

DRAFT: Business Case for AgriSkills Progress
Developing People and Businesses

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AgriSkills Progress – inspiring and enabling UK farming businesses to develop world-class professional standards and behaviours. Without this catalyst UK farming risks losing improved productivity, market growth and consumer trust.

Executive Summary

Attracting, retaining and upskilling the UK Agriculture workforce to improve its long term profitability, sustainability and resilience has been repeatedly articulated by Government, respected bodies and individuals¹ over the past 10 years and more. The urgency, and potential prize, for UK agriculture is now far greater than ever following UK's decision to leave the European Union.

AgriSkills Progress provides an industry-wide solution to inspire a more highly skilled, competent and motivated professional world class workforce that delivers as a consequence a resilient and sustainable food and farming industry.

It will be a free-to-use website and online tool (app) that enables all individuals and employers in the agriculture and horticulture sectors to access information, guidance, advice and alerts to support employment and business management. The hub will collate all the expertise and guidance that already exists across the industry and compile new content where needed.

Professional standards and behaviours mark out the top businesses – and UK farming and horticulture is no different. There is clear evidence (example needed in annex) that those who adopt business and human resource protocols are delivering greater productivity and profitability. With UK productivity lagging far behind Europe and the rest of the world there is an urgent need to accelerate the uptake of science and technology alongside professional business behaviours.

Although there is widespread acknowledgement of the need to adopt professional skills and behaviours, many farmers and businesses often perceive it as being too complex to

enthusiastically embrace. AgriSkills Progress will offer user-friendly guidance to support *all* producers and inspire them to upskill within their own business - from new entrants to farm owners and managers.

AgriSkills Progress will not only support individuals and businesses to adopt best practices, but importantly it will provide the opportunity to demonstrate their competence and professionalism, which is increasingly essential for customers, consumers and legislators in today's market. It will support, and develop, the very top standards of excellence and also give guidance to others aspiring to develop personally and professionally.

The AgriSkills Progress concept has been whole-heartedly endorsed by the Agritech leadership council, St Georges House consultation and is aligned with the Government's wider industrial strategy published in January. The concept has also been backed by the key stakeholders and farmers themselves at a workshop held on March 10, 2017 in Stoneleigh.

The ambition of this concept might, in the past, have been overwhelmed by a conservative industry culture combined with competition and vested interests between some participants. However, the strength and breadth of support for AgriSkills Progress reveals a desire to collaborate more effectively in order to accelerate the urgent need to adopt new skills and professional behaviours in UK agriculture and horticulture. Brexit is both a challenge and opportunity for the UK to champion professional standards, skills development and training and position itself as a world leader.

It is anticipated that AgriSkills Progress will be the first step in bringing agriculture and horticulture into the wider land-based skills and career agenda. To ensure full alignment with this long term ambition, and Government educational policy, it is important that all contributors within the land-based sector collaborate on this project.

Approximately £2m will be needed over a five-year timescale to fully develop the structure, functionality and content of a digital tool and service freely available to all.

“The opportunities for all created by the synergistic collaboration afforded by AgriSkills Progress should, if managed carefully, accelerate benefits to participating organisations that far outweigh the contribution from each individual investment.” Richard Longthorp AgriSkills Forum Chair.

AgriSkills Progress: what is it?

AgriSkills Progress is a free access online skills and people management toolkit for everyone (individuals and employers) in the agriculture and horticulture industry. This is the first step in building a bigger ambition; a one-stop place to guide, support and motivate individuals, and businesses, around skills, career development and lifelong learning for the whole land-based sector.

In this first stage, AgriSkills Progress will be delivered to the end user via digital platforms. Content will be collated from existing professional registers, careers information, job roles, skills, opportunities and business support information held by the industry. Missing areas of information and materials will be identified by a Governing Panel and subsequently developed by the appropriate members of the collaboration.

It will not only support, and develop, the very top standards of excellence but also extend and encourage guidance to others aspiring to improve. AgriSkills Progress will be a vital tool for the whole age-profile and experience range of the industry; from young entrants to older and experienced professionals.

The intention is for AgriSkills Progress to remain voluntary. Farm businesses will not be mandated to use it in anyway but a strong communications strategy to raise awareness on farms and in industry in order to get skills and training embedded into everyday business thinking will be critical to its success.

Additionally, AgriSkills Progress will be able to provide essential evidence to the general public, and the market, of the professional standards and world class skills adopted by UK agricultural and horticultural businesses.

The need and imperative

The UK has some world-class farmers and areas of potential competitive advantage, such as animal welfare, traceability and environmental management. However, it lags well behind its European and global competitors on productivity and labour efficiency:

- **The rate of UK agricultural productivity trails the rest of the world** by a significant margin; UK is only 0.8% compared with 2.5% in France and more than 3% in the USA and Netherlands. Furthermore, total factor productivity in the UK, which is a measure of how efficient inputs are converted to outputs fell by 2.6% between 2015-16: Eurostat/USDA 2015
- **The productivity growth of UK agricultural labour is significantly weaker than other countries;** scaled at 145 compared to more than 185 in the Netherlands, USA and France: Eurostat 2015
- **Fewer UK farmer managers receive agricultural management training** compared with other countries; the UK (30%), Netherlands (70%), Germany (68%), France (60%) and Ireland (50%): Eurostat 2015

- **UK agricultural staff received the least training (40%)** of 13 other sectors including manufacturing, construction, food retail, public services and financial services in 2015: UKCES

Brexit will intensify the scrutiny and competition for UK public funding. A professional and skilled workforce delivering value for consumers and the countryside alike is therefore essential for agriculture's future.

The need to address this gap in productivity and efficiency is all the more pressing as Britain leaves the European Union and faces increasing international competition. Greater productivity requires accelerating the uptake of new technologies and science with a highly trained and motivated workforce.

The agricultural workforce of the future needs to be able to use new technologies to not only deliver greater efficiencies in output but also adapt to climatic, environmental and political interventions.

Skills training, development and professional recognition is crucial to attracting more interest from young people, and a greater diversity of talents, to drive the industry forward.

Aims: what will it achieve?

AgriSkills Progress will develop and acknowledge a highly skilled, competent and motivated world-class professional workforce, which will deliver as a consequence greater productivity and profitability with fewer inputs, less waste and environmental impact.

It will give individuals and businesses (regardless of size) access to Human Resource support, training needs, independent demonstration of professional standards and access to recommended training sources related. It also addresses the core issue that 88% of farming businesses are micro businesses, making investment in their specific HR systems impractical and costly. For larger businesses, it simplifies HR processes and brings all the required information together in one system.

AgriSkills Progress will inspire and empower UK agriculture and horticulture to become profitable, resilient and truly world-class. Embedding best practice and behaviours in people management, skills development and training will:

- increase public confidence in UK food production
- increase the competitiveness of UK products
- increase the consistency and quality of produce
- increase animal and plant health and welfare
- increase the protection of natural resources and the environment

“With all initiatives working together, towards similar aims, the potential improvement is far greater than if any of them were working in isolation or competing against each other.”

Richard Longthorp, AgriSkills Forum chair.

Industry-wide collaboration to build AgriSkills Progress and shape UK agriculture as a professional career destination with structured training and continual professional development opportunities will help to deliver:

- A functional and structured CPD system which is adaptable and aligned with industry need
- Develop more highly skilled, effectively trained, people on an individual basis
- Accelerate the uptake of more professional behaviours and adoption of technological innovations and professional standards
- Attract new talent with a diverse range of skills
- Educate businesses to ensure correct investment is made in staff development
- Ensure training provision of the right quality, at the right time is accessible
- Support businesses and individuals to ensure value from their staff investment i.e correct management, proactive preparation and review and the promotion of good mentoring
- Identify any relevant qualifications/ update required on time-restricted certificates
- Record/ identify personal development opportunities at an individual and business level
- Use world-class standards as an aspiration and an inspiration
- Map out and describe possible career pathways/progression routes for individuals
- Greater alignment of Government policy and industry practice
- Produce valuable data on industry skills development and needs

Organisation: who's involved

The building of the framework of AgriSkills Progress requires positive support, and engagement, from the industry and key stakeholders, in order to leverage the assets, experience and business support to deliver a robust, up-to-date and effective tool. The support of senior management and leadership is essential to drive this forward, and cannot be underestimated. The organisations below have already committed to the concept and agreed to take a lead role for their specific area of expertise at the meeting in March.

Organisation	Main Role	Detail	Resource
AHDB	Project Lead	management and development	in-house expertise and some limited funding to support the start-up
	Business Support / HR information	templates, tools and advice	
Agriskills Forum (via the membership)	Job Standards	Skills requirements; career pathways and progression opportunities; re-numeration and salary bands; employer backing	limited to existing budgets and staff availability of membership organisations
National Land Based College (NLBC)	Training Records	Identifying of training gaps/opportunities; alignment to industry needs and international opportunities; creation of training records which are transferable by the employee and potentially accessible by employers/potential employers; professional accreditation and mechanism for validation.	Currently working on a new entrants registration scheme and recording the activity they engage with to build online CVS
Brightcrop	Career Pathway	Skills and development needs aligned to job roles. Brightcrop , following successful pilots, is already working to develop CPD materials for career advisors so that they can advise potential entrants more accurately	in-house expertise and some limited funding to support the initial development of career advisor CPD material
Lantra	Skills Needs and Training Providers	including matching recruitment needs and anticipating future requirements; centralised database of training; governance and quality of control of providers; matching jobs roles and skills required; qualifications to deliver occupational needs.	Lantra has already utilised funding to develop a framework for aligning skills roles and identifying skills gaps in individuals and recording CPD

These organisations are conscious of the fact that within the community there are many areas of overlap. So skills in short supply in one partner might be augmented and developed by skilled experts working in other bodies.

Wider support, active engagement and cooperation from these other organisations is also essential to deliver the ambition of AgriSkills Progress:

Government: DEFRA, BEIS and DoE	<i>Senior leadership in all three departments is needed to galvanize resource, collaboration and Government policy alignment to skills development and lifelong learning.</i>
(Institute of Apprenticeships)	<i>Government body sets quality criteria for the development of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans)</i>
Industry bodies: NFU and CLA	<i>a critical influence in championing the ambition and delivering user engagement</i>
CPD bodies	<i>BASIS, City & Guilds, DairyPro, PigPro, Poultec/Lantra?</i>
Training Providers	<i>Landex, Levy boards, supply chains, manufacturers, INst of Ag Management, Colleges and Universities, ATB and others all those with an interest</i>
NCUB	<i>provider of relevant curated content and digital expertise</i>
Key influencers including	<i>Retail Producer Groups, Agronomists, Vets, that can help drive the uptake and behavioural changes needed by individuals and farming businesses</i>
Agrimetrics	<i>One of four Agritech centres created by Government to link different data sources to match user requirements. The data integration business has software hosting and website development skills that are applicable to the requirements of developing AgriSkills Progress</i>

Project outline and delivery:

The development of a fully functional AgriSkills Progress App is expected to take place in stages over five years and include the following steps:

Secure Funding:

Initially funding is required for a Project Manager as well as digital and content resource, but allocated budget within the collaborating partners will be utilised in the initial stages. Meanwhile, AHDB will seek funding as outlined below to deliver the bigger project

Management & governance:

A panel to guide strategy, development and governance structure/policies and sign off standards and profiles. The panel, in close collaboration with CPD schemes, ensures high standards with current industry practice and market development

Professional standards:

Industry panels will develop skills standards and define job roles ensuring alignment to new technologies, innovation and the market-place

Sector leads:

Ensure industry relevance and act as project ambassadors; agreement of key stakeholders and identification of the main assets and expertise

Training provision:

identification of quality training providers and courses

Content development:

collection, collation and curation of content for job roles, training needs, career pathways, business support information

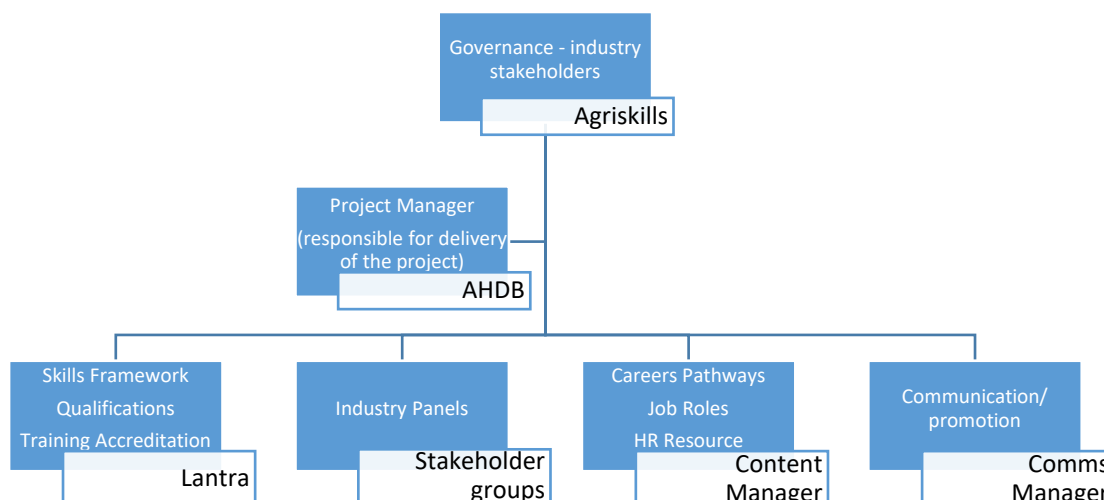
Communications and marketing:

gain widest buy-in from all potentially interested parties; users to information/CPD/training providers, assurance schemes and employers

Software development and support:

develop the interface of the system (web and mobile/app) with links for secure access to records but public access to resources, job profiles and career pathways. Customer support for user issues

This flow diagram shows how existing information and guidance is linked up and where new content is needed.



Staffing

- **Project Manager (to include QA):** Responsible for the delivery of the AgriSkills concept supported by key staff below. The PM reports to the 'board' and provides detailed delivery plans, establishes and maintains relationships with key stakeholders
- **Content developer:** Develop content for job roles, HR resources, case studies, career profiles and development pathways, where they are not in existence already. Collate and curate existing materials. Perform routine reviews to account for innovation and technological advances.
- **Database Administrator/User Support**
- **Communications:** Continuous push on promotion, different audiences include providers, CPD providers, Potential users, assurance schemes etc.

Project Validation

The AgriSkills Progress concept was inspired by the AgriSkills Forum and since been endorsed by the Agritech leadership council, St Georges House consultation and aligned to the Government's industrial strategy published this January.

A recent workshop (10 March 2017) of 25 individuals representing the key organisations¹ listed below gave the concept a unanimous mandate to progress to the next stage of creating a business case, seek funding and build an app, which will become proof of concept to roll out across the agrifood chain.

¹ AgriSkills Progress Workshop Organisations, AHDB, AgriFood Charities Partnership, AgriFood Technology Leadership Council, AgriSkills Forum/LKL Farming, Anglia Farmers (EDGE Apprenticeships), Brightcrop, Bishop Burton Agricultural College, Branston, DEFRA, Institute of Agricultural Management, Gs Fresh, LANDEX, LANTRA, National Farmers Union (NFU), National Land Based College (NLBC), National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs, RN Padfield & Sons, Velcourt

Financial Plan

The cost of developing and marketing the AgriSkills Progress app will total £2m over five years. The value for it will be recouped by the marketplace, and a premium for products that are produced to the highest welfare, environmental and quality standards.

By raising their skills base, individuals and businesses will derive greater value from their products so it is fair that in the future they bear the cost, either directly or indirectly, for AgriSkills Progress.

The UK pig sector provides a compelling case on how raising skills and standards of production, represented in the Red Tractor, have boosted the UK pork trade by 10-35p/kg over its competitors.

A total investment of nearly £2m is needed to deliver the following the activities over a five-year period:

Governance			£30k
	travel and meeting costs for an 8-person panel		
Standard setting			£250k
	travel and meeting costs for 11 panels of six people		
Staffing			£1.3m
	Project Manager	£80k/pa	
	Content Manager	£60k/pa	
	Communications/PR	£80k/pa	
	Database Admin/User support	£40k/pa	
Software hosting/data management			£125k
	From 1500 users/licences in yr 2 to 10,000 in year 5		
Website Development			£200k
TOTAL			£1.905m

Critical Success Factors

Senior Government and industry leadership is essential to ensure AgriSkills Progress becomes a priority for stakeholders; their cooperation and collaboration is crucial to ensure the concept is relevant, and widely adopted.

Potential risks to success include:

- Failure to align to the wider land-based skills and Government agenda
- Failure to maintain collaboration
- Failure to secure set-up funding
- Delays in delivering standards
- Duplication/proliferation of standards makes framework too complex
- Low take-up from employers
- Unable to secure training records data from other CPD schemes
- Lack of interaction from training providers

Annex 1: Background

UK agriculture has focused heavily on technical drivers of productivity, investing in machinery and inputs at the expense of people. While excellent stockmanship and practical skills are important, they are no longer enough alone to ensure the business will survive and thrive in the future. The skills required over the past few decades, will be different to those required for the next decade and beyond.

One thing that distinguishes the owners and managers of successful beef businesses is that they have acquired, and are continuously developing, the skills necessary to successfully run multi-million pound businesses.

On average, UK Agriculture provides less training to its employees compared to other professions.

- **41% received training over 12-months, compared with national average of 65% (UKCES July 2014)**
- **2.5 days a training a year compared to a national average of 4.2 days (UKCES 2013).**

New technologies, require more highly trained and skilled operators to deliver their full potential value. UK farmers spend six figure sums on new machinery, but little or no time or money in training staff on how to use them correctly. One dealer estimates that less than 50% of its flagship tractors are actually operated corrected (Nuffield report – GREAT farmers*).

Greater adoption of skills, training and professional standards are essential to deliver value from new technologies and science – and drive the behavior changes needed to deliver more resilient, competitive

and sustainable UK farming businesses. New talent with a diverse range of skills from outside the sector are also essential to accelerate the uptake of professional standards.

Yet current initiatives in skills development and attracting new talent are fragmented, disconnected, under-resourced and often focused on narrow objectives within the broad AgriFood agenda. Agricultural employees receive significantly less training than their counterparts in other professions; averaging 2.5 days per year compared with 4.2 days for other industries. And it is estimated that much of this will be legislative as opposed to more productive personal development

Presenting agriculture as a professional respected career with structured training and CPD is crucial to inspire new talent and young people to enter the agricultural industry.

Furthermore, the industry has an overall shortage of labour, which has been partially offset by ‘migrant labour’. However, the impact of Brexit is already being felt with a decline in labour moving to the UK (seasonal or full time) due to political/social uncertainty and less attractive earnings following sterling’s falling value.

Scrutiny of UK public funding and its value to society will only intensify following Brexit. The Government has already committed to subsidy support for agriculture until 2020, but increasing competition for public funding in the future places a greater demand to justify the investment. A professional and skilled workforce delivering value for consumers and the countryside alike is therefore essential for agriculture’s future.

Accelerating widespread professional skills development in UK agriculture is needed to:

- **raise UK agriculture productivity and profitability** by improving the adoption of best practice and technological innovations
- **increase international competition**
- **provide social responsibility** to deliver skilled employment that leads to prosperity and security for individuals
- **support scrutiny of public funding** applied to agriculture
- **prevent a shortage of new entrants and labour**, which has been exacerbated by the UK leaving the European Union

AgriSkills Progress provides a great opportunity for UK food and farming to differentiate itself as a world-leading labour force equipped to deliver the highest standards of food quality, plant and animal health and welfare, resource and environmental management.

The challenge is ensuring recognition and reward for those UK farming businesses who already adopt such high professional standards, whilst providing easy accessible tools and guidance to hasten the adoption of the rest.

These two points are central to the AgriSkills Progress concept and its delivery, which builds on the industry’s strengths and addresses its weaknesses.

Annex 2: Evidence

People are the greatest asset in any business, but due to the traditional family make-up of farming businesses this is not often seen as a priority. According to a 2016 report, agricultural labour is the least productive when measured against 20 other UK sectors (Labour in the UK, Stephen Devlin July 2016). The reality is many farming businesses will invest significantly more in machinery than people.

88% of farming businesses employ less than four staff with a large proportion of the labour force being family.

But evidence suggest those that treat people as an investment rather than a cost reap the rewards as DEFRA’s 2011/12 Farm Business Survey Management Practices

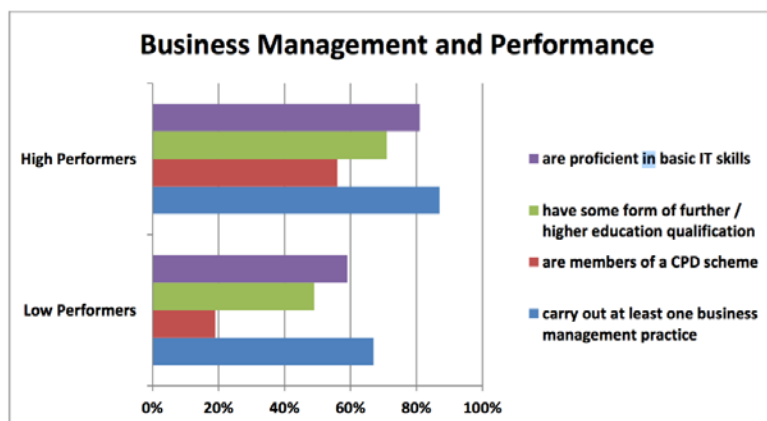


Figure 2: Farm Business Survey Management Practices Module 2011/12 Defra

Module reveals:

- 56% of the highest performing businesses are in Continual Professional Development
- Less than 20% are in CPD for the lowest performing businesses.

Developing Skills in science and technology is one of the 10 pillars of the Government’s Building Our

Industrial Strategy green paper published in January 2017: ‘Countries with higher rates of investment in research and development, more highly skilled people, better infrastructure, more

affordable energy and higher rates of capital investment grow faster and have higher levels of productivity.’ Furthermore, the business and people management skills central to AgriSkills Progress are crucial to support the growth of new food and farming businesses - another key Government pillar in its industrial strategy.

Staff recruitment and retention is a key issue facing agricultural businesses across the world. A recent Nuffield report* highlights that the most successful farming businesses treat staff as an investment. Motivation, satisfaction and empowerment are often more important than salary level in keeping good workers. This was a common finding across countries in Europe, New Zealand and the USA according to the report which also concluded that: **“People management is a skill that can be learnt, not something you either have or don't have.”**

A 2015 survey of the impact of training from the Agrifood Advanced Training Partnership Food showed significant benefits to individuals on a personal, professional and economic level. However while 80% confirmed the training had been beneficial to them personally and similarly 80% said there was a professional benefit, only 18% identified a quantifiable business benefit. This highlights one of the biggest barriers to this training – a lack of clarity on improvements and overall. Figure 1 demonstrates a clear synergy between the development of new skills and the resultant long term impact on the productivity or effectiveness of a company or organisation (Figure 1), but often the small, time consuming incremental changes go unnoticed. Improvements in personal skills are translated into professional competences which in turn are used by staff to benefit their employer or business.

Annex 3: Related Projects

The National Land Based College, set up in April 2016 to champion the land-based skills agenda is a critical influence and ally for AgriSkills Progress. The farming sector has much to gain from being part of the wider land-based skills agenda in both attracting new and diverse talent.

Agrimetrics has the expertise and capability to either build, or advise, the linkage and integration of different data sets to match user requirements. The not-for-profit centre is one of four funded by Government to accelerate growth in the Agri-Tech sector. It was born out of the UK Government’s [Strategy for Agricultural Technologies](#) (July 2013) to drive agricultural innovation and advance the development, adoption and exploitation of new technologies in the agri-food sector. The four founding partners are Reading University, Rothamsted Institute, SRUC and NIAB. Agrimetrics aims to build a scalable computational platform for data integration and modelling, from a range of sources to enable smarter analytics, including mathematical and statistical modelling and visualisation. Supporting businesses in developing their data science, data modelling and analytics capabilities is central to Agrimetrics objectives providing expertise, easier access to relevant data sets, data processing capability, consultancy, training and secondments to upskill the agri-food workforce.

There is an opportunity to leverage some of the content, and expertise, developed during the compilation of [The Food 4.0 Hub](#) by the **National Centre for Universities and Businesses (NCUB)**. This new online hub targets graduates exploring Agrifood careers ranging from ‘labs to landfills’ via a number of entry routes. The initiative was inspired by The Food Economy Steering Board and

a £250k investment for a task force to 'harvest information' from existing sources, most notably Brightcrop but also FACE and Tasty Careers. The investment came from the NCUB itself, Agrifood Research Council and Innovate UK.

The NCUB have a good reputation for digitally animating content to make it engaging and accessible. The Food 4.0 Hub is currently tucked away on the NCUB website while further digital enhancements are made to it to create a portal with functionality akin to this one in [engineering](#). **Prof Joe Marshall** is the key contact for the NCUB Food 4.0 Hub and is a willing partner in helping to inform content, and user engagement, for AgriSkills Progress.

E-learning platforms:

- [The Farmers Academy](#), a bespoke free access e-learning website for farmers and advisors, published by RBI (Farmers Weekly Group) since 2005 has a significant audience reach (300,000 users per month) and engagement (more than 10,000 registered users) that could be tapped into by AgriSkills Progress. The existing e-learning content is basic and linked to CPD schemes. Revenues are currently derived via sponsorship of modules and advertising.
- [ARTIS e-learning](#) is a subscription-only service (£150 a year) for arable producers and advisors. It is owned and managed by NIAB-TAG and provides higher quality e-learning than the Farmers Academy but has a much more limited audience reach.
- [FarmIQ](#) is a subscription only service (£50 per module) for livestock producers. It is owned by Westpoint Vets, who provide the content, and linked to DairyPro CPD.

Annex 4: References

- HM Government Building Our Industrial Strategy January 2017
- Chris Padfield Nuffield report: GREAT Farmers (Growing Really Exceptional and Talented Farmers) July 2016
- Oxford Farming Conference, The Best British Farmers; what gives them the edge January 2015
- DEFRA's 2011/12 Farm Business Survey Management Practices Module
- Future of Farming Review Report 2013 (David Fursdon)
- Future of Farming Report 2000 (Lord Curry)