

The production (commercial) horticulture industry splits into the distinct areas of ornamental plant, flower and tree production (including retail nursery outlets) and food production. Also included are fruit, vegetable, salad, herb and potato production.

### Overview

#### Divisions of production horticulture

##### Ornamental production:

- Range from high-tech automated glasshouse nurseries providing plants for retailers, to family run businesses producing batches of specialist plants
- Work involves a wide range of activities some of which include propagating, planting, potting, crop protection (pest and disease control), quality control, pruning, irrigation, presentation and dispatch. Nursery hands are also required to identify weeds, pests and diseases and know how to control them.

##### Production of edible crops:

- One of the largest areas of horticulture, the industry extends from large glasshouses growing salad crops, to very large farms specialising in field-grown vegetables and fruit growing
- Most growers rely on agency and immigrant labour for harvesting, but there are still opportunities for a long-term career
- Most immediate need is usually for skilled machinery operators and mechanics, especially tractor drivers
- Also a need for workers with good managerial and IT skills to programme production and supervise the workforce.

##### Retail horticulture (garden centres):

- Data from the Horticultural Trade Association shows there are close to 1,600 businesses and 2,700 retail outlets in the UK
- Most garden centres employ 30 to 200 staff and extensive on-the-job training is standard across the industry
- Some chains seek a mixture of horticultural expertise and retail skills. However attitude and personality are often seen as more important than horticultural qualifications. A degree in horticulture remains the most popular route in garden centre retailing at supervisory and management positions.

### Size and scope

Nation/Region	Businesses <sup>3</sup>		Employment <sup>4</sup>	
	Count	%	Count	%
UK <sup>5</sup>	15,260	100%	116,300	100%
Northern Ireland	320	2%	600	<1%
Scotland	560	4%	7,100	6%
Wales	280	2%	2,500	2%
England	14,100	92%	106,100	91%
East of England	3,020	21%	13,350	13%
East Midlands	1,920	14%	13,100	12%
London	220	2%	550	1%
North East	380	3%	250	<1%
North West	860	6%	9,800	9%
South East	2,380	17%	34,750	33%
South West	2,240	16%	11,800	11%
West Midlands	1,560	11%	14,850	14%
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,500	11%	7,700	7%

##### Business figures:

- Official statistics estimate that there are 14,200 businesses that fall within the production horticulture SIC code in the UK<sup>1</sup>
- However, Lantra estimates that this figure is 7% higher at 15,260 businesses in the UK<sup>3</sup>.

##### Employment figures:

- Official statistics from the Office of National Statistics estimate that there are 53,550 people employed within production horticulture in the UK<sup>2</sup>
- However, Lantra estimates that this figure is more likely to be around 116,300, by using more accurate statistics from the Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture, Defra<sup>4</sup>.

## Workforce demographics

Gender <sup>2</sup>			
Male	62%	Female	38%
Age band <sup>2</sup>			
16-24	9%	45-54	29%
25-34	18%	55-64	21%
35-44	16%	65+	8%
Employment <sup>2</sup>			
Full-time	77%	Part-time	23%
Occupations <sup>2</sup>			
Managers and senior officials (e.g. farm manager, company director)	16%		
Professional occupations (e.g. plant pathologist)	3%		
Associate professional and technical occupations (e.g. horticultural production manager, pack house manager)	1%		
Administrative, clerical and secretarial occupations	7%		
Skilled trade occupations (e.g. horticultural technician, packhouse supervisor)	37%		
Personal service occupations	<1%		
Sales and customer service occupations (e.g. garden centre manager)	3%		
Transport and machine operatives (e.g. Machinery Operator)	10%		
Elementary occupations (e.g. packer)	24%		

## Employment projections 2010-20<sup>8</sup>

- Forecasts<sup>11</sup> estimate that in the next ten years (2010 to 2020) the production horticulture industry will need a minimum of 2,000 more people.

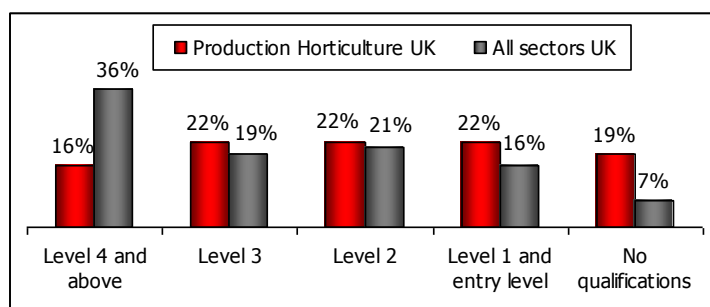
## Businesses by size

- Businesses that fall within the production horticulture SIC code have a smaller than average business size; 94% have a workforce of ten staff or fewer compared with 83% across all businesses in the UK<sup>1</sup>.

	Production horticulture UK	All sectors UK
0-4 employees	85%	68%
5-9 employees	9%	15%
10-19 employees	3%	8%
20-49 employees	2%	6%
50-99 employees	<1%	2%
100+ employees	<1%	1%

## Qualification levels<sup>2</sup>

Workers in this industry are often highly skilled and experienced, but can lack formal qualifications.



- One fifth of the workforce does not hold any qualifications, more than double the UK average
- The proportion of the workforce qualified to Level 1 is slightly higher than the UK at 22%
- The proportion of the workforce qualified at Level 2 and Level 3 are both marginally higher than the UK average at 22%
- 16% of the workforce is qualified to Level 4 and above, which is 20% lower than the UK average.

## Learning supply

- There are relatively few enrolments on qualifications, and training courses in the area of production horticulture
- Around 50 learners enrolled at FE colleges/work-based learning and around 60 enrolled at HE institutions in the area of production horticulture in 2008-09<sup>6, 7, 8</sup>
- Although specialist qualifications such as the NVQ in Production Horticulture are available, this area is often included within more generic horticultural qualifications
- The low number of enrolments within this subject area is due to lack of demand by students, therefore colleges are not delivering these qualifications<sup>9</sup>.

## Skills issues

### Incidence of skills shortage vacancies<sup>9</sup>

Of the employers in the production horticulture industry, 6% had a vacancy at the time they were surveyed. This is compared with 7% for all England and highlights the low level of vacancies within the sector.

	Production horticulture industry	Lantra sector
% with a vacancy	6%	7%
% with a hard-to-fill vacancy (HtFV)	<1%	3%
% with a skills shortage vacancy (SSV)	<1%	2%
HtFVs as a % of vacancies	13%	43%
SSVs as a % of vacancies	13%	32%

### Incidence of skill gaps<sup>9</sup>

18% of businesses in the sector reported a skills gap (i.e. the extent to which employers perceive current employees to be less than fully proficient for their current job) compared to 15% in England.

	Production horticulture industry	Lantra sector
% of establishments reporting skill gaps	18%	15%
Number of employees with a skill gap	1,223	26,500
Skill gaps as % of employment	9%	6%

In broad terms, the skills required to ensure not only increased food production, but essentially food security for the future include<sup>10</sup>:

- Information technology
- Intensive production techniques (including fuel, [carbon foot printing] and water efficiency techniques)
- Climate change challenges
- Practical production and related specialism
- Mechanisation and machinery maintenance
- High level plant and soil science
- New management techniques and skills (linked to the supply chain and consumer demands).

## Drivers for change

### Labour supply

- Harder to source migrant labour
- Ageing workforce - need to attract entrants at all ages
- Potential labour and opportunities for upskilling within young people not in education, employment or training
- Needs good information, advice, and guidance (IAG) and raising of awareness on jobs in the sector
- Importance of good management skills so employers know how to recruit/'sell' their jobs
- Providing opportunities for career progression and development
- Influencing migration policy and operation of control mechanisms (SAWS).

### Impact on skills

- Original migrants were skilled students, where as now the migrants coming over are not as highly skilled
- Barrier with language/communication skills, often need ESOL
- Keep up-to-date with changes in legislation
- Information, advice and guidance needs to demonstrate the high levels of technology and science related skills utilised by the industry.

### Land management

- Implementation of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms, single farm payments and cross compliance
- Cross compliance - environmental management skills
- Water Framework Directive
- Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ)
- Decisions on land use e.g. crops versus timber, leisure versus housing
- Needs innovation and best practice
- Changes in crop protection legislation.

### Impact on skills

- Training needs/upskilling for legislation/policies
- Importance of degree level and science based knowledge to facilitate ideas
- Knowledge transfer needs to be a priority.

### Health and safety

- Legislative requirements
- Safer working environment.

### Impact on skills

- Awareness raising, knowledge of requirements and how to comply
- Improved learning provision in terms of CPD
- Recognition of health and safety competence.

## Energy and fuel use

- High cost of fuel and energy driving changes in practice at a business level
- Demand for efficient and renewable energy
- Need to manage complaints regarding use of windmills and other sources of renewable energy.

## Impact on skills

- Research community to provide knowledge
- Knowledge of new agronomy techniques
- Knowledge of more efficient logistics.

## Changes in consumer demand

- Quality assurance schemes (including those schemes for the ornamentals such as BOPP)
- Changing consumer demand - with people training down due to tighter budgets due to the recession
- Developments in trade and markets
- Natural resource management
- Need for market intelligence.

## Impact on skills

- Skills for profitability for example business planning
- Need for sales and marketing skills including understanding of market intelligence.

## Food security

- Quality assurance scheme
- Traceability and ethical requirements/record management
- Recording and monitoring of crop production
- Ensuring that imports are safe.

## Impact on skills

- Risk management
- Business advice, guidance and support
- Information and communications technology
- Contract management and negotiation
- Skills for growing without use of pesticides
- Crop protection — controlling pests and disease.



## Modernisation of rural delivery

- Establishment of new agencies to support environmental and rural development and deliver Public Service Agreement targets
- Devolution of decision making and resources to national/regional organisations
- Streamlining of funding support mechanisms
- Change in regional development agencies.

## Rural issues

- Workforce for the sector is under pressure
- Access and cost of housing
- Local families priced out of villages as commuters move in - rural communities developing without rural people
- Delivery of services - need to manage impact of complaints by residents of tractors/lorries through villages
- Social cohesion - areas with high number of glass houses and therefore migrant workers.

## Impact on skills

- Knowledge of impact of rural issues on workforce.

## Sources and information

- <sup>1</sup> Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) 2010
- <sup>2</sup> Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2009-10
- <sup>3</sup> Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) 2010 for England, Scotland and Wales, plus June Agricultural Census for Northern Ireland
- <sup>4</sup> Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture 2009, Defra
- <sup>5</sup> Figures and percentages may not add up due to rounding. Percentages are calculated from actual figures
- <sup>6</sup> Data Service (England), DCELLS (Wales), Skills Development Scotland (SDS), DARD/DEL (Northern Ireland)
- <sup>7</sup> Data Service (England), DCELLS (Wales), Skills Development Scotland (SDS), DARD/DEL (Northern Ireland)
- <sup>8</sup> Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
- <sup>9</sup> National Employer Skills Survey 2010
- <sup>10</sup> Report of the Fruit and Vegetables Task Force 2010
- <sup>11</sup> Lantra Model for Employment Forecasting (LMEF) 2010. Figures represent estimates of minimum job openings to satisfy replacement and expansionary demand. This may be higher or lower depending on future conditions

## Lantra website

For further information regarding this factsheet, Lantra and the sector, please visit: [www.lantra.co.uk](http://www.lantra.co.uk)

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