



SOIL ASSOCIATION

The Soil Association is the UK's leading membership organisation campaigning for healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use.

FUTURE GROWERS

The Future Growers Scheme is an organic horticulture programme, which has successfully trained over 120 new entrants and engaged with over 50 organic small scale farms.

FUTURE GROWERS SCHEME - BACKGROUND



- Launched in 2007
- Established to address the lack of quality in horticulture trainees
- A committee of interested organisations and growers came together to develop the terms and objectives for the scheme



Organic
Growers
Alliance



Abbey Home Farm,
Cirencester



FUTURE GROWERS SCHEME - TERMS



- Full time employment
- Two year employment contract
- Apprentices to be paid at least the minimum wage
- Host farms to provide at least one hour of formal mentoring per week

SOIL ASSOCIATION'S ROLE

- To act as the link between the farm and the apprentice
e.g. advertising placements, matching apprentices to hosts
- To deliver a structured learning programme including 8 weekends of seminars, workshops and networking opportunities
- To provide support throughout the scheme including one on one meetings with the FG Coordinator

FUTURE GROWERS SCHEME



FUTURE GROWERS SCHEME - SUCCESSES



- Scheme grew from 3 apprentices in year 1 up to an average of 12
- Financial crash in second year made it difficult to recruit but scheme recovered and continued to grow
- Many apprentices continued developing a career in horticulture after graduating from the 2 year programme
- Soil Association build stronger relationships with the host farms



FUTURE GROWERS SCHEME - CHALLENGES



- High interest in the scheme from new entrants, however lack of farms who could afford to host and train an apprentice for minimum wage
- Many potential new entrants could not afford the scheme – a reflection of poor farm wages rather than the cost of the programme
- The level of mentoring varied from farm to farm depending on grower and time of year

FUTURE GROWERS SCHEME - CHANGES



- After pilot studies, the Soil Association introduced a one year scheme to run alongside the two year, giving new entrants and host farms a shorter term option – improved numbers to approx. 23 per year
- In 2017 the scheme dropped the requirement of new entrants needing to be an apprentice on a host farm
- In 2017 and 2018 the scheme ran as a successful one season programme consisting of six 3 day weekends visiting over 20 different farms around the UK, specialist seminars and workshops and networking opportunities
- Although the interest has been significant, the Future Growers scheme is not running in 2019 while the Soil Association conduct research and development

FUTURE GROWERS IMPACT SURVEY 2019



What motivated you to take part in the Future Growers scheme?

“The opportunity to learn more about horticulture from the Soil Association”

“I have a passion to see sustainable food production in the future, concern for the future of food production and a love of working outside with the soil and plants. I wanted to eventually to have my own organic smallholding business and wanted to learn everything I could about it”

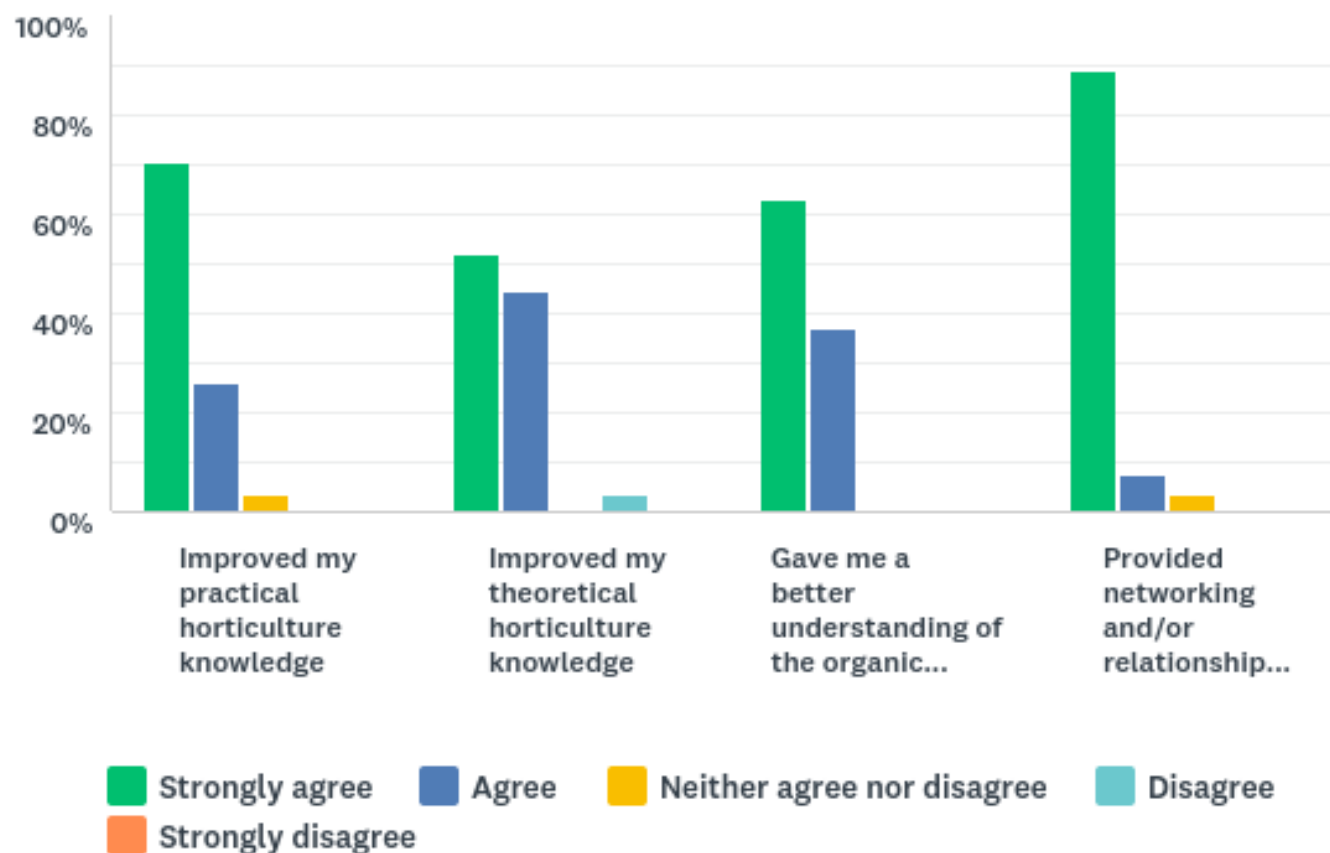
“Wanting to get hands on practical experience, while learning theory of growing, planning, soil management etc, and wanting a more structured experience than something like woofing”

“Interest in learning more about horticulture, expanding my theoretical knowledge and having opportunity to visit other organic producers and see the growing models available to me in the future”

FUTURE GROWERS IMPACT SURVEY 2019



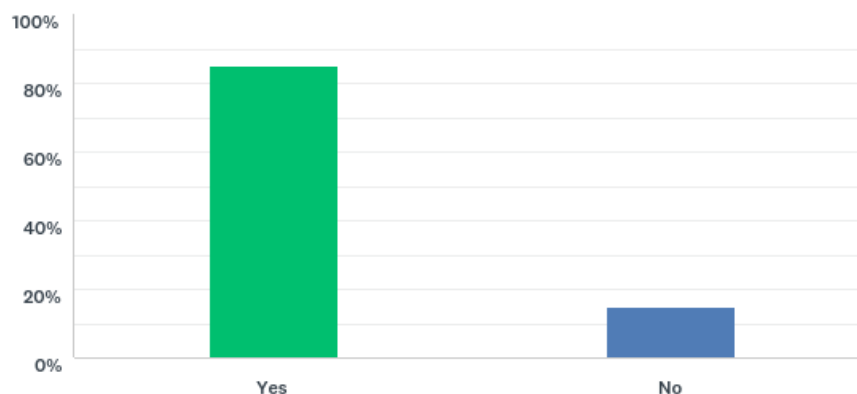
Q8 The Future Growers scheme:



FUTURE GROWERS IMPACT SURVEY 2019



Q12 Did you continue a career in horticulture after completing the Future Growers scheme?



"In 2014 I set up an organic market garden business with help from seasonal trainees"

"I moved on to be head grower at a 12 acre venue, and am now considering starting my own business"

"I have been the head grower at a farm in Coventry for five years, before that I started a CSA in Ireland for two years"

"Went to work for a couple of other commercial veg box schemes before starting our own market garden in 2017"

FUTURE GROWERS IMPACT SURVEY 2019



If no, what were your reasons for not continuing a career in horticulture?

“As much as I loved growing, the salaries on offer to me simply weren't viable for me to live off and instead I planned to get a better paid job to save some funds to start my own enterprise.”

“I'm now stepping out of horticulture as I cannot make it financially viable... for now.”

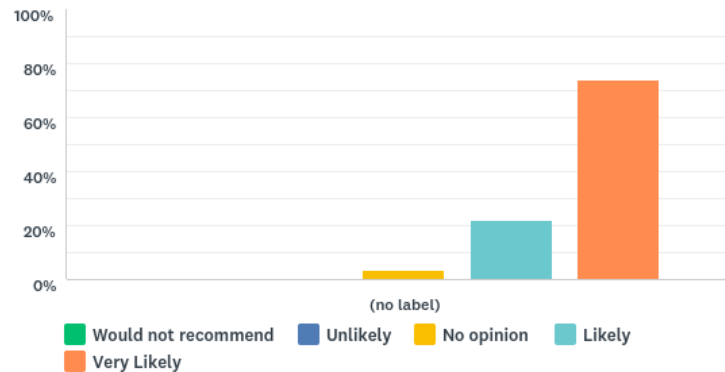
“Hard to find work near urban centres e.g. Bristol. Crucially, low pay. Currently doing carpentry work where I'm currently paid £11 per hour and could get up to £20 per hour. Food growing is more like £8 per hour”

“I retrained as a teacher”

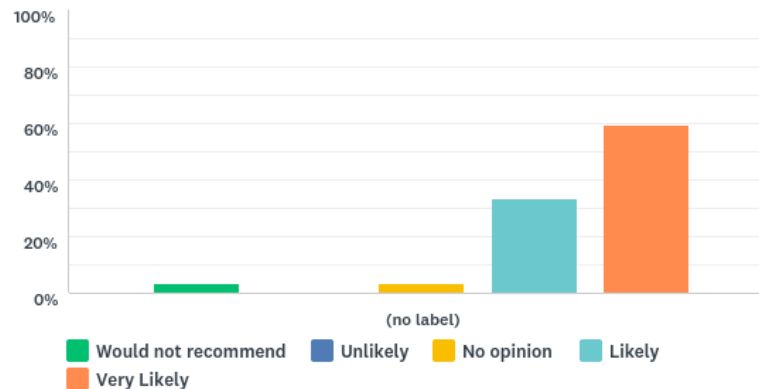
“Personal circumstances, but plan to return to it in the future.”

FUTURE GROWERS IMPACT SURVEY 2019

Q24 On a scale of 1-5 how likely are you to either continue with, or pursue a career in horticulture/agriculture in the future?



Q23 On a scale of 1-5 how likely are you to recommend the Future Growers scheme to a new entrant in horticulture?



FUTURE GROWERS IMPACT SURVEY 2019



If any, what do you feel are the challenges for employment in horticulture, particularly for new entrants?

“Access to paid, structured, training on a living wage, and long term employment opportunities, again on a wage that supports a living”

“Gaining the experience in such a low wage scenario. Plenty of internships and apprenticeships out there but it's difficult when the wages are potentially so low.”

“Very low salaries and reliance upon volunteer labour.”

“The relatively small scale of many producers means it is difficult to move up after time as there is no 'up' (ie. positions of greater responsibility, permanent contracts and better pay) to move into. Access to land is the single biggest barrier to setting up on your own”

“Seasonality of labour, lack of affordable housing options across rural areas”

“Low pay and mainly seasonal work. There often seems to be few job positions which fall between being a trainee and a head grower.”

NEW ENTRANTS IN HORTICULTURE



THE PROBLEM:

Voluntary exploitation – we need to pay workers enough to make horticulture a viable, sustainable, long term career

THE SOLUTION:

Government subsidies or grants for new entrant horticulture training on organic farms

