa. *(courtesy of www.visabureau.com)*

There are many different industries you can work in to become eligible for a second year visa including agriculture and horticulture, as well as others such as forestry, fishing, mining and some sectors of the construction industry. By far the most common way of obtaining a second year visa is seasonal farm work. Regional areas where this work can be undertaken are clearly outlined by set postcodes within each state. The process of tying agricultural and horticultural work into other incentives people wish to access is providing another source of labour and therefore supporting farm labour demands. As with the SAWS schemes in the UK, the quality of workers is varied but it is certainly providing Australia with another labour source the like of which the UK currently isn't utilising.

Despite these initiatives such as those mentioned above, Australia has very similar issues to the UK in relation to shortages of labour and lack of sustainable consistent solutions. These issues faced are well documented in the press: see example press cuttings below.

Not enough Australians want to work on farms

Labour shortage costing farmers \$150m a year

January 6 2012
Rosalyn Beeby

ACUTE labour shortages are costing Australia's farmers more than \$150 million a year in lost productivity, with rural food producers struggling to find specialist trades workers, food technicians and agronomists, a Senate inquiry has heard.

One of Australia's biggest farm industry groups, AgForce Queensland, estimates agriculture currently faces a national labour shortage of at least 96,000 full-time skilled workers and 10,000 casual workers.

Why Skills Shortages Are The Number One Threat to Agribusinesses

June 22, 2013

Agriculture, Industry, News



Farmers and growers are still reporting that skilled worker shortages are getting worse. One grower just outside Horsham (Australia) mentioned: "We're discussing with the schools and training providers about redesigning and refocusing some of the education and training, and also considering mentoring programmes with an aim to get young people in the region to consider taking up careers and training in horticulture."

Longerenong College

Longerenong College, known as Longy, is one of Australia's leading tertiary institutions specialising in agriculture and land-management, established in 1889. The college was a campus of the University of Melbourne Institute of Land and Food Resources until the end of 2005. From then on courses and training were awarded to WORKCO Limited, now rebranded as Skillinvest Limited.

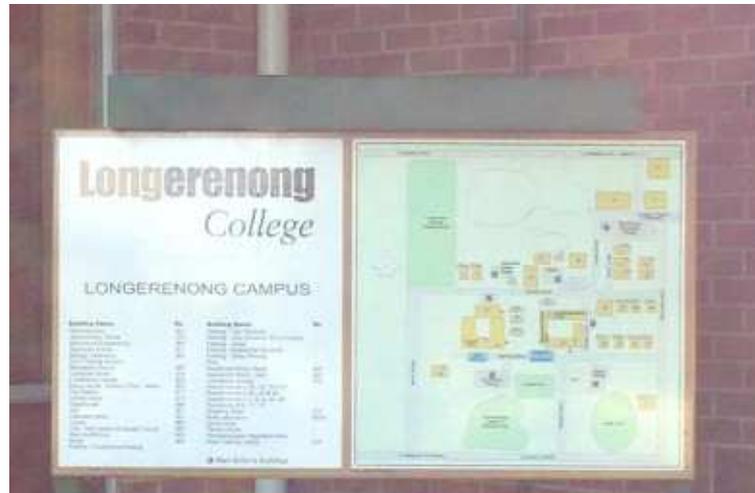


Figure 12: Longerenong College

Skillinvest is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). It provides education, training and employment opportunities and services throughout Victoria and Melbourne, with office locations in Ararat, Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Dandenong, Donald and Horsham. It also operates as a Group Training Organisation (GTO). It's important to note that the equivalent in the UK is called an Apprenticeship Training Association (ATA) and this Australian model isn't comparable to what the UK knows as GTOs.

Longerenong College trains students in all aspects of land based studies and is similar in setup to many leading UK agricultural colleges. Much of the training on offer is also very comparable; with the one noticeable difference being the change from seeing Land Rover Defenders with snorkels, and One Life Live It stickers to cars - which looked much more Australian!

Longy also delivers a lot of training courses for industry such as competency certificates for things like ATV and spraying licence acquisition. It is a residential college with a wide catchment area for students.

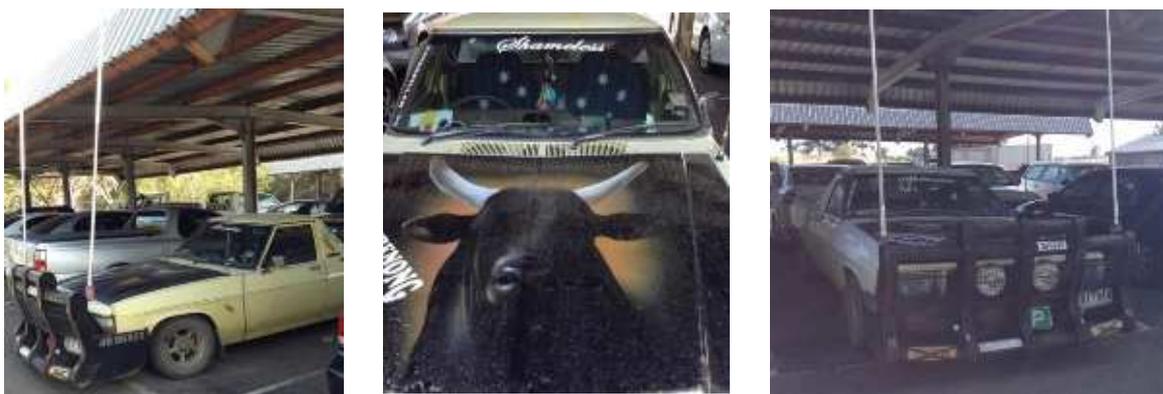


Figure 13: Selection of Australian student cars



Group Training Organisations – John Ackland

Group Training Organisations are employment and training arrangements where organisations such as Skillinvest employ apprentices under a training and employment contract, and place them with host employers for the duration of their training programme. GTOs are located in city, regional and remote areas and to date (*courtesy of grouptraining.co.au*), circa 100,000 businesses in Australia have used a GTO to manage the employment and training of their apprentices and trainees. GTOs have been operating in Australia for approx. 30 years. This type of training and employment is relatively new to the UK. Termed Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs), the first few were set up in the UK in late 2000s. They have been steady to develop and are still relatively unknown. Traditionally apprentices have to be employed for the entire duration of their apprenticeship with their host employer (minimum 12 months). This means there are challenges for businesses that are seasonal and may not be able to sustain employment for the whole duration. ATAs were established to try to address this issue.



Figure 14: John Ackland CEO Skillinvest (Formerly WorkCo Ltd)

The main restrictions on the setup and growth of ATAs in the UK, considering how prevalent and commonly used they are in Australia, is around the eligibility criteria for setting them up. One of the main considerations before you can look to engage in an ATA is the Skills Funding Agency regulations about the reason for employing apprentices via an ATA, versus direct employment which they deem as more secure. So to set up and employ via an ATA you have to be able to demonstrate that the apprentice isn't able to be employed full time by the employer for the duration of their apprenticeship training programme. You are also required to demonstrate this apprenticeship is only available to support employers who otherwise would be unable to take on an apprentice had it not been for the ATA. This drastically reduces the takeup of ATAs and most employers are completely unaware they exist. It impacts horticulture and agriculture businesses' engagement because usually staff have to reach a certain competence or skillset before the business can afford to keep them on full time.

The GTO model is one of the easiest ways for employers to engage with and take on apprentices and trainees. Employers get all the advantages of carefully selected apprentices, short or long term, without the hassle of paperwork and payroll. The GTO will take care of the paperwork for wages,



allowances and pensions. As part of the partnership the host employer allows time off for the apprentice to attend off-the-job training that may be required. (courtesy of Skillinvest.com)

Benefits to the host employer:

- The GTO makes it as simple as possible for businesses to take on apprentices and trainees without the worries of long-term contracts.
- With your input, the right apprentices and trainees are carefully selected
- The GTO arranges the training provider and obtains regular progress reports.
- The GTO handle the paperwork and payroll.
- The GTO provides ongoing support to make sure everything runs smoothly, including three-monthly performance reviews.
- Businesses have the flexibility to meet peak workloads and seasonal variations.

MEGT Australia – David Windridge and Ashley Langdon

MEGT Australia are one of Australia's largest GTOs. I met with Ashley Langdon, General Manager Operations, and David Windridge, Director/CEO. MEGT also own an ATA based in the UK called Impact Apprenticeship run by Petar Fee. Ashley came over to the UK for two years initially to bring the concept over and set up the UK arm.



Figure 15: David Windridge, Ashley Langdon and myself outside MEGT Australia

MEGT started in the 1980s initially as a recruitment company. The GTO (ATA) arm started off the back of local authorities and councils who were running them. Nearly all GTOs are not-for-profit as making things commercially viable for employers is the key.

MEGT has 98 offices across the country.



MEGT has 3 main parts to their business:

1. Australian Apprenticeship Centre - Employer training; incentives are available for employers. Apprentices can either be trained through a private training provider, or college. Funding comes into 2 layers of federal funding – e.g. incentives for employers to take on an apprentice are different depending on the state. Some have allowances for things such as a living-away-from-home allowance.
2. Recruitment Management Services - the original recruitment and agency service. This still employs apprentices and then contracts them out to host employers.
3. Education Service – where MEGT undertakes training directly for apprentices so if can recruit, train and employ apprentices on behalf of their host employer

What is the size of the opportunity for apprenticeship training agencies in the UK and how many apprenticeships are we currently overlooking?

The UK population is 64.1 million compared to the Australian population of 23.1 million. Australia has 15,000 apprentices employed in the GTO equating to 0.06% of the population.(www.grouptraining.com.au) The opportunity in the UK would be that of 38,460 in employment at an ATA. In England there were 499,900 apprentices starting their training in 2014/15, 14% more than the previous year. The number of apprentices in training in 2014/15 increased by 2% to 871,800.

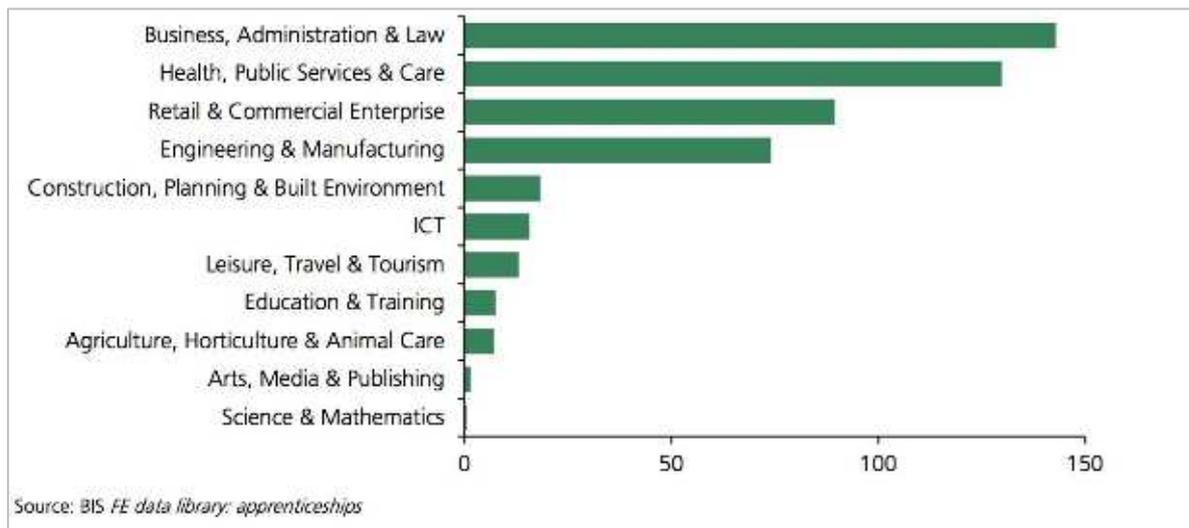


Figure 16: Apprenticeship starts in England by sector subject 2014/15 (thousands)

If there were alternative employment methods for apprentices in the agriculture and horticulture sector in England this would be another way of increasing new entrants into the sector.

Manuka Farm Trust and O’Connor’s – Leigh, Sam and Sharon McGennissen

I met Sam and his employer Sharon McGennissen - who is also his mother - at their farm in Burnt Creek just outside Horsham (Australia). Sharon has been working with Skillinvest for a number of years and her other son, Leigh McGennissen, is also a Skillinvest apprentice working at O’Connors Farm



Machinery. Leigh is employed under the GTO scheme and after meeting his line manager Simon Adams, Service Manager at O'Connors, he has only positive things to say about the arrangement. They appreciated the close partnership with the GTO as it really is a joint venture in sourcing, recruiting, employing and training apprentices, and the relationship with the GTO was one that enabled them to support their apprentices together. Therefore, if there were issues the GTO would be there to support, train, advise or indeed find an alternative apprentice should things not work out. O'Connors are an employer who could sustain an apprentice all year round, but prefer the GTO model as a host employer and find it works best for them.

Leigh has also taken part in the Today's Skills: Tomorrow's Leaders programme which is an initiative set up to identify and develop the leadership potential that exists amongst group training apprentices and trainees. Each year around 20 group training apprentices who are high achievers in their chosen professions and potential industry leaders of the future. Those chosen participate in an intensive



Figure 17: Sam McGennicken with GTO tutor and assessor

programme held at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra. They come representing all states and territories and from varied industry backgrounds. The creative learning environment of Today' Skills: Tomorrow's Leaders is a unique opportunity for participants to develop their leadership and self management skills. They are challenged to take their current training successes to the next level and provided with practical tools to assist in clarifying their vision for the future and in working towards making this a reality. It's great to see an initiative for apprentice level and although we have the MDS scheme in the UK for graduates - and obviously The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust - it's great to see there is something to support apprentices who are at an early stage in their career.

Sam is a GTO apprentice employed on the family farm. I was keen to understand why they had decided to go to this route when he could have been employed directly. Sam's mother said that working with Longy ensured there was a professional approach to employment and training within a family farm environment. It also allows Sam to work on the family farm in addition to working on other farms throughout his apprenticeship - to manage peaks and troughs and bring experience from other farms back to the home farm. This has already proved fruitful with Sam learning the best time to buy and sell produce and bringing the use of technology back to the farm to improve it.

ABARES Outlook Conference – Australia 2014

The ABARES conference was a chance to understand what bodies and representative organisations - such as sector skills councils - were doing to support labour recruitment and retention. It was a great opportunity to see how the sector was promoted within Australia.

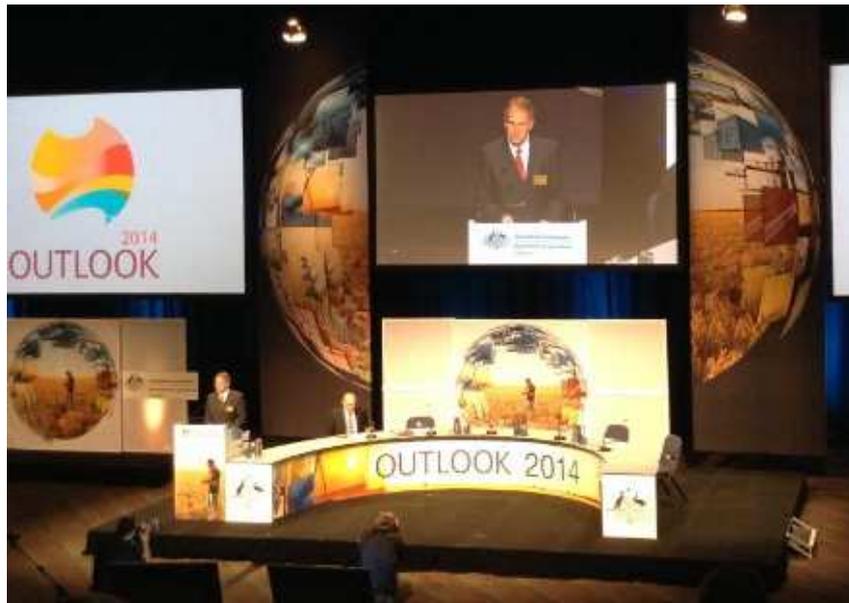


Figure 18: ABARES Outlook Conference 2014 Australia

Harvest Trail and Agrifood Skills Australia – Arthur Blewitt

Arthur Blewitt is the CEO of Agrifood Skills Australia, which provides independent advice to the agricultural industry on workforce development. Arthur discussed with me the current shortage of skilled workers in the industry, and the importance of government initiatives, grey nomads, backpackers and casual workers to areas of labour shortages. We also discussed general public perceptions, apprenticeships, co-operating with other industries, training funding sourcing and procurement.

Harvest Trail is an Australian Government-established initiative called The National Harvest Information Service, to help coordinate and distribute information on harvesting around the country to match job seekers with employment opportunities. This service was designed to assist growers experiencing difficulty finding sufficient workers at harvest time.



Figure 19: Arthur Blewitt, CEO AgriFood Skills Australia

The Harvest Trail website administered by the Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations (DEEWR) provides comprehensive information about harvest opportunities, accommodation and transport, and links people looking for work with farmers seeking workers during the harvest. The National Harvest Guide has been set up to help show what is in season and where to help direct workers to jobs in the right area. The other key part of Harvest Trail is Harvest Trail TV. It provides viewers with an account of the Harvest Trail Experience focussing on different regions and produce and invites viewers to meet growers, workers and also locals involved in tourism to showcase other things the



areas have to offer should workers decide to work there. Video content is aired on major channels such as Foxtel and Austar and is also included in Sunday papers within Australia. Harvest Trail TV was launched by SkillsOne with support from DEEWR, the National Farmers Federation, Agrifood Skills Australia, Tourism Australia and media partners including News Limited, Rotary, Foxtel and Austar. *(courtesy of harvesttrailtv.com)*

Launched in Sydney in 2007, SkillsOne works with industry, educators, government and TAFE to engage and promote the extensive career opportunities and pathways in traditional trades and emerging skills areas, of which agriculture and horticulture are part. The dedicated website www.skillsone.com.au and SkillsOne TV, broadcast nationally. The website and TV programme attract a wide audience including career counsellors, students, parents and mature aged workers.

The integration of SkillsOne’s TV and website with Harvest Trail allows for a joined up approach to advertising the careers opportunities available and then directs people more specifically to understand what part of the country, state area, produce and, therefore, working opportunities there are for people wanting this type of work. There is nothing equivalent to this in the UK and I believe this is a key development needed. Many of the reasons given by UK nationals for not wanting this type of agricultural work is the uncertainty and lack of consistency and this sort of initiative could start to offer a more co-ordinated approach.

Career Harvest

Exhibiting at the Abares Outlook conference, this is an initiative set up by the Council of Deans of Agriculture with



the aim of re-branding and showcasing careers in the newly named Food and Fibre Industry. It covers farming and horticulture and other associated sectors and also showcases the transferrable skill jobs such as IT and Research and how these are required in the Food and Fibre Sector. With ambitious marketing strategies, this website portrays the sector in a different light.



In the UK we have websites such as LANTRA, Bright Crop and Grow Careers, just to name a few which aim to educate and introduce people to the sector. However, none of those showcase the industry as a whole or provide a simple approach for an interested person to choose their skillsets, location and sector of interest. This is something I think the industry desperately needs, a simple and effective



mapping website or app which helps people look through all opportunities and see how generic skills can cross over to the land-based sector.

There is so much negative messaging to the general public about our industry and most press coverage is about issues the industry is facing. I believe taking on board the Australian approach to co-ordinating opportunities in our sector will be a really positive step forward, starting to bring some integrity and clarity to an industry that is wholesome at heart.

3.3.1. Australia lessons learnt and recommendations:

1. **Tying in agricultural work** to other benefits people are looking for is something that supports the sectors as **part of a solution**.
2. SkillsOne TV and Harvest Trail were a real inspiration and by providing **one place for people looking for work** to be able to follow, get updates on jobs, locations, seasons, produce, accommodation, information about the locality and pay rates, gives people a really clear insight into how you can work across all the seasons and ensure you are **employed fulltime** should you require it.
3. **Spread reliance** across numerous labour sourcing methods to reduce risk
4. Consider **succession planning and retention** methods
5. **Joined up approach to communicating needs of the sector** such as Harvest Trail and Skills One; there is no equivalent in the UK
6. Unclear ways to engage with the industry – one area and **clearly defined career paths** are needed
7. **One website and app** that provides simple and effective mapping facility for people to be able to navigate based on Skills, Locations, Opportunities and Progressions.
8. **GTO or ATA development** is a real opportunity to engage with apprenticeship and attraction or new talent. This is even more so because of the impending implementation of the UK Apprenticeship Levy.

3.4. Austria - August 2015

Austria was somewhere I really wanted to visit due to the reputation of its education system, and I wanted to understand the latter and how it harnesses individuals early on to support them through a vocational or academic route - depending on their skills sets. I also wanted to see what the public perception of the sector was, and how they looked to harness and keep talent whilst also giving learners the opportunity to learn and travel. The other part was to find out any engagement they had with job centres or the unemployed and why the average age of a farm owner/manager was significantly lower than in other countries.

Austrian Education – The Dual System

There has been significant interest in the dual education system operating in Austria, set up with an aim to address the lack of highly qualified workers and rising youth unemployment rates. It appears in Austria practical vocational training (VET) is considered a method of creating better job prospects



for young people. Austria's dual training system is a blend of practical training and more general education delivered alongside each other. The impact of this system is notable when compared with youth unemployment rates. The EU youth unemployment rate is approximately 23.3%: the comparable rate in Austria is approximately 8.6% (*European Union, Eurostat 2013*). Apprenticeship training in Austria is most importantly orientated towards future skill needs where the development of practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge is absolutely key. The Austrian system is embedded within the schooling system with VET opportunities commencing from age 14, and going through to higher level degree programme. (*austria.org*). This is something the UK has also started with the introduction of higher level apprenticeship programmes recently.

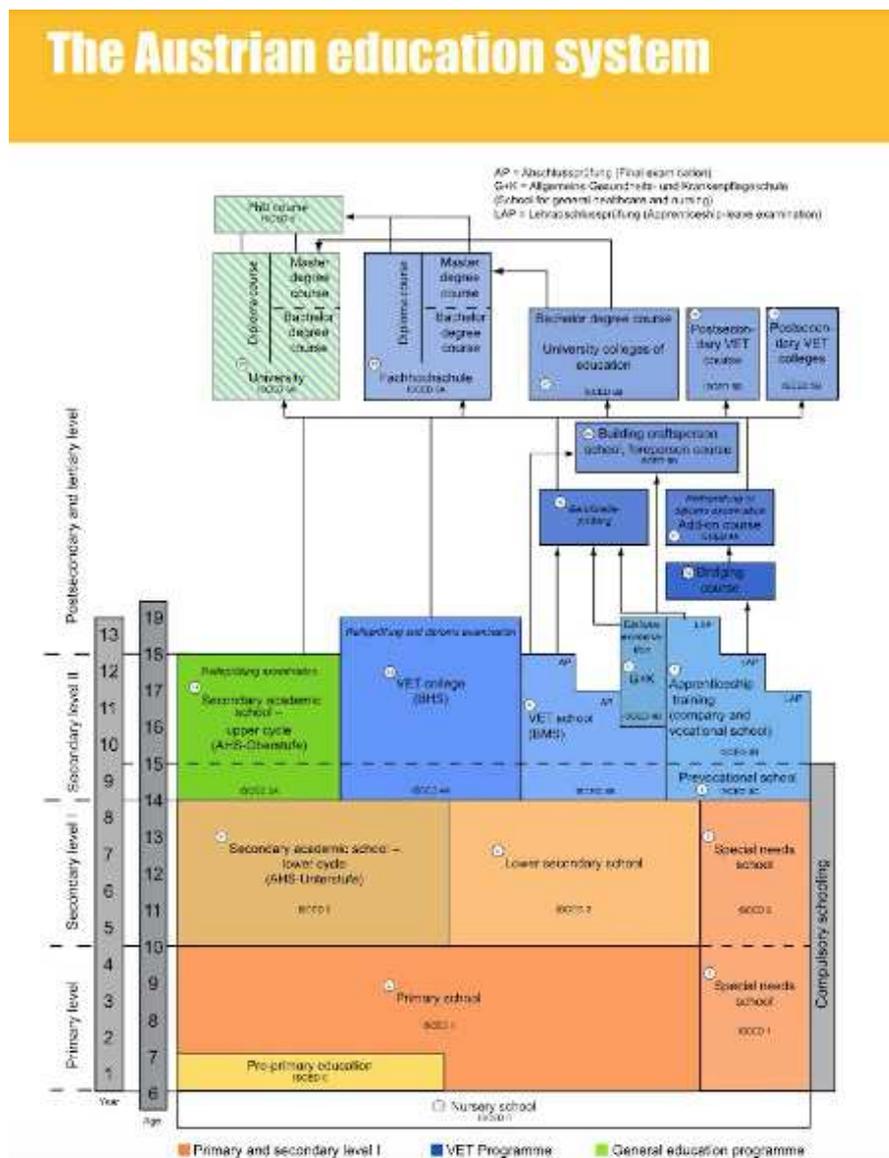


Figure 20: Courtesy of bic.at Outline of the Austrian Education System

The wide acceptance of this training among young people and the public perception demonstrates the awareness of vocational training and apprenticeships as a credible training method. A staggering 40% of those completing compulsory education opt for dual training apprenticeships as part of their



education and this number has been stable since the 1950s. 35,000 companies within Austria train approximately 120,000 apprentices. Employers are very complimentary about this system and are always looking towards the future in terms of developing individuals.

AMS - The Austrian Public Employment Service Heinz Riedel and Harold Wurzer

AMS is Austria's leading provider of labour market-related services. Candidates are matched with job openings and the AMS assists jobseekers and employers by offering advice, information, qualifications and training and financial assistance.

Within the agenda of the Government's policy of full employment, the AMS is a major contributor to preventing, reducing and eventually eliminating unemployment in Austria. It's interesting to see the link between qualifications and unemployment. Both the UK and Austria have approximately 45% of their population whose education levels do not go beyond secondary level. Unemployed persons in Austria without secondary education make up 40% of the unemployed statistics, with the next largest areas being women and migrants. (*Information sources ams.at*)



Figure 21: AMS Offices Austria

I visited Dr Heinz Riedel at the AMS based in Graz, to discuss the statistics relating to unemployment and find out the training and support on offer for job seekers. I was also keen to understand the AMS



Figure 22: Dr Heinz Riedel, AMS Graz

perception of working in horticulture and agriculture sectors. Austria has a very proactive approach to unemployment and a clear six-stage strategy to address these issues, which takes into account the differences in each region.

At the age of 15, students who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS) are attached to a job centre from day one with an intensive support plan in place to lessen the gap between EET (Employment Education and Training) and leaving school. Once assigned to an AMS office you are offered numerous services standardised by the AMS to provide a clear offering to clients. All college promotional material, VET and further education routes are put together by the AMS so job seekers have a clear standardised information to enable them to compare options easily.



Unlike the UK the AMS is also a place for people who are already in work but wish to progress or change careers to access. The AMS offers career coaching and also funds training for people wishing to progress their careers. As the AMS is somewhere where people who have jobs attend - as well as those who don't - the stigma and perception of people attending a job centre in Austria is more positive and the mix of clientele is apparent.

Landjugend - Bernadette Mayr

I met with Bernadette Mayr, National Director for Landjugend, based and headquartered in Vienna.

The Rural Youth Austria (Landjugend Österreich) sees itself as a coordinator of the interests of young people in rural areas. In many areas, the perceived image of the young people is that of a city culture, and that is why the role of



Landjugend is of significant importance. Landjugend has positioned itself as a modern youth organisation that is consciously aware of its agricultural roots. There are approximately 90,000 members which shows that it is possible to find members with the right attitude and attributes to support the agricultural industry. *(courtesy of Landjugend.at)*

With the support of the Chamber of Agriculture Austria, Landjugend offers an extensive programme in six agreed priority areas:

- General knowledge
- Agriculture and environment
- Sports and society
- Culture and traditions
- Young and international
- Service and organisation

Staying true to its agricultural roots, Landjugend works with rural areas to support the community by facilitating opportunities for its members to grow, develop and experience new opportunities. Austria has its own Young Farmers Club movement but Landjugend sits quite separately with a different approach and direction.

One of the ways it supports the development of its members is through its exchange programme, with members travelling overseas to work on farms or in rural areas in other countries. Its ultimate aim is to try and address the reasons people leave farming or rural locations and, using its 6 priority areas, tackle these in different ways. It understands that young people in rural locations want to experience things outside their own areas, explore other cultures and ways of doing things. Instead of accepting that rural youth move to more urban areas, move abroad, or go to university, it does all it can to support them to experience the challenges they need with a view to returning to their rural roots. This strong engagement is a way of building bridges between people with agricultural and non-agricultural backgrounds so there is understanding from both sides. To date there are 1000 local groups in villages across Austria.



Figure 23: Bernadette Mayr, National Director Landjugend Austria

Many members are very keen to go back to their farms supported by the fact that public perception of being a farmer in Austria has improved, especially over the past 5-8 years. The image of farmers which is presented publicly is of businessmen/women, running their own business, selling, buying and operating. The Austrian ministry is actively promoting this image too. Social media is a key influencer of the image, farmers themselves use it for promotion as they are best placed to provide authentic updates. More people are wanting to buy directly from farms and there has been considerable positive movement to capitalise on farm produce being purchased directly on farms. However, in order to avoid absentee landowners and “hobby/week-end” farmers, new owners of agricultural land must live near the plot and demonstrate competence in farming through experience or education.

Whilst driving across Austria, starting in Salzburg then travelling down to Graz and through the growing regions, I came across the promotional trails for farms. **Apfelstrasse** (Apple Street)

www.apfelstrasse.at is a trail route of open farms in the apple growing region in Styria. In the towns and villages along the route there are map boards similar to those you find in UK cities and towns showing where you are, and what other open farms are in the region. This is a really great, simple idea that works in cities, and which we could bring to UK growing regions to showcase farming to the general public, all helping to increase public perception.

Ages of farmers in Austria

During my meeting with Bernadette at Landjugend we were discussing the average age of farmers and how they are trying to support this by giving their members the skills, experience and training needed to take over family farms. The TAB labour force survey 2010 shows 43.5% of farmers are under the age of 44 and 69% of farmers are under the age of 54. In Austria, Bernadette discussed the funding in place to support early handovers of family farms. Parents who hand over the family farm to their children prior to them turning 40 years old, and providing they are educated in agriculture to degree level, are eligible for a funding grant to invest in the farm. Bernadette suggests this has had a positive influence on the early handover of farms and, rather than children of farmers working in other sectors, they are able to come back to the family farm earlier, thus affecting the average age profile.



Figure 24: Apfelstrasse sign Styria, Austria

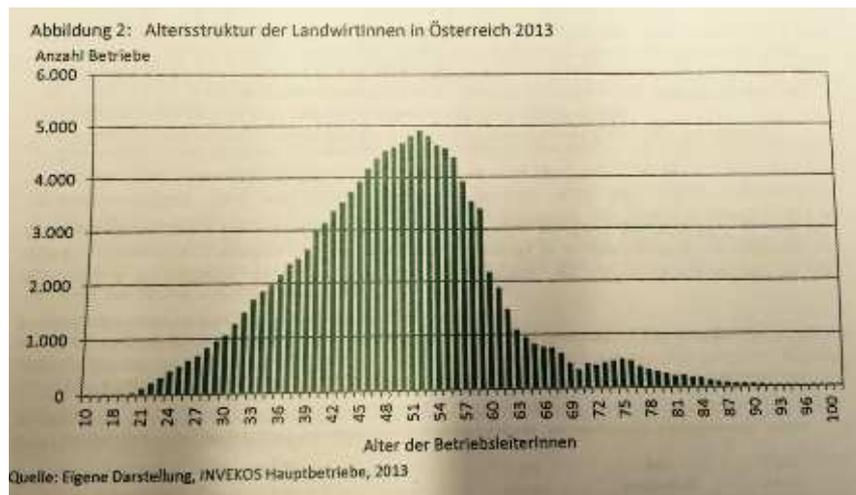


Figure 25: Shows the ages of Austrian farmers



Figure 26: Age structure of farmers in Austria by gender

Landjugend considered it had achieved its mission when:

- People in the countryside are active in getting involved in their local community, bringing ideas and making their surrounding like they want to stay there
- They are there to support members at times of difficulties and challenges and offer solutions
- Goals they give to young people give them the incentives and skills to set up and create their environment as they wish
- Support members in realising what their life in Austria looks like
- Support community living so young people stay on the countryside
- Encourage and support members to go elsewhere, learn and take their learning back their learnings to their community (a mini Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust!)
- They support members to appreciate what they have here in Austria



WAFF Vienna – Ursula Adams

Visiting Ursula Adams at WAFF in Vienna, which is funded by the city of Vienna, I found it supports better opportunities for career development of employees, the elimination of existing discrimination on the job market; and the employment system ensures there is good vocational training and successful careers for young persons. It also works to enhance the attractiveness of Vienna as a business location. It also promotes fair opportunities in the labour market for people with a migrant background living in Vienna. They have developed a number of initiatives to support clients including the development of a widely recognised employee qualification and experience passport. A career plan is discussed with customers and funding is available through a vocational route to upskill people already in employment or support the unemployed to develop the skills they need. Training takes place at WAFF and it also links up with other colleges and training.



Figure 27: Waff offices Vienna, Austria



Figure 29: AMS and WAFF Qualification Passport



3.4.1. Austria: lessons learnt and recommendations:

1. The increased focus towards **vocational education from an early age** results in some impressive vocational statistics with **80% of young people aged 14/15 signing up to a VET programme**
2. The Dual System provides learners and also parents with the reassurance that vocational training is no less valuable than academic, but an alternative route to assist their children to progress towards different careers. The UK could adopt this approach which would help to address parents' perceptions and show how aligned these training routes are
3. Apprenticeships in Austria are highly valued and very well thought of. **40% of the Austrian workforce boasts an apprenticeship** diploma as their highest educational attainment
4. **Public perception about apprenticeships is high**, are well recognised, and considered valuable qualifications



5. At the age of 15 those **unemployed are attached directly to an AMS job centre**, and those wishing to improve their careers whilst already in employment are also attached. This takes the stigma away from attending a job centre and captures people at an early age to support them into employment
6. The concept of supporting rural communities to give their **young persons the life experience** they require in a structured way embeds rural communities further and increases the number of people returning to their rural roots.
7. Promotion of the UK farming and fresh produce sector by having an **“Apple Street” type map** system could really work to support farm shops and growers in key regions in the UK, promoting both the sector and local produce. Italy has a similar initiative called Agriturismo where farmers will use their own and other local produce to provide meals and accommodation. These too are sign posted well across the county.
8. **Financial incentives to support succession planning** in family farms are really interesting and not only secure the future of the farm but also enables both parents and offspring to invest in the farm.

3.5. California – March and April 2016

California was a “must” visit for me when planning my travels. It’s extremely well known for its huge production sector and incredible scale with a far reaching spread right across the state. I was keen to understand more about their labour issues, and to see what the public perception of the sector was. I wanted to understand the different ways large farms were managed and how succession planning was addressed. I understood prior to travelling that it has similar or if not worse issues than the UK in relation to labour and recruitment, so was keen to understand why.

Morning Star

Morning Star has farms throughout California and is headquartered in Sacramento, California. It’s the world’s largest tomato grower for processed tomatoes, harvesting 40% of California’s processed tomato crop annually. It operates across three farms and has annual sales of approximately \$750million. It certainly is a huge operation employing 2500 staff at peak. I didn’t know it at the time, but this was to be one of the most inspirational and thought provoking visits of my entire Nuffield Farming experience.



I started off travelling from San Francisco through to Arbuckle to meet with Matt Cooper. Matt doesn’t have a job title and that’s probably one of the first things that’s different about this company - but certainly not the last!

Morning Star operates in a way I have not witnessed on any other farm. Its philosophy in regard to company structure, direction, mission and values is unique among most businesses but even more unique in agriculture and horticulture. This visit was clearly going to be like no other.



Figure 30: Morning Star pack house, train line and training facility, Arbuckle, CA

Morning Star philosophy:

- There are no human bosses, the only boss is the company mission
- Has no job titles apart from the one required by law - “President”
- Has no job descriptions
- Has no set start or finish times
- No one can be sacked, they have to ask to leave
- Bonuses are asked for by staff on an annual basis via a 1-page hand written letter
- Staff operate using a self–management approach
- Staff are given ownership to make the best decisions on behalf of the business
- Staff are provided with “Missions” which outline their objectives
- Morning Star assumes all staff do the best they can with the information they have

Matt is from Lincolnshire originally and had worked on large production horticulture farms in the UK before moving out to California approximately 20 years ago. When he started at Morning Star he was provided with his mission, his pickup truck keys, and was then initially left to get started. In a more normal business Matt’s job title would be farm manager so his mission is along the lines of: “To grow, harvest and produce tomato products and services to meet customer requirements consistently and in a viable and cost effective way.” There is support to meet missions and “steps to mission” conversations happen with colleagues.



Morning Star's company mission is to:

"Produce tomato products and services which consistently achieve the quality and service expectations of our customers in a cost effective, environmentally responsible manner. We will provide bulk-packaged products to food processors and customer-branded, finished products to the food service and retail trade"

Morning Star operates by providing staff with the authority and ownership to make the best decisions on behalf of the business as long as they use their mission as their guiding light. Quoted below is a sample "mission" drawn up for someone who in traditional business would have a job title of field operative. Their mission is to :

"transplant and harvest processing tomatoes, productively and safely, in order to provide great customer satisfaction and an enviable return on assets"



Figure 31: Morning Star's railway network

Each member of staff completes a Colleague Letter of Understanding (CLOU), which defines the following:

- Personal Commercial Mission, the processes for which they have ownership
- Outline the colleagues' "Steppingstones" which are used as performance measures for each process
- CLOU Colleagues, the colleagues to which they are primarily accountable
- The CLOU also documents each colleague's commitment to Morning Star's Mission, Vision and Principles.

When you look at missions of different colleagues it's clear that these missions overlap and that in order to meet your mission you must negotiate and work with colleagues to help them meet theirs.

That is the key to this method of management. The other information provided to staff is very clear information on the cost of production and income earned for produce. Staff are encouraged to know what the costs are for their part of the business and the cost impacts of decision they make. The cost of planting a field of tomatoes is clear to staff including machinery, planting costs, labour costs and any other costs associated with the process. Therefore, each staff member is clear on their objective/mission, what their costs and income are, and the area given to be the able to do their job, taking this into account and making the best cost-versus-income based decisions. This is something I have termed a Dynamic Cost Assessment.

See photo on next page



Figure 32: Matt Cooper and me visiting one of the Morning Star Farms

Dynamic Cost Assessment

Using the Risk Assessment process, all companies are required to ensure they have risk assessment for all activities that take place within their business. When working in situations where alternative factors affect risk assessments e.g. with horses, you have a risk assessment for turning horses out in a field. This risk assessment stands for 95% of the time when conditions are relatively normal and covered within the standard risk assessment. However, there may be situations when it's frosty, snowy, or there is machinery operating near the field entrance and, based on these, we are required to make a Dynamic Risk Assessment taking into account these issues and make appropriate adjustments. This is termed a dynamic risk assessment. Therefore, in the Morning Star operation, when taking ownership, a self management approach Dynamic Cost Assessment seems to fit well and I have since used it with my own team with early signs of success.

Taking ownership and developing staff

Morning Star allows staff to make decisions amongst themselves in relation to start and finish times, operating schedules, purchases and acquisitions. This appears quite risky but when it's aligned back to the mission it really makes sense. A member of staff who works in the packhouse wanted to invest \$80,000 in a new piece of machinery. This is a decision this member of staff is able to champion themselves. However, rather than just say this machine costs XX and it will increase productivity, they have to go a step further. If they want to purchase this machine, they need to take more things into consideration – that is, they have to go a step further. If they want to purchase this machine, they have to consider some of the following:



- Cost to change from old to new
- Loss of production
- Impact on order fulfilment
- Company cash flow
- Future orders
- Longevity of opportunity

Providing all of this make sense then members of staff have the authority to make purchases on behalf of the company.



Figure 33: Morning Star packhouse facility

Staff bonus

Once a year staff are able to submit a bonus request to a select team of colleagues from across the business. It has to be hand written and only 1 page long. Staff have to ask what bonus they would like and most importantly why they deserve it. For example, a member of staff has made an adjustment to a process which has improved productivity and saved \$2000 annually, and they have asked for \$500. Bonuses are rarely refused as it's up to the member of staff to justify the rationale for their request.

Staff are not allowed to be sacked

Staff have to ask to leave, as issues with performance are addressed by highlighting why workers aren't achieving their mission. This is picked up by peer review because if a person/s is not performing this will affect other members of staff's ability to meet their responsibilities. It's a team approach. If, after discussions with the member of staff and by negotiation, things won't work, then the member



of staff will ask to leave as they effectively aren't prepared to take on board any of the suggestions on offer by the rest of the team.

Mission overlap

For each member of staff to undertake their mission fully, they need to contact and work alongside colleagues whose missions overlap e.g. for the example given above relating to purchasing machinery one person who would need to be contacted is a colleague whose mission included taking care of company finances and investments. In this method of management, giving permission and encouraging staff to self-manage, and investigate the options they are proposing fully, staff are making informed decisions based on tangible facts, constituting a reasoned, well-thought-through opportunity. If all of this makes good commercial sense, then in the example relating to machinery, purchase will go ahead.

This approach means that Morning Star staff are making decisions that in a traditionally structured business would be passed up to senior management. This alternative style of self-management means that senior level well-thought-through decisions are being made by staff in all different roles at all different times, constantly. Therefore, if all staff in a business were operating in this way what could businesses look like?

Morning Star staff

The workforce at Morning Star is made up of a high percentage of returnees - usually about 70% - with staff being local from a wide range of backgrounds. Staff have set up their lives around the farms but in Morning Star no one lives on site. Staff will have a number of different farms they work for and move between these farms. Language barriers and educational levels of staff are low, with many travelling across from Mexico. However, unemployment allowance in the US is paid based on the previous three months' earnings prior to becoming unemployed. Therefore, as long as staff start working after two months off, and time it right, it means seasonal work with peaks and troughs is more achievable. Labour isn't that much of an issue for Morning Star and where it is they provide training prior to the season starting to ensure they have the right skillsets ready.



Figure 34: Driver licence acquisition training prior to the start of the season



Erik Andresen and Sujei Gonzalez

After meeting with Matt at the farm in Arbuckle, I went on to meet Erik and Sujei in Sacramento. Eric’s mission is about Talent Acquisition and Sujei’s is about organisational development.

Morning Star staff measure themselves against how they have achieved their own mission to encourage staff to reflect on how they have performed. Once staff understand their mission they don’t really discuss it too much as people get to know what each other is trying to achieve. If someone isn’t following their mission it works by negotiation with other people. This is either done one on one, or with the team coming together to negotiate the best course of action. Compromise and empathy with colleagues and their missions need to be considered and used to ensure the right outcome for the business occurs. Something that Sujei and Erik mentioned that really stuck with me was:



Figure 35: Erik Andresen, Sujei Gonzalez and me at Morning Star Head Office Sacramento, California

There are three ways to have power within an organisation:

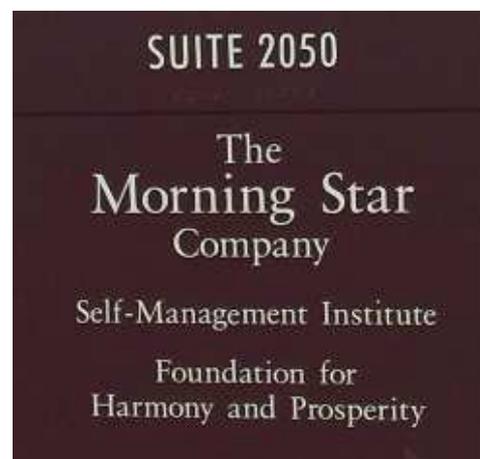
1. Knowledge power
2. Position power
3. Personality power

The Morning Star approach takes out the influence of position power and staff are respected for their knowledge and personality and ability to articulate themselves. The self-management approach narrows or eliminates the gap between blue and white collar workers and according to Sujei it’s a shark tank, you either sink or swim.

The Self-Management Institute

On the back of the success of the self-management approach at Morning Star, founder Chris Rufer went on to found the Self Management Institute in 2008. The institute is a research and educational group focused on the development of systems and educational programmes and applied behavioural research. It’s not surprising that the Self-Management Institute also has a mission which is:

“To cultivate a superior organisational structure and happier, more productive colleagues by creating and





refining principles, systems, and practices of attracting, developing and organising people”

The organisational structure stems from a set of core principles in order to encourage, achieve and maintain an atmosphere of high integrity, trust, competence and harmony among all colleagues, customers and suppliers:

1. Company mission
2. Individual goals and team work.
3. Personal responsibility and initiative – committing to:
 - (a) communicate and consult with other parties who are likely to be meaningfully affected when initiating a change of any sort
 - (b) seek the input of others who we believe have additional and substantive expertise related to the proposal.
4. Tolerance
5. Direct communication and gaining agreement.
6. Caring and sharing.
7. Do what is right. Live, speak and endeavour to find the truth.

The detail behind these principles is enlightening and can be found here courtesy of the Self Management Institute – [Flat company a unique organisational perspective](#)

The Morning Star environment is very conducive to self-managed, mature individuals. It is not nearly as conducive to those who either need someone else to tell them what to do, or need to be able to tell others what to do. Morning Star has also embraced the concept of Topgrading, this means it aims to place what it terms “A” players in every position. If an employee can’t be an “A” player in one position, their colleagues will try to identify a position where he or she can be an “A.” Again, therefore, finding people’s strengths and ensuring they are operating in their areas of strength giving them the best possible chance of success.

Young Farmers America – Lindsay Liebig

Lindsay works for the California Farm Bureau Federation on the Young Farmers and Ranchers Programme. Lindsay oversees the farm bureau leadership programme which has approximately 10 people joining a year to provide agricultural and business skills training. It provides other skills such as communications and media training, how to have conversations with political people, and also incorporates two field trips to different parts of the USA.

The Young farmers and Ranchers programme is a programme geared to getting the rural demographic together. The age range differs in different states. In California it’s 18-35 years of age. The average age of farmers is 60 in the USA so these initiatives are keen to ensure there is succession planning for



Figure 36: Lindsay Liebig, Young Farmers America



the future in place. Lindsay believes it's incredibly difficult to get into farming in California, especially to set up on your own. It's not something you can walk out of school and do, due to the lack of opportunities for new entrants.



Figure 37: Farm Bureau Headquarters, Sacramento

There is a scheme which is supported by large growers such as Morning Star, called 4H. It supports the age group prior to joining young farmers. It encourages school children to get involved in agriculture with professionals signed up to teach them prior to joining the Young Farmers and Ranchers movement. The biggest part of the 4H

programme is the livestock side where businesses donate a steer/cow and then the children are supported to buy it, keep it, raise it and auction it off. They train it to be led and go into the auction ring with it too. The income then goes to the children, but most importantly it teaches them responsibility about raising animals and helps them prepare for college.

University of California Co-operative Extension – Dr Surendra K Dara

Surendra has been an Extension entomologist since January 2009 and works across San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties and is an affiliated University of California Integrated Pest Management advisor, part of the UC State-wide IPM Program. He is also affiliated to the Department of Entomology and Nematology at UC Davis. *(Detail courtesy of ucanr.edu)*



Figure 38: Dr Surendra K Dara

In his role as the strawberry and vegetable crops advisor, Surendra remarked that, from his work on the IPM programme working alongside growers, the high value and requirements of manual labour in this industry are clear. Strawberry growers were suffering the most due to double cropping. Two crop cycles create optimum harvest for growers but to take full advantage of this then consistency of labour supply is key. Planting and working towards the autumn harvest has had to be reduced due to lack of labour supply. A number of labour supply schemes are utilised in the region but none that are providing all the required labour, at the right quality in the appropriate timescales.

Is there really a labour shortage?

Surendra commented that he didn't think there was a "skills only" shortage as, with the right opportunities, skills can be acquired easily. The problem is the skills shortage in combination with the shortage of labour supply.



The other big point of discussion was food waste; do we really need as much food as we are producing? and therefore do we need as much labour as we think? Looking to address the issue of imperfect produce with initiatives such as “wonky veg” would further reduce the production requirements. If a combination of these two issues were tackled, the impact on labour required would be significant. However, there hasn’t been any research carried out currently to see what this impact would look like. Reducing the supermarket specifications alone would look to reduce produce required by as much as 20-30%. Therefore, tolerance for less perfect food would reduce the labour supply issues. Supermarkets need to lead the change and help to educate and manage expectations of the general public. Supermarkets have a much wider reach than that of farmers and growers, and need to support this change and embrace opportunity. Imperfect produce is caused by deformity and doesn’t compromise the quality.

In summary we have to act now and not wait until extremes. Whilst visiting California it was clear there is a water shortage over there and everything you see: from farming practices, water restrictions, water recycling, reminders of how much water to use for various day-to-day activities such as brushing teeth, make that apparent. Saving water is a ritual now for all Californians. It’s the opposite with fuel usage. Many Americans drive big pickup trucks with huge engines and low miles per gallon, with one person travelling in the vehicle. Speaking to one farmer they were boasting about the good MPG of their new truck: it was 23mpg! In India it’s quite the opposite with huge numbers of people crammed into small cars, due to the incentives they have for multiple occupants versus single occupants.

3.5.1. California lessons learnt and recommendations:

1. The **self-management** culture I witnessed was one that had been set up at the start of the company and has grown from the beginning. In the UK a similar type of management style termed Upside Down Management, created by John Timpson, owner of the Timpson chain, has changed the culture of his organisation with fantastic success
2. **Culture change** is key to addressing status quo, harnessing this with training, **robust management styles** and showing and illustrating clearly why something that isn’t working will start to create a new culture of **individual ownership and responsibility**.
3. The self-management concept is extremely usable and all the staff I spoke to agreed on one thing: **it shares the pressure!** Instead of one person knowing the impact of things not working how they should, the whole team does, and **harnessing the power of the team is incredibly strong**
4. **Identify your own and your colleagues’ strengths** and wherever possible use this to create a team operating in their **“A’ game**.
5. The self-management style makes **colleagues more appreciative of each other** and their contribution to the company mission. Equally through natural selection colleagues who just don’t buy into this style of working usually ask to leave the company.
6. **Autonomy** – give permission to staff to use their knowledge of both their expertise and that of the company to empower them to make their own decisions
7. **Mistakes aren’t always bad**, this style of taking ownership does mean that mistakes will happen, but they will in other styles of management too. However, the culture creates a feeling of **honesty** and staff will acknowledge when the best decisions haven’t been made,



which is a chance for them and others to **learn from these mistakes**. That is the key – learn from mistakes; **rarely does someone make the same mistake twice**

8. **Do things because it's the right thing to do** and not just because it affects us financially – we wait until labour supply is at its most critical and think a scheme to bring migrants in to harvest is the only option. It's key for us in the UK to start investing heavily in multiple solutions to resolve the issue:

- **Advancing mechanisation for planting and harvesting**
- **Retention and staff development strategies**
- **Attraction strategies to promote the industry and raise public perception**
- **Efficiency strategies to optimise performance**
- **Reduce labour demand by reducing food waste and change supermarket specifications to reduce amount of food required to be produced**
- **Don't wait for extremes – act now**



4.0. Training and development – what is the impact?

Training and staff development is absolutely key to the success of businesses. However, it's actually often the last thing that is considered in businesses or, if it is, priority is on mandatory or compliance training. One thing I was told in Australia by one of the team at WorkCo who had the following question asked of them:

*“What happens if we invest in developing our people and they leave?
What happens if we don't and they stay?”*

It's incredibly true, directions and instructions can be taken from management, but if you train your team, the impact of those changes will be considerably: one person affecting change on 100, or 100 driving the change because they have been trained to see it's the right thing to do.

Why is training important?

1. Ensuring staff are up to date with industry changes and new developments
2. To be able to identify skills gaps and weaknesses within the business
3. To maintain knowledge and skill
4. Advance employee skills
5. Provide an incentive to learn - if it's part of a career development pathway and leads to internal progression opportunities
6. Increase job satisfaction levels, reduces employee turnover and increases productivity - continued investment from the business makes staff feel they are valued, which can improve their motivation towards their work.
7. Employing new staff involves recruitment costs, hiring fees and induction and training time to get new staff up to optimum performance; when this could be used to upskill existing staff
8. Attract new talent - businesses want to attract the best, so showcasing the benefits of working for a company including training, development opportunities and other added value features of working for your business will make staff choose your company over another
9. Keep in touch with all the latest technology developments
10. Stay ahead of competitors

Return on Investment

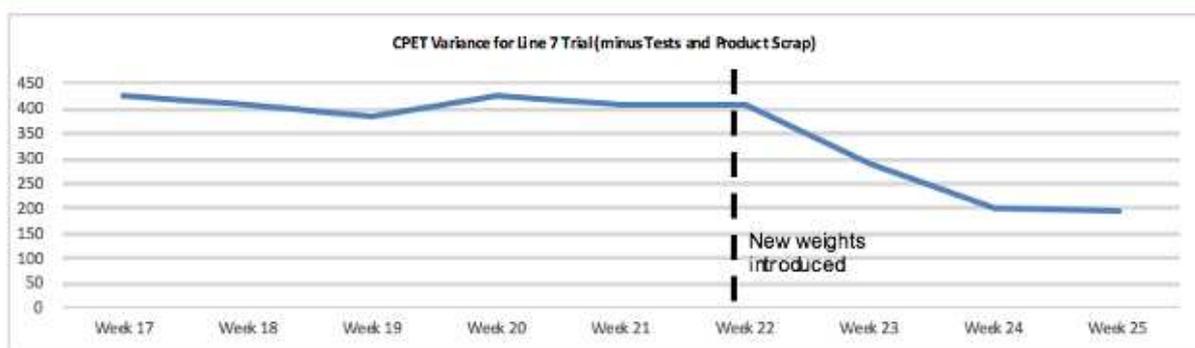
The value of training can be particularly difficult to measure and therefore challenging to show the improvements or impact made as a direct result of it. This does put businesses off from investing due to the concern they won't be able to see a direct impact. However, this is not always the case and by



following some key steps it's possible to set up a training programme to address the needs of your business.

- 1) Engage with a training professional to conduct a full **business needs analysis** to work out the areas of the business that require improving, refreshing or introducing.
- 2) Once needs have been decided then a **measure of these in their current state**, be it a tangible or objective rating to understand the starting point, where possible this can be linked to existing performance measurements.
- 3) **Set success targets** to work towards alongside the training plan
- 4) **Set and implement training plans** which can be designed by the training professional, including type of training, who for, timescales, numbers, level, length and depth of training to meet the needs identified above.
- 5) **Evaluate the impact** during and post training considering what trainees tell us in training evaluation, testing, response to training, reaching set target objectives
- 6) Where possible **define improvements in measurable value**, be it in efficiencies, cost savings performance improvements, customer satisfaction surveys or other measures of success suitable for the business.

8. CHECK (Monitor Results and Processes)



Solution appears to be working on Line 7 trial with a reduction in weekly CPET losses of around 209 pots (51% reduction).

If this was rolled out across all 13 lines, we estimate a total cost of implementation was £8,635 and a weekly saving of £2,717 pots worth £163 meaning the savings in the first week have already exceeded the costs. Over a year, based on this trial, it may be possible to save £8,476.

Speaking with line leaders, quality, operations, technical and production, it does not appear that the trial has had any adverse affects on other aspects of the manufacturing operation. We are happy to recommend the trial is expanded to the other lines.

Figure 39: Improvement Measure as part of a PeoplePlus Apprenticeship delivered by a team of staff already employed by the employer, and using the Business Improvement Techniques Apprenticeship as a vehicle to upskill existing staff and achieve the targeted improvements set at the start of the training.

Figure 39 shows a typical result graph delivered as a Kaizen project. The 6 apprentices made a combined saving on £8,500 so if this was replicated, which is very realistic, even with the time out of the job for training ranging from 80 hours over 12 months, this demonstrates a clear return on investment. After this training it doesn't need to stop there as the employees will be competent in the delivery of this kind of project and able to continue adding value to their employer.



5.0. Conclusions and Recommendations

1. A **multi-solution approach is required** to build a sustainable workforce. No country I visited or researched has the perfect solution, but what my travels have taught me about are the variety of methods able to be used to take a big step forward in tackling this issue.
 - Recruitment
 - Retention
 - Training and development
 - Management styles
 - Company culture
 - A willingness to look at things differently

2. We need to carefully consider the question **do we need more labour?** If the use of the produce already picked was optimised by tackling issues such as food waste and making more use of imperfect produce the impact of this would be a reduced demand for labour. **Retention of staff is a bigger issue** to the UK horticulture and agriculture industry than recruitment. There needs to be a **balance** between recruitment and retention and the strategies put in by employers to address this.

3. **What does “Good” look like?** establishing and embedding a company culture, mission, values, vision, goals, and key performance indicators and **communicating these consistently and effectively with all employees** is vital to ensure all employees are working towards the wider company objectives and understand their part to play in the bigger company. Take the time to ask **Why, What and How?** Why would people want to work for your business? What do they want to get from working there? and How can you help them? By helping them to get what they want, whilst they help you to do the work you need them to do, it will create a mutually beneficial working relationship. **What does a good employer look like?** Lots of time is spent analysing the right employees required for businesses, job descriptions, recruitment profiles, essential and desirable criteria, recruitment and selection criteria. **How much time is spend ensuring your business is somewhere your “ideal” candidates want to work?**

4. A lot of lessons can be taken from the **Self-Management** culture and applied to the horticulture and agriculture industry introduced either in part or as a whole. Strategies such as **Dynamic Cost Assessment** is a robust way of encouraging employees to make best decisions on behalf of the company – as long as they know the company expectations! **Transparency** is vital to allow this to happen. Identify your own and your teams **“A game” areas** and matrix manage your team to ensure you have all elements that your business requires covered.



6.0. After my study tour

There is so much that has happened professionally as a direct and indirect result of the journey I have been on since being awarded my Scholarship. Since beginning my Scholarship in Autumn 2013 I have had numerous promotions within the Staffline Group which has given me the opportunity to implement and share the knowledge I have gained from my studies directly into my day-to-day working life. I remain on the DEFRA SAWS working party group and am an active member of the ADHB HORT Employment and Education Working group. I have been able to support and showcase initiatives from my travels within my role in PeoplePlus part of the Staffline Group and advise of learning from my studies.

I am currently Head of Apprenticeships at PeoplePlus after taking the position in early May 2016. We are one of the top 10 largest training providers in the country with a national remit and the ability to deliver and facilitate training in England, Northern Ireland and Wales with a strong partner network in Scotland. We currently have approximately 2000 apprentices in training. We pride ourselves on designing and developing training plans with customers to address their business needs. We use an Organisation Needs Analysis approach and working with clients to identify the areas that need improving; measuring these and reporting on the impact and return on investment.

After my studies I have been inspired to further develop and share the insights I have gained on my travels. I am fortunate enough to work for a company that embraces change and already operates using some of the self-management characteristics I saw in California. I therefore have the autonomy to shape my division how I see fit and my “tomato story” is already well known by my team. I have instigated a lot of self-management principles and the performance as a result is improving quickly. I aim to continue this succession of management as I move my division to improve performance further and ensure it’s fit for purpose for our next challenge.

Within the skills arena we are approaching the biggest reform in the training sector for many years. April 2017 sees the implementation of the Apprenticeship Levy shifting the funding of apprenticeship for levy-eligible clients over to employers, and SMEs will also be required to contribute towards training apprentices. The levy applies to all businesses who have an annual wage bill of £3 million or more. 0.5% of the wage bill will be taken as per PAYE and deposited into a digital account for that employer. This means employers will be in control of how their money is spent on apprenticeships.

As well as the benefits that are already starting to be realised within my current role, I am keen to work with clients to support and consult on:

- Performance improvement through change management
- Training plan setup and delivery
- Self management, setup and implementation

I continue to be involved as part of the ADHB Horticulture’s Training and Development group. I also would like to engage with employers both within and outside of the Agricultural and Horticultural sector consulting on issues such as retention, culture change, staff development and other strategies, including discussing impacts and opportunities of the Apprenticeship Levy and am keen to explore speaking and consultative engagements. I will continue to support the requirement for a SAWS



replacement scheme for incentivised recruitment, in line with strong retention recommendations outlined in this study.



7.0. Executive summary

The choice of my study topic has been controversial from the start, evoking a number of different responses from the beginning; some negative reactions wished for the study not to go ahead, but the vast majority have been thoroughly supportive and excited to see what would arise from it. It just goes to show how important this issue is and why it was necessary to look further.

The production horticulture industry has labour issues! They are regularly heavily reported on by the press and often the topic of government discussions. The industry relies heavily on migrant labour and is further impacted by the closure of the Seasonal Agriculture Workers Scheme. With the average age of farmers currently sitting at 58 in the UK; the negative general public perception of the industry; the lack of uptake meaning the *“sum of the parts not being equal to the size of the whole”*; rising global population; critical skill shortages; succession planning issues; employers crying out for a motivated, interested and skilled workforce - it certainly is an exercise that needs to be explored.

Having discovered from my travels the issues I was looking to find answers for were, in fact, also just as big for the other countries I visited, I quickly realised that although there were elements of good practice to be shared, no one country had got it wholly right. This led me to investigate and look into the features the people, businesses, organisations and countries I visited, had got right, and start to build a summary of a multi-solution approach to reflect and report on.

The multi-solution approach is made up of 6 core areas:

1. Recruitment
2. Retention
3. Training and development
4. Management styles
5. Company culture
6. Willingness to self-reflect and change

The principle of these solutions is looking at retention and progression of workers in line with recruitment strategies. If we continue to try and put more potential recruits in the top of the recruitment funnel without plugging the gaps, no matter how much recruitment is carried out to provide the right number of people to fill vacancies, due to retention issues we will never reach a sustainable solution. Conclusions and recommendations from this study aim to illustrate methods that can be used to support this and assist growers in getting the balance between recruitment and retention right for their business.

This study shows there is a clear need to ensure that schemes to incentivise workers to work in the sector are absolutely still required. However, they are not to be relied upon and should be operated in balance with retention strategies to reduce reliance, and work to keep recruited workers in the industry. It's time to reflect on the type of businesses we are asking these “good” workers to work in, and consider how we can make the structure, management style, culture, progression opportunities and rewards attractive so that they encourage retention.



8.0. Acknowledgements and Thanks

I am extremely grateful to the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust for the opportunity to undertake this Scholarship. The Nuffield Farming process has been inspirational, educational, challenging, exhausting but, most of all, extremely useful and enjoyable.

I would like to thank AHDB Horticulture for sponsoring this Scholarship and, in particular, Steve Tones for his support and belief in me and my topic of choice before he had even met me! Also a huge thanks to PeoplePlus, part of the Staffline Group, for being a fantastic employer, supporting and challenging and, most importantly, believing in me.

I also want to say a huge thank you to Adam Savage my husband who has put up with all the travelling and has been thoroughly supportive throughout!

There are so many others whom I would also like to thank, from those who agreed to be interviewed, those who gave hospitality and others who offered advice and guidance. There are too many to name, but thank you.

Laura Savage



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Self Management Institute <http://www.self-managementinstitute.org>

AMS Austria <http://www.ams.at/english.html>

Landjugend Austria <https://landjugend.at/home>

Career Harvest <http://www.careerharvest.com.au>

Abares Outlook Conference <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/outlook-2016/Pages/default.aspx>

Longerenong College <http://www.longy.com.au>

Skillinvest <http://www.skillinvest.com.au/about>

MEGT Australia <http://www.skillinvest.com.au/about>

PeoplePlus <http://peopleplus.co.uk>

Staffline <http://peopleplus.co.uk>

University of California <http://ucanr.edu>

IBC Student exchange <http://ibcbulgaria.com>

Agricfood Skills Australia <http://www.fas.org.au>

WAFF <https://www.waff.at/de/startseite/>

Self Management – Flat company a unique organizational perspective http://www.self-managementinstitute.org/assets/images/uploads/Flat_Company-Updated.pdf

Dual Education System – Austria www.bic.at

Migrationwatchuk <http://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefing-paper/290>

Harvest Trail – www.harvesttrailtv.com

Local Government Authority - Local.gov.uk