

Parliamentarians for Agroecology

Parliamentary Briefing: Agroecology, Land Access and New Entrants

June 2026

The UK farming sector faces a growing generational crisis. The average age of a farmer is now around 59 years old, while many aspiring new entrants are unable to access land, housing, finance or training opportunities. The challenge is not a lack of interest in farming, but a lack of accessible routes into the sector. Supporting new entrants is therefore critical not only for renewing the farming workforce, but also for strengthening the long-term resilience, sustainability and food security of the UK food system. At the same time, the UK horticulture sector faces labour shortages and remains dependent on migrant labour.

The new generation wants to farm agroecologically and support food production that functions in harmony with nature. Despite increasing interest in agroecology and sustainable food production, structural barriers continue to prevent new entrants from establishing viable farming livelihoods. The main barriers include:

- lack of affordable access to land;
- insecure tenancy arrangements;
- shortage of affordable rural housing;
- limited access to finance and start-up capital;
- lack of clear training pathways, including apprenticeships and career support;
- planning systems geared toward conventional large-scale agriculture.

Land-based sector skills are often overlooked due to underfunding, limited political representation and a mismatch between government ambitions and training provision. As a result, access to skills training is declining, threatening food security, biodiversity, climate resilience and the future workforce. With growing government focus on land use, farming and skills, there is a timely opportunity to strengthen land-based training.

Key asks

Parliamentarians for Agroecology (P4A) would encourage you to:

- **Submit a Written Parliamentary Question to Defra** asking what support they will provide for a publicly funded national land matching service to improve opportunities for new entrants into farming and support training to help them succeed.
- **Write privately to the Farming Minister** requesting that future farming policy explicitly supports new entrants, agroecological farming and small-scale horticulture businesses.

Barriers facing new entrants

Access to land remains one of the biggest and most unequal barriers facing new entrants into farming, particularly for those without family connections, inherited wealth or existing access to land assets. High land prices, insecure tenancy arrangements and concentrated patterns of land ownership make it extremely difficult for new farmers and growers to establish viable businesses. Many new entrants struggle to access affordable land to rent or buy, while short-term tenancies can make it difficult to invest in sustainable farming practices or build financially secure enterprises. These structural inequities risk excluding talented and

diverse new entrants from the sector altogether. In response, we are calling for policies that improve fair and long-term access to land.

Access to land is also closely tied to housing and planning policy. [Rural house prices are significantly higher than in urban areas, while local rural wages are lower and affordable housing remains limited in many communities.](#) These pressures make it difficult for new entrants to live close to their work or establish viable farm businesses. Current planning policy and guidance are also still largely geared toward conventional large-scale agriculture and often fail to recognise the viability and operational realities of small agroecological enterprises. This creates significant barriers for smaller farms.

Supporting the next generation

[Research](#) found that younger generations are strongly motivated by meaningful work, environmental values, community and career progression — values that align closely with agroecological farming systems. However, many aspiring farmers struggle to identify clear pathways into farming careers and often face high levels of stress, isolation and risk of burnout due to insecure livelihoods and a lack of support networks. In response, the Landworkers' Alliance has developed "[Agroecological Pathways](#)" focused on practical training, apprenticeships and peer-to-peer learning.

Addressing the barriers facing new entrants will require coordinated policy action across land access, planning, housing, training and finance. This has been outlined in Lantra's new report, [Shaping a Resilient Future](#). A key part of this solution is [Landmatch England](#) — a new collaborative initiative designed to connect landowners with new entrants seeking opportunities to farm using regenerative and agroecological approaches. Landmatch England delivers:

- one-to-one support and registration;
- tailored guidance and resources;
- facilitated introductions and site visits;
- signposting to professional support for legal agreements.

The programme also includes targeted support for people often marginalised from land access, including those facing economic and racial barriers to entering farming.

Why agroecology matters

Agroecology provides a framework for transforming agriculture to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits. Defined by the [UN FAO](#) as an approach that applies ecological and social principles, it recognises the interconnected relationship between farming, land, food and communities. By promoting systems, such as agroforestry and pasture-based livestock, agroecology can improve biodiversity, soil health, and climate resilience while reducing reliance on synthetic inputs. Closely aligned with the [2020 Agriculture Act](#) and the Government's [National Food Strategy](#), it also supports fairer supply chains, equitable access to food and sustainable rural economies.

Written in partnership with Apricot Centre, Landmatch England, Ecological Land Cooperative, and OrganicLea

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