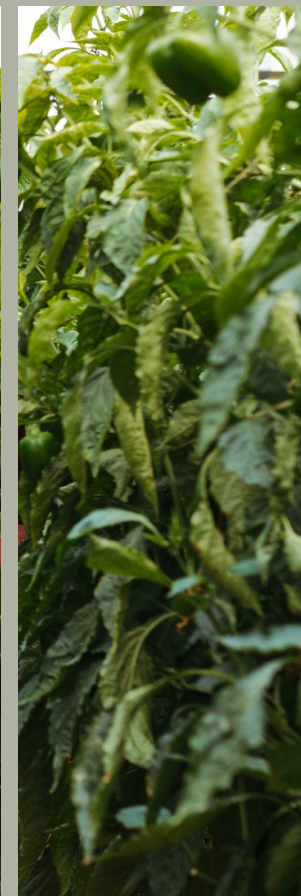


Securing the Future of Farming

**An EIT Food Consumer Observatory study on the image of
agricultural careers among young people in Europe**

26 June **2025**



Contents

1. Executive summary
2. About the study
3. Making career choices
4. Motivation to pursue agricultural careers
 - Agriculture as a means to do good
 - Agriculture as a romantic lifestyle
 - Agricultural careers as scientific careers
 - Agricultural careers as entrepreneurial
5. Ability to pursue agricultural careers
 - Uncertainty
 - Skill
 - Familiarity
6. Images of agricultural careers
7. Appendix
 - Bibliography

Executive summary



A new generation of agricultural professionals is needed

Farmers are the subject of countless nursery rhymes and children's books. Ask any young child to name examples of jobs and chances are 'farmer' will be a common response. Ask a young adult what they want to do for a living, and you are unlikely to hear the same answer.

Farming must become more sustainable and resilient to climate change if we hope to feed a growing world population. Political debate over agriculture is rampant across Europe today, yet farmers are still the most trusted actor in our food system.^{1, 2}

The public's positive perception of farmers fails to translate into young people entering the profession. In Europe, **35% of farmers are 65 or older and only 11% are under the age of 40.**^{3, 4} Previous research has established the reputation of agricultural careers as hard work, isolated, requiring low education and offering poor financial opportunities. Farming is also seen as an inaccessible career due to a shortage of land.^{3, 4}

Using in-depth qualitative methods, this study explores how **technological, sustainability and political** developments affect young people's perception of agricultural careers. It also tests alternative images of agricultural careers which could inspire the next generation.



Methodology

The aim of this research is to provide insights needed to design interventions that reposition agricultural professions, to encourage young people to pursue careers in the agricultural sector.

Using the BJ Fogg model of behaviour change, we identify factors that motivate and demotivate agricultural career choices. We also determine the barriers and enablers influencing young people's ability to enter the agricultural sector.

This research answers the following primary research questions:

1. What factors motivate young people to consider a career in the agricultural sector?
2. What factors inhibit young people from pursuing agricultural careers?
3. How do young people respond to images of alternative agricultural careers?

This **exploratory qualitative approach** develops a detailed picture of how young people think about agricultural careers and why these perceptions arise. To gather rich qualitative data, we used the Citizen Participation Forum (CPF) to host moderated online discussions among young Europeans. The CPF is the Consumer Observatory's online community of around 350 consumers from seventeen different countries across Europe.

The study also incorporated interviews with experts in the fields of career choices, agricultural education and rural development. This approach delivered a nuanced understanding of factors shaping behaviour around agricultural career choices. This detailed understanding of behaviour provides a strong foundation to build future quantitative studies.

Key findings

The study identified four themes affecting young people's motivation to pursue agricultural careers. Each theme is broken down into related motivating and demotivating factors.

Agriculture as a means to do good

Motivating:

- Benefits the community
- Fulfills a critical public service
- Contributes to sustainability
- Sustainability presents a business opportunity
- Sustainability can improve farmer's reputations

Demotivating:

- Sustainability challenges are insurmountable
- Demand for sustainable food products is low
- Food production is a big responsibility
- Farmers are not respected or valued

Agricultural careers as entrepreneurial

Motivating:

- Opportunity to be your own boss
- Varied work

Demotivating:

- Administrative burden
- Unclear financial opportunities

Agricultural careers as scientific careers

Motivating:

- Applied technology and science career opportunities
- Interesting work
- Technology and science improve the social status of farming
- Working conditions are improved

Demotivating:

- Science has made agriculture unnatural
- High-tech approaches are unfeasible and unrealistic
- Monotonous work

Agriculture as a romantic lifestyle

Motivating:

- Connection with nature
- Rewarding work producing food and spending time outdoors
- Working with living creatures

Demotivating:

- Poor working conditions and hard physical labour outdoors
- Rural isolation
- Reality isn't romantic

Findings

Three themes affect young people's ability to pursue agricultural careers. Each theme is broken down into composite enablers and barriers.

Uncertainty

Enablers:

- Job security in this essential sector

Barriers:

- High risk sector
- Financial investment in technology and sustainability
- Changing politics and policies

Familiarity

Enabler: Role models make careers tangible and relatable

Skill

Barrier: Highly skilled, specialised work



Recommendations on leveraging technology

Based on the results of the study, the Consumer Observatory has identified several recommendations for policymakers, educators and other industry actors. The following recommendations focus on how to leverage technological developments in the agricultural sector effectively:

→ **Clarify the status of technological development**

What happens during food production behind fences and closed barn doors is somewhat of a black box. Integrating technology in the agricultural sector brings inspiring new opportunities for some young people. However, others doubt the feasibility of automating and digitalising technologies or the extent to which technology could change the nature of agricultural work. For the inspiring effect of technology to take full effect, young people need clarity on the status of technological development.

→ **Leverage technology to inspire, but especially to mitigate demotivating factors**

The poor working conditions associated with agricultural work, especially the manual labour required, are a powerful and prevalent demotivator. While not all young people are inspired by technology itself, they do value its potential to reduce physical labour. Technology could help to tackle the sector's reputation for hard, exhausting manual labour by automating and digitalising some tasks. By presenting technology as an assistant to farmers it could suppress this powerful demotivator.

→ **Present technology as complementary to connecting with nature**

While technology excites some and offers useful tools for others, it is also seen as an intruder on the farm. Especially for those who value agricultural work for closeness with nature, it can ruin the romantic appeal of an idyllic rural life. For some, high-tech agriculture is unnatural or even inherently wrong. They fear a negative environmental impact or feel repulsed by 'artificial' food production. To shift this view, technology should be presented as complementary to nature. By highlighting the role of technology in enabling more sustainable agriculture in sync with natura, an idyllic vision of farming can be reconciled with the use of technological tools.

Recommendations on tackling uncertainty

The following recommendations focus on the urgent need to tackle uncertainty associated with agricultural work, which is a key barrier to young people pursuing agricultural professions:

→ **Reduce risks in the agricultural sector**

Young people need to be assured that the very real risks involved in agriculture can be mitigated. Raising awareness for how technology, income diversification and more sustainable practices can build resilience could help young people feel more in control. Weather, disease and market prices are inherent risks which will only grow as climate change progresses. Policies need to show that they provide support and stability. If young people know a safety net is available, the inevitable risks may be less of a barrier. Policies also need to be reliable; the short-term nature of many agricultural policies exacerbates uncertainty.

→ **Clarify the pay debate**

Previous research established that agricultural careers are unattractive in part because people believe they are paid poorly.^{3, 4} This research found that while some young people are concerned about low pay in the sector, others believe that there are good financial opportunities. In general, young people are more optimistic about remuneration in scientific and specialised agricultural roles. Conversations around pay spark debate and uncertainty, which is unattractive to young people making career choices. Career advisory resources need to outline roles available in the agricultural sector and the financial opportunities they present.

→ **Give reasons to be optimistic about sustainability challenges**

Many young people find having a positive impact critical to building a fulfilling career. For some, positive impact means contributing to solving global sustainability problems. The sustainability-minded are divided: is it possible to solve agriculture sustainability challenges? Or a losing battle? To feel inspired, young people need to believe that significant change is possible, happening already and represents an opportunity rather than a burden. Politicised debate paints farmers as the culprits of environmental harm. An antidote is required: examples demonstrating that successful food production businesses can be built on sustainable values.

Recommendations on tackling uncertainty (II)

The following recommendations focus on changing public discourse around agricultural careers to address uncertainty and emphasise the security of jobs in this critical sector:

→ **Governments must demonstrate that they support and respect farmers**

Young people say they value and respect farmers, but they perceive the rest of society as not. Contentious political debate across Europe makes pursuing an agricultural career more unattractive for young people. There is a strong belief that farmers, especially small-scale farmers, are not valued nor adequately supported by governments. Instead, they are burdened with administration and sustainability demands. This sense of a lack of respect reduces the social status of agricultural work, which makes the sector even less attractive. To help calm political debate, policies and narratives from policymakers need to demonstrate that agricultural professionals are valued and respected.

→ **Present the agricultural sector as a valuable public service**

There is a strong consensus that agricultural careers can contribute good to society. Whether the focus is producing good food to feed the community, or pursuing sustainability, doing good is seen as an important aspect of agricultural work. That doesn't mean people think farmers always do good – but they see great potential for agriculture to have positive impact.

The aspiration to do good seems to be a common motivator to choose agricultural careers. It may even be almost a prerequisite, as agricultural work is often perceived as noble: ultimately good and meaningful but requiring sacrifice in terms of hard work, lack of freedom and pay. When communicating about agricultural careers it may be effective to prioritise targeting people who aspire to do good and frame agricultural careers like public service jobs. This could appeal to the desire to do good and find meaning or purpose in work, but also harness the belief that there is job security in such an essential sector.

Recommendations on communicating with young people

The following recommendations make suggestions around how to present and frame agricultural careers in an appealing manner:

→ **Tailor the message**

This research has uncovered four main themes that can motivate agricultural career choices: agriculture as a means to do good; agriculture as a romantic lifestyle; agricultural careers as scientific careers and agricultural careers as entrepreneurial. Communication promoting agricultural careers, should be comprised of specific messages tailored to different groups who are motivated by different factors.

→ **Engage role models**

Familiarity is an important factor enabling young people to choose agricultural careers. Experience with food production or family members working in the sector, makes agricultural careers more tangible and relatable. It is important that young people connect with role models personally. Remote examples are unlikely to have the same effect. On the other hand, the traditional, stereotypical image of a farmer is a barrier to those who do not fit it. By providing young people agricultural role models from a range of backgrounds, more young people will feel the sector is accessible to them.

→ **Explore the role of digital media in shaping career choices**

The extent to which social media influencers' and reality television characters' careers could inspire young people is up for debate. Many young people acknowledge that social media influences their decisions, and many use these platforms as a source of information. It would be worth considering further what role digital media could play in promoting agricultural careers. Social media could be used to expose young people to agricultural career options and perhaps even provide motivating and relatable role models, build motivating value-based communities, and provide some skills training or education.

Recommendations for further research

→ We recommend setting up a representative European quantitative study to measure the image of farming as a career among young people.

This research has established four main themes motivating agricultural career choices and three factors affecting young people's ability to choose agricultural careers. It is beyond the scope of this research to place the factors in a hierarchy of importance and determine which groups are best motivated by which factors. Answering these questions could assist in designing more effective, inspiring communication about agricultural careers, tailoring it to different groups and measuring its effectiveness. There is a clear need for further research beyond this exploratory study.

Given the importance of the topic, we recommend setting up a representative European **quantitative study** to measure the image of farming as a career among young people. This research should capture the perceptions, aspirations, and emotional associations with farming, and track both barriers and drivers that influence the decision to pursue agriculture as a profession.

Understanding these dynamics is critical for the long-term sustainability of our agricultural sector. Quantitative insights would provide a further strategic tool to guide policy, investment, education, and communication. Results would allow stakeholders to see what's improving, what's stagnating, and what new barriers or opportunities are emerging. An annual survey acts as a feedback loop, helping measure the effectiveness of these efforts and refine strategies based on real-world impact.

By measuring how the image of farming evolves year by year, stakeholders can collectively work toward a future where farming is seen as an inspiring, viable, and future-forward career for young people.

About the study



Predicting behaviour change

To encourage young people to explore agricultural careers, we need to understand what shapes career choice behaviour.

According to a model developed by the psychologist **BJ Fogg**, a specific behaviour (or choice) will be exhibited when three elements converge:⁸

1. **Motivation** is the desire to make a specific choice. Motivation is shaped factors including physical sensations, emotions and social pressure.
2. **Ability** is whether someone feels they can make a specific choice. Ability is shaped factors like physical capability, knowledge, skills, time and resources required to enable the behaviour.
3. **Prompts** are cues that trigger behaviour change by providing inspiration or calling attention. Prompts can be internal (emotions, thoughts, habits) or external (events, reminders).

This study explores young people's motivation and ability to choose agricultural careers. It also tests and proposes prompts that could better invoke behaviour change.



Insights to design interventions

This research provides insights needed to design interventions to re-position agricultural professions.

This study investigates how technology, sustainability and political debate affect young people's perceptions of agricultural careers. A qualitative approach develops a detailed picture of how young people think about agricultural careers. This provides a nuanced understanding and a strong foundation on which to pursue a quantitative approach.

Using the BJ Fogg model of behaviour change, we identify factors influencing young people's motivation and ability to enter the agricultural sector. The results of this study are useful for a range of actors working in the agricultural sector, education and policy including:

- **Agricultural higher education institutes and programs** who want to attract and inspire students.
- **Teachers and career advisors in schools** who want to support young people who are curious about farming.
- **Government and policymakers** who want to incentivise agriculture careers to secure the sector, food security and sustainability.
- **Advocacy groups and farmers' unions** who want to promote farming as a profession and improve their working conditions.
- **Food manufacturers and industry** who want to secure a supply of high-quality raw materials.



Exploratory, qualitative methods

The Citizen Participation Forum (CPF) is an online community consisting of around 350 members from seventeen countries.

Members are interested in talking about food and generally well-informed. Researchers guide and moderate activities within the community, probing participants to gather rich qualitative data.

During this study, **30 young people between the ages of sixteen and 25** took part in online activities through the community. They filled in questionnaires and engaged in forum-based discussion and debates. They originate from mixed backgrounds including rural and urban alongside highly educated and less .

This **qualitative approach** enabled the researchers to develop a deep understanding of young people's perceptions, motivations, emotions and beliefs around agricultural careers and where these come from. The insights it delivers provide a **detailed and nuanced** picture of young people in Europe's perspective on agricultural careers.

The first part of this study explored what factors affect and inform young people's career choices and how they perceive agricultural careers considering **technological developments, sustainability transition and political debate**. Based on the results, the study formulated **narratives portraying inspiring agricultural professions**. In the second part of the study young people reacted to these narratives.

This research also included interviews with five experts on agricultural development, education and career choices.

During interviews, the experts shared their perception of the young farmer problem in their country.

These conversations provided an additional level of insight and information about **how the young farmer problem varies across Europe**.

The results of our expert interviews refined the approach taken during the qualitative phase of this research and informed data interpretation.



Testing inspiring narratives

To explore how to inspire the next generation of young agricultural professionals, we presented young people with four narratives portraying distinct models of agricultural careers.

According to BJ Fogg's model, prompts are the final component required to trigger behaviour change. We created inspiring narratives describing agricultural careers. The narratives were designed to reflect the motivating and enabling factors identified in the first phase of this research. They are entirely distinct, allowing comparisons to be drawn and simple enough that they are accessible to anyone. In achieving this they present exaggerated representations of modern agricultural work.

Back to nature

A small family-run regenerative farm that provides healthy, sustainable food to the community. This narrative emphasises sustainability, rewarding hard work and connection to the community.

High-tech harvest

A large, modern agri-business offering scientific careers, emphasising efficient production and innovation. This narrative presents a technology-oriented agricultural career with the same benefits of corporate jobs in other fields – like fixed working hours and a good, stable salary.

Urban grower

An innovative business for the city-dwelling food producer. The urban farm uses technology to connect city residents with their food. This narrative focuses on food production at the intersection of science, business and community. It aims to quell concerns that agricultural work is lonely, isolated and uncomfortable.

Agricultural services

An agricultural consultant who applies their specialised expertise to advise farmers. This narrative is designed to reduce the perception that agricultural careers are risky. It depicts a flexible, entrepreneurial career.

Results: Making career choices



Young people are searching for careers that offer a sense of purpose

'Do what you love' is common career advice delivered by parents and schools, but can confuse and limit young people.

Careers that offer a sense of purpose and meaning are desirable.

For many young people fulfilment at work begins with helping other people and leaving a positive impact. For this reason, amongst the participants in this study, public service careers are very popular.

For me, what is important is to help others, to love one's job and to love the human relationship.

Asli, FR (18)

When making career choices, parents' opinions are highly influential. Although well-intentioned, the advice to **'do what you love' limits young people's options**. They lack the experience required to judge what they enjoy outside a handful of hobbies and subjects offered at school. They are also unaware of many sectors and roles.

When I pick my career, there are three things that matter to me. There is passion - I want to enjoy my job. Then there is work-life balance, so that I may still maintain time for myself and my family. Third is a regular income so I can sustain a good life without worrying about money.

Taqdees, GR (24)



Income security and good working conditions are priorities for young people

Young people can be pragmatic when making career choices. Salary, job prospects and work-life balance are priorities.

Finding a job that offers security and good working conditions is a priority. For most young people this means an **adequate, reliable salary, stable future job prospects and work-life balance**. Other common criteria include flexibility, proximity to home, and work that doesn't exhaust them mentally or physically.

A good job should ensure a proper balance between work and personal life. Working too much can be counterproductive and may lead to burnout. Choosing a balanced career allows us to live properly, without neglecting family, friends, health, hobbies, and personal growth.

Federica, IT (22)

Lacking experience and information compromises the search for a secure, purpose-filled career.

They are really looking for certainty...they want to choose a job in which they get a good salary and good [job prospects], but they don't know where to find this information.

Suzanne Dölle, Senior Researcher at JINC



Digital media play an growing role in shaping career choices

Social media is used to search for a behind the scenes perspective on unfamiliar career options.

Digital spaces could expose young people to inspirational examples of new farmer archetypes and connect them with value-based farming movements - appealing to their search for purpose.⁴

On social media, young people explore careers they would otherwise never have been exposed to. They can look **behind the scenes** at the daily reality of a job.

You can explore aspects that normally you cannot know. The social networks show concrete examples of lifestyles and the world of work.
Sofia, IT (23)

Digital media makes it easier to discover unconventional career paths. If agricultural careers were more visible on social media perhaps more young people would consider them. **Victoria, DK (18)**

Some young people disagree with this position arguing that social media has little influence on their choices.

I simply choose what I like and I don't think digital media has a significant impact on me personally. **Luuk, NL (22)**

Social media offers remote farming role models catering to ranging values and interests.

There are numerous popular social media accounts and television shows depicting the lives of farmers. These digital media expose young people to agricultural careers. However, it remains a question to what extent passively consuming social media content and television can alter your career choices. Real-life role models may be more effective.

To be honest there are a lot of people on Polish social media that share their farm life. For me the most inspiring is Erika Nawrocka (on TikTok) she shows how living in a village and having a farm doesn't make someone worse. You can still have hobbies, travel and so on. **Agnieszka, PL (25)**

I know that Ballerina Farm's TikTok videos are extremely popular promoting a traditional lifestyle and farming. **Zuzana, DK (18)**

The diversity of social media accounts sharing their agricultural work or rural lifestyle caters to a range of young people's interests. While many influencers find their niche in sharing a romantic, peaceful rural life there are also farmers who focus on entrepreneurship, animal breeding or even just amusing aspects of their work.

Results: Motivation to pursue agricultural careers



Four main themes motivate young people to consider agricultural careers

Motivation is the desire to make a choice. It can be shaped by factors including physical sensations, emotions and social pressure. This research identified four themes motivating agricultural career choices.

Agriculture as a means to do good

The ambition to have a positive impact is a powerful motivator. What 'good' means varies between individuals. Motivation can stem from having a tangible impact on individuals, contributing a service to society, or solving sustainability challenges.

Corresponding demotivating factors include concern that: sustainability challenges are insurmountable, they involve a high level of responsibility, and that society fails to value and respect farmers for their good work.

Agriculture as a romantic lifestyle

Those craving a sense of peace and a stronger connection to nature are motivated by the romantic ideal of an agricultural lifestyle. They believe agricultural work is hard but ultimately rewarding.

Poor working conditions, the unattractiveness of rural life, and the belief that this romantic vision is more fantasy than reality compromise motivation.

Agricultural careers as a high-tech career

The agricultural sector increasingly offers opportunities to build high-tech career. Technological development is anticipated to bring more interesting work, improved social status and better working conditions to the agricultural sector.

Contrastingly, high-tech agricultural work is also seen as repetitive and monotonous. This model of food production is also interpreted as unnatural and unfeasible.

Agricultural careers as entrepreneurship

Entrepreneur has become a buzzword. Interest in agriculture can be stirred by the freedom, challenge and variety owning a business brings. Others find the prospect intimidating and anticipate administrative burdens. The prospect of poor remuneration in the agricultural sector is demotivating in general. On the whole, young people believe that the sector lacks necessary government support.

Results: Agriculture as a means to do good



Agricultural careers offer opportunities to provide for the community and serve society

Agricultural work is embedded in community and has a tangible, positive impact on the people around you.

Building positive relationships with others makes for fulfilling work. The opportunity to have a tangible, positive impact on another person can be very motivating. For some young people this creates a sense of purpose.

Those people tend to be attracted to agricultural work that is **embedded in community**. They are inspired by getting to know customers and delivering high-quality, healthy food.

Selling directly to the local community and forming strong relationships with customers sounds rewarding. Knowing that the work directly benefits people by providing fresh, organic food would give a sense of purpose.

Victoria, DK (18)

Food production is a critical public service, and agricultural work contributes to society.

Public service careers inspire people who want to play a valuable role in society. The agricultural sector too is seen as critical to the functioning of society. Some young people perceive fulfilling society's basic need for enough healthy, high-quality food as an essential public service.

This elevates the value of agricultural work and resonates with people who aspire to **contribute to society**.

*I think careers in this field are very important and [a] benefit to most people and country as whole, so it could be [a] very rewarding feeling to work in such important field with [an] important purpose. **Eliska, CZ (22)***

*You are contributing to society and you can see how our food is made and what goes into the price for the food. **Zuzana, DK (18)***

Sustainable agriculture provides a rewarding mission and offers business opportunities

Agricultural careers present an opportunity to change the world by making food production more sustainable.

Sustainability challenges are at the forefront of conversations about agriculture. Careers that contribute to achieving sustainability goals are perceived as **important and rewarding**.

The sustainability transition presents a virtuous, highly motivating mission and an opportunity to work in alignment with one's values.

Some young people resonate most with agricultural careers that make the world a better place by improving sustainability.

*Working in this sector also means actively contributing to a more sustainable future. **Federica, IT (22)***

The agricultural sustainability transition presents a business opportunity.

Sustainability-oriented agricultural work is also seen as a business opportunity. There is demand for healthier, organic, sustainably produced, local food and these products can command a **premium price**.

Some young people are convinced that rising to sustainability challenges could make agriculture more profitable while doing good.

As climate change creates new challenges, farmers and agricultural workers have the chance to develop new technologies, adopt eco-friendly methods, and meet the growing consumer demand for sustainable and healthy food. This shift not only benefits the environment but also supports long-term profitability and resilience in the agricultural sector.

Victoria, DK (18)

*There really is a strong opportunity for some impact, with profit alongside it, where healthier foods that have an eco-friendly conscience are now in demand. **Maryam, GR (22)***

Food producers are burdened with responsibility and hopeless sustainability issues

Sustainability challenges are insurmountable and real demand for sustainable food is lacking.

While the opportunity to contribute to sustainability motivates some, the seemingly insurmountable challenge can also be **overwhelming**. The agricultural sector's sustainability challenges present a need for drastic transformation in the sector. Young people are sceptical if this scale of transformation is feasible.

*Climate change will be stronger than any technology we can create or imagine. **Robert, ES (25)***

Looking at the agricultural sustainability transition through a financial lens, the question remains: **is there a reliable market for sustainable food?** Sustainable, local produce is can be seen as an expensive luxury. The market may be too small to support many producers.

Young people are not convinced that focusing on sustainability will pay off financially long-term.

*It's fantasy. Money rules the day unfortunately and positive change won't involve sustainability as it affects profit. **Sophie, UK (17)***

Careers related to food production involve real responsibility to provide healthy, high quality food

Agricultural professionals have an important responsibility to provide **healthy, sustainable and ethically produced food**. It seems that young people recognise that the way food is produced has a tangible effect on human health, the environment and animal wellbeing.

*We need to remember that some [modes] of agriculture use some harmful specifics to grow their plants bigger and faster, which is dangerous for example for bees. **Agnieszka, PL (25)***

For some young people, this level of influence and responsibility is not attractive. Instead, they see it as a burden.

Political unrest demonstrates that farmers are not respected despite their essential work

Political debate has contributed to the belief that society in general does not value or respect farmers.

Although most young people profess to value and respect agricultural workers, they believe that the rest of society does not.

More than eight out of ten participants agree with the statement "Agricultural work contributes to society". However, they are not convinced that society recognises the value of agricultural work or respects farmers.

There is a discrepancy between the respect individuals report giving farmers and their perception of society's valuation.

*French farmers would not have spent the year 2024 on the streets demonstrating... peasants are absolutely not respected. **Max, FR (17)***

*Some see them negatively because of the pesticides used. **Asli, FR (18)***



Results: Agriculture as a romantic lifestyle



Working with nature, growing things outdoors can seem idyllic and rewarding

Agricultural work is a path to a more peaceful life in connection with nature.

Some of us long for a simpler life and a stronger sense of connection to nature. For some young people agriculture presents a path to a natural, peaceful lifestyle. The fact that farming is a **lifestyle rather than just a job** is part of its charm.

I think I would like the slow way of living and enjoying the time in nature.
Cathy, DK (26)

I can relate to the type of life and I would very much like to be able to live like this, raising my animals and growing my plants, eating genuine fruit and vegetables. **Federica, IT (22)**

This lifestyle is at odds with our **sedentary, digital reality**. For those that spend all day working at a screen, the romantic vision of a healthy, active, peaceful life in the countryside is very attractive.

Perfect sense of tranquillity and peace in the countryside. **Diogo, PT (18)**

Agricultural jobs are great because they involve working outdoors with living organisms that require care and attention. **Luuk, NL (22)**

Doing physical work outdoors is rewarding.

Although an agricultural lifestyle involves hard physical labour, this harsh reality is somewhat overshadowed by fulfilment gained from seeing the tangible results of your work and spending the day outdoors. The key word romantics associate with agricultural work is 'rewarding'.

It is a job where you can see the results of your hard work grow day by day, making it even more rewarding. It requires a lot of dedication but can bring great personal and financial satisfaction. **Federica, IT (22)**

Agricultural career is a good job for many reasons but mainly in my opinion because you get to work outdoors and in the fields. **Evangelinou, GR (16)**

The reality of agricultural work involves poor working conditions

Agricultural careers offer poor working conditions that are not suitable long-term. Farmers enjoy little freedom or work-life balance.

Agricultural careers have a reputation for **hard manual labour, little time off, and isolation**. The perception that agricultural careers have poor working conditions is very strong.

Nine out of ten participants in this study agreed with the statement "Agricultural work is hard work". Some young people are concerned that agricultural work is not only hard work but also boring and repetitive.

You can't just take the day off. **Agnieszka, PL (25)**

It is hard and repetitive work. I can't imagine myself living like this for a long time. I would die of boredom. **Ewa, PL (17)**

Hard physical labour is believed by some to cause **health issues** long-term.

One of the negatives is physical ailments later in life because of the hard work. **Sammy, IE (23)**

Agricultural lifestyles may translate to a lower quality of life, without the **freedom** other people enjoy. Some young people can imagine working in agriculture for a short time, or when they are older, but not for their whole life.

It can also be a job that leaves little free time as nature never stops, and there is always something to do... It is physically demanding requiring long hours outdoors in harsh weather conditions... It could be a somewhat sacrificed life. **Federica, IT (22)**

As for me, it would be a pleasant break for working in a big city for a while, but not for many years. **Ewa, PL (17)**

Agricultural work is not idyllic and eroding rural communities lead to isolation and loneliness

The reality of agricultural work is not as idyllic as romantic stereotypes suggest.

Although the notion of an idyllic countryside life can be very inspiring, some young people are sceptical about whether this ideal reflects reality. They may not have seen examples of rural lives like this or feel that it sounds too good to be true.

This kind of farm does not exist in the UK, it paints a great picture but not sure it's realistic. Sophie, UK (17)

This approach to me sounds a bit too naive or optimistic. Zuzuana, DK

One participant even described the agricultural lifestyle as a dream, suggesting that this lifestyle seems unreal and unreachable.

This would be like a dream, in nature, with animals, relaxing. Jari, FI (25)

Agricultural careers are tied to the countryside and rural life is eroding.

Living in the countryside is widely understood as prerequisite for agricultural work. Moving to the countryside means leaving family, friends, entertainment and opportunities behind. Young people also increasingly want flexible and remote working arrangements.

You mostly have to live in the same place to be close to the workplace, so it isn't really flexible as there most likely isn't remote work as an option. Eliska, CZ (22)

Rural communities are eroding: people are leaving rural areas for opportunities and convenience in cities. This leads to less investment in rural communities and their infrastructure. In turn more people leave rural areas in search of a better lifestyle. This contributes to the isolation and loneliness associated with agricultural careers.

Most of the agricultural sectors are far away from the cities, so they might need to move far to a location they do not like and be away from loved ones. Joe, NL (23)

I live near a farm and can only see lonely hard workers. Jari, FI (25)

Results: Agricultural careers as scientific careers



Technology provides opportunities for interesting scientific careers in the agricultural sector

Developing technology enables young people to better relate their existing interests to the agricultural sector.

Young people with an interest in scientific subjects, like programming, biotechnology, and biology, see modernisation as an opportunity to pursue technical careers in the agricultural sector.

*Since I have experience in biotechnology, it would be a great career opportunity for me. It would be a great way of expanding my field of experience by contributing to the development of agricultural devices (I'm currently working with medical devices). **Kristyna, PL (23)***

*It also opens up new job opportunities for other types of professions such as computer engineers! I would love to apply my area of computer engineering in this field of activity because I know there's still a lot to explore. **Diogo, PT (18)***

High-tech career opportunities may attract more young people who don't come from farming families into the sector. AERES Hogeschool, a technical agricultural university in the Netherlands, launched a program called 'Agrotechnology and Engineering'. This program attracts students from outside farming families. It allows them to apply their interest in engineering to the agricultural sector.

Novel technologies and new approaches to food production are exciting and innovation inspires curiosity.

Experiencing high-tech agriculture first-hand and being part of the innovation process can sound exciting.

That's way cooler! Tech makes work not just blood and sweat... I think working with advanced technologies would probably give a lot of thrill.

Taqdees, GR (24)

*I also would feel excited to be part of the technical advancement that transforms farming for the better. **Sammy, IE (23)***

*I would like to ride a modern tractor that has a built-in screen and shows exactly how to drive. It would be a real pleasure for me. **Rafal, PL (16)***

Some young people also see technological development as complementary to sustainability efforts.

*Innovation and sustainable practices have made the industry much more exciting... it is not just about hard work anymore but about finding solutions and making a better future out of it. **Maryam, GR (22)***

Technological development is mitigating negatives associated with agricultural work

Technological development is improving the social status of agricultural careers.

If agricultural work increasingly requires technical skills and scientific expertise, agricultural professionals must be more highly educated and have specialised skills. This increases the social status of agricultural work as it signals intelligence, hard work, better pay and an active choice to pursue this career.

Agriculture was associated with very rudimentary work for years, but now it is fortunately revitalizing. We are increasingly seeing highly developed agricultural activities in terms of technology. There are a number of opportunities for growth and development in the agricultural sector. It is rapidly expanding and modernizing. **Diogo, PT (18)**

Digitalisation and automation are improving working conditions in the agricultural sector.

Modernising farms can make agricultural work more efficient and reduce the manual labour required. For some young people this mitigates their concern that farming is exhausting and can cause physical strain. The hard manual labour involved is one of the key demotivating factors associated with agricultural work but young people see potential to reduce this through technology.

Agricultural careers today involve advanced technology like drones and automation, making the work more interesting and less physically demanding. **Hanan, ES (21)**

Other more attractive working conditions such as greater flexibility and shorter working hours are not perceived as easily improved with technology.

Technology in agriculture is seen to weaken ties to nature and community

Technology compromises the romantic appeal of agricultural work.

Integrating technology to automate and digitalise agriculture can reduce the feeling of connecting with nature. If the romantic image is compromised, agricultural careers seem **less fulfilling**. Others actively oppose a high-tech model of agriculture, perceiving it as **unnatural**. Technology can foster distrust in food safety and quality.

I would miss the more hands-on parts of farming, like working directly with crops or animals. Using so much tech can sometimes take you away from the natural side of farming. Joe, NL (23)

I may be bothered by the reliance on machine. While machine being useful for efficiency, I would miss hands-on work with crops and the land. Maryam, GR (22)

I think if I will choose to be a farmer it's better to join the nature... My grandfather looks so happy when he sees how everything grows from beginning to end. Rafal, PL (16)

Combining high-tech equipment with nature does not feel that "right" even though it will have its own benefits. Jari, FI (25)

Technology focused agriculture weakens the connection between people and their food.

Some young people are also concerned that a high-tech model of agriculture will **lack connection** between food production and the community consuming food.

For these young people **relationships** are essential to fulfilling work, and one of the things they find most attractive about agriculture is being embedded in a community. A technology- and science-focused model is perceived as compromising this.

This type of work seems very focused on technology and efficiency rather than human relationships. Since I enjoy working closely with people and helping them, I think I would find it unfulfilling to mostly interact with data and machines rather than individuals. Victoria, DK (18)

High-tech, science-based agricultural work is either unrealistic or will be monotonous

Agricultural careers revolving around technology and science involve monotonous work.

Some are concerned that automating and digitalising agriculture by integrating technology will make agricultural work **boring**.

They anticipate technology creating highly specialised jobs which quickly become monotonous.

*I would get bored quite quickly as it seems quite repetitive work. It's also possible that too much automation would also lead to boredom. **Sophie, UK (17)***

*The tasks may be mundane and monotonous. **Zuzanna, DK (18)***

High-tech models of agriculture are unrealistic and more sci-fi than reality.

Some young people are sceptical if a high-tech model of agriculture is feasible. For many this stems from a worry that technology is not reliable. Technology may fail to successfully replace manual labour because its temperamental.

*If there is a failure or problem with a machine human labor is immediately needed and it needs to be solved as soon as possible. **Mikel, ES (16)***

Another concern is that significant financial investment is required to acquire and implement technology. This creates a barrier to adopting new technology and compromises accessibility.

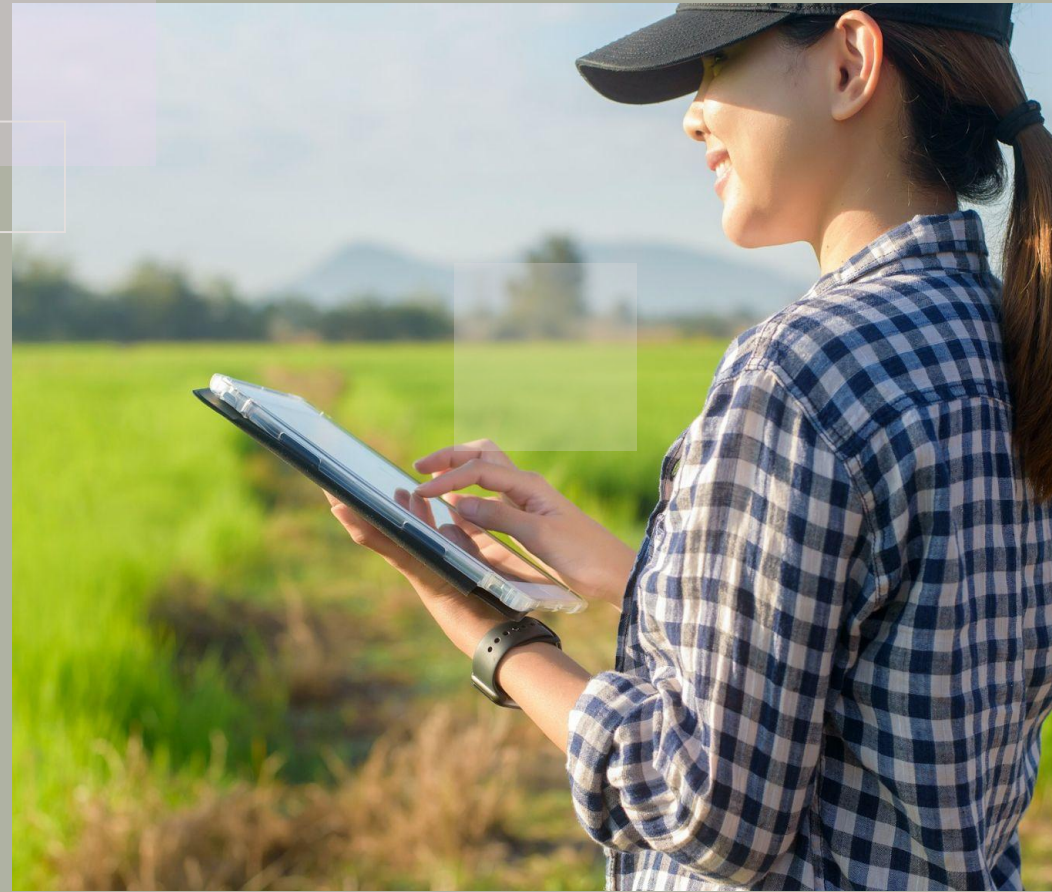
*This seems like a job for large companies. **Rafal, PL (16)***

*I fear that this has a very expensive impact especially at the beginning to buy all these new technologies. **Asli, FR (18)***

The extent to which technology is already integrated in agriculture and is successfully automating tasks is unclear amongst young people.

*Unfortunately, the results are long-awaited and far away. **Sofia, IT (23)***

Results: Agricultural careers as entrepreneurial



Agricultural careers offer autonomy and variety through entrepreneurship

Farming provides autonomy and means being “your own boss”.

The concept of a farmer as a land and business owner is familiar. It also offers a sense of **autonomy**. Your success being a direct consequence of the hard work you invest is appealing to the ambitious next generation.

Many young people today are searching for flexible career opportunities and the ability to manage their own time. The idea of being one's **own boss** can be very attractive.

Yes, being farmer it's kind of being your own boss - the total incomes are the output of your own hard work! **Agnieszka, PL (25)**

I agree about being your own boss - who wants to be told what to do? **Sophie, UK (17)**

The future is in working with your own land and food that you grow yourself, by studying this you could even have your own business. **Mikel, ES (16)**

Being a farm business owner involves varied, entrepreneurial work.

The **multifaceted** role of a farm business owner can be very attractive. Young people often see entrepreneurship as a route to a varied career where they get perform in several roles, learn new skills and avoid boring, repetitive work.

I would enjoy the variety of the work. **Elizka, CZ**

This is a job in which I don't feel boredom. **Ewa, PL (17)**

Agricultural entrepreneurship involves uncertain financial reward and navigating bureaucracy

Financial opportunities in the agriculture sector are uncertain.

Previous research shows that the **reputation for low pay** makes agricultural careers less attractive. Young people are often uncertain of the financial opportunities agriculture presents. **Uncertainty** is unattractive when earning a stable income is a priority.

Some young people strongly believe that agricultural work is poorly compensated. **Political debate** in only Europe confirms their belief.

*In France, farmers hold a lot of demonstrations to show how badly they are paid. **Asli, FR (18)***

Others believe that this is changing. Developments in **technology** leads them to believe that some roles in the agricultural sector offer good remuneration. Young people tend to anticipate that working in big agricultural corporations or as an entrepreneur pays better.

*I think some areas like ag-tech actually can be profitable. **Maryam, GR (22)***

*Some agricultural careers are really paid poorly, but some are paid super well. **Asli, FR (18)***

Agricultural professionals are burdened with administration and bureaucracy.

As business owners, farmers have significant administrative responsibilities. Some young people recognise that running a farm involves administration, navigating bureaucracy and managing employees. For some this represents an unattractive responsibility and challenge.

*The downside is that it is a lot of paperwork. **Rafal, PL (16)***

*These careers may not generate good jobs if there is difficulty in finding trained people. **Diogo, PT (18)***

Agricultural entrepreneurship is unattractive due to lacking governmental support

Political conflict between governments and farmers make entering the sector unappealing.

Across Europe, political debate and protests have given the impression of active conflict between government and agricultural professionals. This confirms the existing belief that governments do not support farmers sufficiently – especially small farmers. They see a lack of government support as a barrier to livelihood security and a bottleneck in the process of **modernisation and sustainability transition**.

State support is not always sufficient or reaches all farmers, making the difficulties even greater. Without proper access to training, financing, and fair markets these opportunities may not be as accessible to everyone.

Hanan, ES (21)

In some cases, modernisation has made farming more efficient, but it hasn't necessarily made agricultural careers more appealing or easier. The industry's growth depends on factors like government support.

Victoria, DK (18)

Some young people believe that governments should provide support like financial investment, training and market protection.

Government regulations are seen as failing to protect local farmers from competing with international agribusinesses. This is perceived to favour cheaper, lower quality, imported food. These people believe that unfair market regulation has forced food prices to fall so low that farmers are struggling to get a fair price for their produce.

They have to deal with unreasonably low commodity prices with high costs of production and minimal support from governments. **Taqdees, GR (24)**

Lacking governmental support demotivates young people from choosing agriculture careers for both practical and emotional reasons. However, some young people perceive farmers as receiving significant support and express frustration that farmers remain ungrateful and use these resources inefficiently. For these young people, farmers have a negative reputation and are associated with greed and even corruption. This makes joining their ranks unattractive.

They are subsidised every way possible and produce so little of use for the country. We have to import most of our food. The farmers have successive government in their pockets. **Sophie, UK (17)**

Don't farmers want too much too? They have to make good use of the funds they receive. These funds are to help and not to pay for the business. **Diogo, PT (18)**

Results: Ability to pursue agricultural careers



Young people consider their motivation to pursue agricultural careers before their ability

Ability is whether someone feels they can make a specific choice. It is shaped physical capability, knowledge, skills, time and resources. This research identified three main factors affecting young people's ability to enter the agricultural sector.

Previous research suggests that agricultural careers are not only seen as unattractive, but also **inaccessible**. This means that ability is expected to be low. Land accessibility is thought to be a key barrier to entering the agricultural sector.

During this research, **land accessibility** was mentioned only once by a young man who exhibited high motivation to pursue agricultural work..

*It would be my second choice after the police, but I think it requires resources, owning land etc. **Pedro, ES (16)***

When considering agricultural careers, young people are mostly occupied with their motivation. They first consider if they would enjoy the job, if it fits their interests and is well compensated.

Participants discussed the accessibility of agricultural careers far less than their **motivation**. The practicalities and feasibility of pursuing an agricultural career only become important if they felt motivated enough to truly consider pursuing the career.

Uncertainty

Certainty and stability are important criteria when making career decisions. Agricultural work is high risk due to uncontrollable factors such as weather. Technology, sustainability and policy present risks too. The fact that food production is critical tempers this uncertainty by providing a sense of job security.

Skill

This study found that young people believe that many agricultural careers require higher education alongside considerable skill and experience. Technological development is an important factor in shaping this view. For some this is barrier to entering the sector.

Familiarity

For many farmers agricultural work is closer to a lifestyle than a job. Familiarity is a powerful enabler in making the lifestyle more relatable and tangible. Role models make agricultural careers more tangible.

Agricultural careers are high risk

Agriculture is a high-risk sector.

Young people seem acutely aware of the risks associated with agriculture. Those participating in this study identify the **weather, pests and disease** as serious risks over which farmers have **limited control**.

This is a real downside of agricultural work because certainty and security are important criteria for people making career choices.

Farming depends on weather, bugs and prices, which you can't control.
Matinio, PL (17)

The continually **evolving market** is another risk factor. Consumer demands and global policies change continually making long-term decision-making challenging – market forces could turn and compromise a farmer's livelihood much like a natural disaster.

Agriculture depends on weather conditions, market prices and other factors that can make income unstable and uncertain. **Victoria, DK (18)**

Investing in technology may not pay off.

Technological development and sustainability transition requires significant **investment** from farmers. High upfront costs and training needs may prevent implementing innovation and contribute to poor financial security. Some believe that the majority of farmers lack the financial resources to acquire new technology.

The cost of these facilities will be enormous. **Diogo, PT (18)**

Adapting to such a huge change isn't easy and for many I think it will mean bankruptcy. **Zuzana, DK (18)**

Lack of government support demotivates young people.

The tumultuous political climate exacerbates the risk and uncertainty associated with agriculture. Political protests among farmers have made young people aware that the sector is heavily influenced by policy changes. This makes long-term planning challenging in the sector.

The sector is facing significant changes, and the future is uncertain. Challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and shifting policies will shape the way agriculture evolves in coming years. **Luuk, NL (22)**

Food production is a critical service: young people expect this to provide job security

Some young people anticipate job security in the agricultural sector because food production is essential.

Some young people see food production as an essential **public service**. They feel assured that agricultural work will always be available because people will always need food as a matter of survival. This means that the agricultural sector provides the **job security** and certainty many are searching for.

There is job stability in the agricultural sector as it is necessary for human survival. Joe, NL (23)

It will also be a necessary sector for human survival. Gonzalo, ES (16)



Young people expect agricultural professionals to require higher education and specialised skills

Against a backdrop of digitalisation and modernisation, many young people recognise that agricultural professionals require highly specialised skills and knowledge.

Existing research suggests that people believe agricultural work requires little education and this contributes to its low social status. This research indicates otherwise. Many young people recognise that agricultural work requires extensive and varied knowledge, skills and experience that can be dramatically different to what they are equipped with. As a result, they feel poorly prepared to enter the sector. Some young people even feel intimidated by the level of education or training required.

*Requires strong business skills, and the pressure of managing finances and finding new opportunities could be stressful. **Hanan, ES (21)***

*Requires a lot of studying. **Jari, FI (25)***

The growing recognition that agriculture careers are increasingly **scientific** as the sector integrates innovative technologies strengthens this concern.

*I also imagine that it requires specific skills to work in such an environment based on very advanced technology, and it might be difficult to enter and make a career without adequate training. While traditional agricultural work is often accessible even to those without any training. **Federica, IT (22)***

This presents a challenge but also an opportunity to accelerate the **improving social status** of agricultural careers. The fact that young people's perception of the relationship between education or skill level and agriculture is changing may indicate that the social status of agricultural work is also improving.

Familiarity is a powerful enabler in making the agricultural lifestyle more relatable and tangible

In this digitalising and modernising agricultural, many young people recognise that agricultural professional require highly specialised skills and knowledge.

Familiarity makes agricultural careers more relatable, tangible and accessible to young people. **Role models** are a key enabler for choosing agricultural professions.

Young people who come from farming backgrounds are much more likely to pursue agricultural careers. Young people participating in this study who have friends or family members working in the agricultural sector were also more open to this career path.

*As a person from a small farming town, I can imagine doing this job with my family because I have friends whose parents have a farm or work in agriculture. **Gonzalo, ES (16)***

*My parents have a farm, so I know how it works and how much satisfaction it gives. **Agnieszka, PL (25)***

This supports the idea that working in the agricultural sector is a **lifestyle and an identity** rather than just a job. It may be difficult for young people who have no practical experience with agricultural lifestyles to envision what it would be like to live this life let alone resonate with farming as an identity. Those who do not come from a farming family often enter the sector with hands-on experience. For example, they have a weekend job at a local farm and this translates to an ambition to follow this career path.

Results: Images of agricultural careers



Introduction to the narratives

This table shows how each of the narratives relate to the factors affecting ability and motivation established by this research.

The first part of this study explored which factors affect and inform the participants' career choices and how they perceive agricultural careers considering technological developments, sustainability transition and political debate. Based on the results, we formulated narratives portraying potentially inspiring agricultural professions. In the second part of the study young people reacted to these narratives.

This table shows how each of the narratives relate to the factors affecting ability and motivation established by this research.

	Back to nature	High-tech harvest	Agricultural services	Urban grower
Motivators				
Agriculture as a means to do good	✓	✓	✓	✓
Agriculture as a romantic lifestyle	✓			
Agriculture careers as scientific		✓	✓	✓
Agricultural careers as entrepreneurial			✓	✓
Enablers				
Uncertainty	✓	✓		✓
Highly skilled		✓	✓	
Unfamiliar		✓		✓

Back to nature

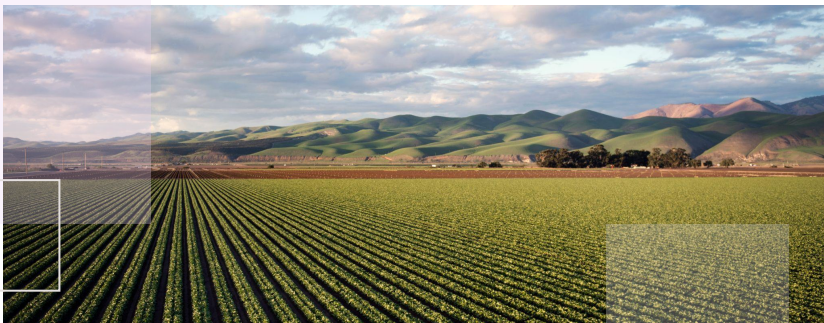
The 'Back to nature' narrative is designed to appeal to those who are motivated by agriculture as a romantic lifestyle and a means to do good. It encompasses motivating factors such as sustainability, connecting with nature, rewarding physical work, and positively impacting others.

The narrative aims to quell the demotivating effect of a lack of respect towards farmers by portraying a strong connection with the community. It also shows opportunities to earn a good living through income diversification and sustainability as a business opportunity. Elements of entrepreneurship are included by exhibiting varied work and business skills.

On a small, family-run regenerative farm, sustainability comes first. The focus isn't on maximising yields but on working with nature to produce the best quality food. By building healthy soil, growing seasonal crops, and replacing synthetic fertilisers and pesticides with sustainable, natural alternatives, agriculture can work in harmony with nature. Diversity is key: a range of vegetables, fruit and livestock makes the farm more resilient to changing weather and provides a varied, healthy diet for local people.

Farming here is hands-on. Days are spent planting, harvesting, feeding animals, or repairing fences. It's a lot of physical work, but a healthy lifestyle and there's always something new to learn. Selling directly to the local community, the farm creates strong relationships with customers. People who value fresh, organic produce are willing to pay a little more than they do at the supermarket. Some farmers also run guesthouses or produce products like cheese or honey to boost their business.

While the farm may be small, its impact is big; it provides healthy food and supports biodiversity. For those who choose this life, it's about more than making a living—it's about creating something meaningful, enjoying nature and feeding the community.



'Back to nature' appeals to do-gooders and those romanticising a farming lifestyle

This narrative offers opportunities to do good through an agricultural career

This narrative conveys opportunities to contribute to sustainable food production and facilitate access to healthy, high-quality food. The idea of being embedded in a tight-knit community was an important aspect of this narrative's attraction. The idea of working with your family and other people close to you also appealed to some.

Two good things about this job are living with nature and being in harmony with it, and working with family. Gonzalo, ES (16)

This narrative provides a path to an idyllic rural lifestyle

The notion of agricultural careers as the gateway to a romantic, rural lifestyle was very prevalent in response to this narrative. It appealed to young people's desire for connection with nature and a more peaceful life.

Perfect scene of tranquility and peace in the countryside. Diogo, PT (18)

This model of farming is familiar and resonates with those who have similar role models

Familiarity is the key enabler associated with this most traditional image of farming. Recognising this lifestyle enables young people to consider placing themselves in this position. The presence of a role model who farms or even gardens as a hobby, multiplies the effectiveness of familiarity as an enabler.

I could definitely work on this type of farm because I grew up on this type of farm. This type of work is completely natural to me. Zuzana, DK (18)

Poor working conditions, pay and isolation demotivate, posing farming as a risky career

The narrative invites concern regarding working conditions, pay and isolation in rural area

For those demotivated by this narrative, anticipation of poor working conditions was their greatest concern. This lifestyle involves sacrifice. The work can be physically exhausting. It also provides no guarantee of a good income. Comparing this lifestyle to a conventional job, it offers a poor work-life balance, no time off and no flexibility. The demotivated believe this lifestyle is lonely and would compromise their freedom. These people are not swayed by the romantic image, perceiving it as a fantasy.

It takes too many hours of work for little financial reward. It is only gratifying on a mental level. Marta, ES (17)

This narrative depicts a model of agriculture which is highly vulnerable to risk

This model of agriculture is thought to face the most uncertainty and risk. Small, sustainable farms are perceived as especially vulnerable to weather, market forces and policy. For many young people this work seem financially unviable. They believe the farm would be expensive to run and not offer a stable income.

Running a small farm seems unpredictable especially with changing weather and market fluctuations. The stress of making ends meet without a stable income would be challenging. Victoria, DK (18)

High-tech harvest

The 'High-tech harvest' narrative is designed to appeal to those who are interested in scientific careers, technological innovation, and pursuing higher education.

This narrative presents an agricultural career within a large, organised business with the same benefits of corporate jobs in other fields – like fixed working hours and a good, stable salary. It also shows technology reducing manual labour. By focusing innovation and efficiency as a path to feeding the world this narrative also seeks to appeal to those motivated by doing good.

Large-scale, modern farms are driven by efficiency, technology, and innovation. Using precision agriculture, these farms maximise yields while minimising waste. They rely on advanced data analysis, automation, and AI-driven decision-making. Drones monitor crop health in real time, digital sensors track soil conditions, and robotic systems take over a lot of physical labour from planting to harvesting.

This focus is on crops that can feed the world - like wheat, rice and dairy - but the farm is also busy experimenting with new crops. Every input, from fertiliser to water, is optimised for efficiency. This type of agriculture is about using cutting-edge science to efficiently produce a lot of food.

The people behind these farms are engineers, data scientists, and biotechnologists. They each have specific technical expertise, and work together to drive innovation, from developing disease-resistant crops to refining automated harvesting techniques. There are fixed working hours and opportunities for growth within the organisation.



'High-tech harvest' resonates with those interested in scientific careers

This narrative shows scientific career opportunities in the agricultural sector

The idea of working with novel technologies stoked curiosity and created an opportunity to pursue an agricultural career with improved working conditions. The association with technology and science was interpreted as leading to better pay. This narrative also conveyed that automating technology can reduce manual labour.

*It's so innovative and fascinating. I want to see in real life how it works. **Matinio, PL (17)***

This narrative offers opportunities to do good through an agricultural career

Young people were also convinced that this approach to farming could have a positive impact. Many participants see potential for technology to play a role in the sustainability transition. Some also acknowledge the essential role of technology in feeding the world.

This narrative opposes the romantic ideals associated with rural life and agricultural work

Those who resonate with agriculture as a romantic lifestyle are not inspired by this narrative. Demotivation came from unfulfilled desire for a closer connection with nature and community. These young people characterise technology as unreliable, expensive and unsustainable. They worry that the work will become more boring when tasks are automated and employees become more specialised.

*This type of farming is very technological, almost like sci-fi. I'm not sure I like it because of that. **Karolina, CZ (16)***

*I think I would find it unfulfilling to mostly interact with data and machines. **Victoria, DK (18)***

A high-tech focus can be perceived as futuristic, making this narrative seem out of reach

This narrative shows a new, emerging model of agriculture

Some young people are not aware that these technologies are developing, and indeed already exist on farms. It is unfamiliar and they doubt that this model will ever exist in reality.

This unknown creates uncertainty

The prevalence of technology and automation in this narrative is seen as putting human jobs at risk. This is the only narrative that undermined the perception of job security in the agricultural sector.

*I am concerned that the use of machines more and more may replace human labour and take away jobs. **Pedro, ES (16)***

This narrative requires knowledge of tech and high level of education

The high level of education and skill required to work with innovative scientific technology also presents a barrier to some.

*I also imagine it requires specific skills to work in such an environment based on very advanced technology, and it might be difficult to enter and make a career without adequate training. While traditional agricultural work is often accessible even to those without any training. **Federica, IT (22)***

Agricultural services

The narrative 'Agricultural services' seeks to appeal to those who are most concerned that agricultural careers are risky. In this narrative, the professional isn't exposed to the risk and uncertainties of farming. It also shows the diversity of roles in the agricultural sector; as consultants' expert services can be tailored to the individual's skills and interests. The model shows a flexible, entrepreneurial career which also does good by supporting farmers.

Agriculture today is more than just growing crops and raising animals—it's also about entrepreneurship and learning from each other. Agricultural advisors play a crucial role in supporting farms by providing specialised expertise, from testing soil health to implementing new technology and providing strategic business advice. Rather than working on a single farm, advisors work across multiple operations, helping several farmers optimise their work.

The work of a farm advisor varies depending on their field. Some are scientists, others specialise in technology or finance. For example, a drone engineer might use aerial imaging to assess crop health and guide targeted interventions, while regenerative agriculture trainers help farmers transition to more sustainable methods.

Advisors don't run or own their own farm, but they work for farmers. Unlike traditional farming, consultancy offers stability—the risks of unpredictable weather or fluctuating market prices lies with the owner of the farm. This career is about problem-solving and making farming more efficient, resilient, and sustainable, but most of all, cooperating with farmers and farm workers.



'Agricultural services' mitigates key problems associated with agriculture

This narrative presents a best-of-both-worlds agricultural career

This narrative was perhaps the most popular amongst young people participating in this study. For many young people it resolves the most demotivating factor associated with agricultural work: poor working conditions. Young people anticipate that a consultant would earn a better wage, have work-life balance, and would be far less engaged in the manual labour agricultural work involves. At the same time, an agricultural consultant would still enjoy spending time outdoors.

This work can also be interpreted in many different ways. Depending on the individual's interest, whether it be in science and technology, entrepreneurship or sustainability, it is possible to imagine a consultant specialised in this topic. Young people generally anticipate that this work would be varied and intellectually stimulating. It would involve problem solving and working with people. They also think that society respects consultants more than farmers.

*I like the idea of helping farmers optimise their work by applying scientific knowledge and strategic thinking. The challenge of diagnosing issues, whether related to soil health or technology, and finding solutions seems engaging. **Victoria, DK (18)***

*I would like to do it because it is more in contact with farmers and ranchers. I like that the relationship with people. **Pedro, ES (16)***

This narrative portrays a familiar model of farming which resonates especially with those who have similar role models

This type of career path is also more relatable for many young people compared to traditional farming. This image presents a job rather than a lifestyle which makes it easier for young people to relate the work to their existing interests and lifestyle.

*I could definitely work on this type of farm because I grew up on this type of farm. This type of work is completely natural to me. **Zuzana, DK (18)***

Lacking hands-on work, high skill levels required and responsibility are main barriers

This narrative provides few opportunities for hands-on farming

The most common concern young people have about this image is that farmers either do not need or do not want advisory services. Their preconception is that farmers work alone and may even be hostile to advice.

An experienced farmer could cope without our help and everything is now on the internet. Rafal, PL (16)

For some, the lack of autonomy to make decisions about how the farm is run also makes this work less inspiring. Contrastingly others find the role of advisor an overwhelmingly big responsibility.

This job comes with a lot of responsibility. I would be concerned if someone was financially harmed by my bad advice. Ewa, PL (17)

This narrative requires high skill-level and many years of education

The most prevalent barrier young people identify is the need to have a high level of skill and experience. They expect that this role would require a lot of studying or training to properly advise farmers. For some the idea of running a consultancy business is also intimidating and perceived as requiring niche skills.

I also feel like farmers would not really take consultants seriously due to their lack of actual farming experience. Asli, FR (18)

Urban grower

At first glance the 'Urban grower' narrative appeals to people motivated in science and technology, but this narrative is also designed to appeal to those who are interested in entrepreneurship and doing good for other people, through its business approach and connection to urban citizens.

This narrative calms concerns that agricultural work is remote, rural, lonely and involves being exposed to bad weather in muddy fields.

In the heart of the city you'll find crops growing in stacked vertical trays under LED lights, nourished by precisely controlled nutrient solutions - rather than in muddy fields. Urban farmers are entrepreneurs producing fresh food on citizens' doorsteps. A team of friendly colleagues works together; the team combines scientific and business expertise to succeed.

Many urban farmers are fascinated by plants; they apply their expertise to optimise growth conditions, ensuring a constant, year-round harvest of salad greens, herbs, and vegetables. Some incorporate aquaculture, even growing fish alongside plants in systems that recycle nutrients and water. The team is constantly searching for new business opportunities and they provide fresh healthy food to local restaurants, supermarkets, schools and individuals.

Urban farms are also hubs for education. They reconnect city residents with food, showing consumers where their meals come from. These farms won't replace large-scale wheat or rice production, but they make fresh, locally grown produce more accessible and the workers feel appreciated by their community.



'Urban grower' is a relatable modern career option for do-gooders and science enthusiasts

This narrative offers opportunities to do good through an agricultural career

Urban farmers are perceived as contributing to society. Building community around an urban farm and connecting city residents with their food is motivating. Young people are also inspired by the potential for urban farming to be sustainable and space-saving.

City residents could be able to know more about the source of their food. And this also creates an opportunity to educate them about the environment and sustainability work and they could support local businesses this way. So this would make the job seem fulfilling being able to connect and communicate with local residents. **Eliska, CZ (22)**

This narrative shows scientific farming career with improved working conditions

The scientific approach to urban farming could make for interesting work, but is also anticipated to improve working conditions compared to traditional, rural agriculture. For some an indoor work environment seems clean and more comfortable.

This narrative portrays a model of farming which is more similar to conventional urban careers

This narrative presents a much more relatable image of a modern farmer, aligning more closely with city-based career expectations. An urban grower can live in the city, has a skilled role based indoors, and fixed working hours.

What I would like is that I can live in the city not far away in the countryside. **Zuzana, DK (18)**

Urban indoor farming can be perceived as unnatural and unfamiliar

This narrative shows an unnatural version of food production

The most prevalent reason young people failed to be inspired by this narrative is its perceived artificial or unnatural approach. Some young people even likened an urban farm to a factory farm. Young people are also concerned that produce will be lower-quality if it is grown indoors.

It reminds me of chickens on a farm that don't see the light all day. **Pedro, ES (16)**

In my opinion that kind of harvest would have an impact on flavour and quality of food. **Matinio, PL (17)**

There is a strong sentiment that working outdoors in natural surroundings is more inspiring and that being stuck in an artificial environment. Urban farmers are also critiqued for being less beautiful.

Working in an artificial environment devoid of sunlight might be a bit too disconnected from nature for me. **Taqdees, GR (24)**

This narrative shows an alternative model of agriculture which is relatively unknown and uncertain

Urban farming can be interpreted as a futuristic idea, not reality supported by existing technology. Those who are aware of the technology still often see the costly upfront investment as a huge financial risk that is relatively untested and may not pay off.

I didn't know that existed and I think the cost of production is quite high...to be financially profitable it would be necessary to be sure that it could be possible before committing to it. **Asli, FR (18)**

Appendix

Bibliography

Cited sources

1. The EIT food trust report – EIT Food. (2024). <https://www.eitfood.eu/reports/trust-report-2024>
2. NUF urges government to truly value UK food & environmental security by increasing agriculture budget – NFU. (2024). <https://www.nfuonline.com/media-centre/releases/nfu-urges-government-to-truly-value-uk-food-environmental-security-by-increasing-agriculture-budget/>
3. Borda, A.J., Sarvari, B. and Balogh, J.M., 2023. Generation change in agriculture: a systematic review of the literature. *Economies*, 11(5), pp. 129-144. <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies11050129>
4. Constantino, F., Vindigni, G., Spina, D., et al., 2023. An agricultural career through the lens of young people. *Sustainability*, 15(14), pp. 11148-11614. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151411148>

Further reading

- Coopmans, I., Dessien, J., Accatino F., et al., 2021. Understanding farm generational renewal and its influencing factors in Europe. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 86, pp.398-409. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.06.023>
- Unay-Gailhard, I., Brennen, M.A., 2022. How digital communication contribute to shaping the career paths of youth: a review study focused on farming a career option. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 39, pp. 1491-1508. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-022-10335-0>
- Cultivating resilience: regenerative agriculture – EIT Food. (2024). <https://www.eitfood.eu/cultivating-resilience-regenerative-agriculture>
- Fogg, B. (n.d.). Fogg Behavior model. Behavior Model. <https://behaviormodel.org/>
- Consumer perspectives on agriculture: how different agricultural methods rank in the eyes on the consumer – EIT Food. (N.A.). <https://www.eitfood.eu/files/Agricultural-Study-Final.pdf>

About the EIT Food Consumer Observatory

Powered by EIT Food, the Consumer Observatory brings together experts and consumer insight organisations from across the food system to curate and produce consumer insights, trend analysis and research tools.

By combining research expertise, sector knowledge and the green transition behaviour change perspective, the Consumer Observatory aims to maximise the availability of consumer insights on agrifood topics, delivering greater knowledge, strategy and guidance to agrifood stakeholders – helping to bring about positive change in the food system.

This platform puts consumer knowledge and behaviour at the heart of the conversation on food sector trends, driving forward innovative solutions that will help to achieve EIT Food's three missions:

- A Net Zero Food System
- Healthier Lives Through Food
- Reducing Risk for a Fair and Resilient Food System

To access the latest insights or to discuss your specific insight needs, visit eitfood.eu/projects/consumerobservatory

or get in touch via

co@eitfood.eu

For more information about EIT Food Consumer Observatory reports, download our [reports disclaimer](#).



