

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Future of farming review

Annex B: Young farmers survey

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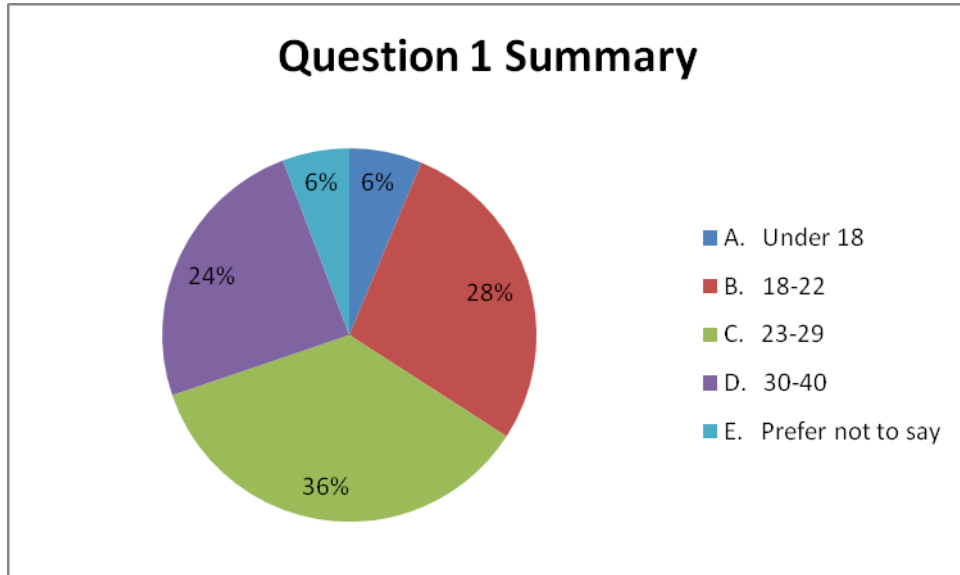
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Introduction

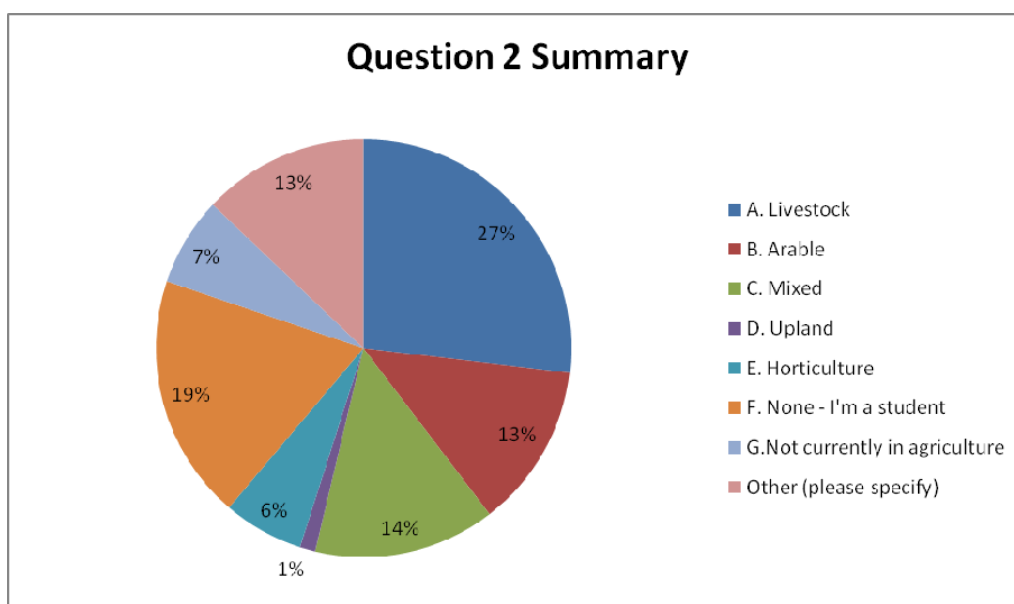
- 1.1 As part of the Future of Farming Review we, the Review Group, launched a public survey to ascertain the views and experience of young farmers and agricultural students. The survey was open to any member of the public. We had over 400 respondents from a range of backgrounds. The responses were invaluable in shaping our report.
- 1.2 The following is a summary of each question asked in the survey. Where the answers were free text we have grouped them as far as possible and presented them as pie charts. Example answers are included in each question summary.

Question Summaries

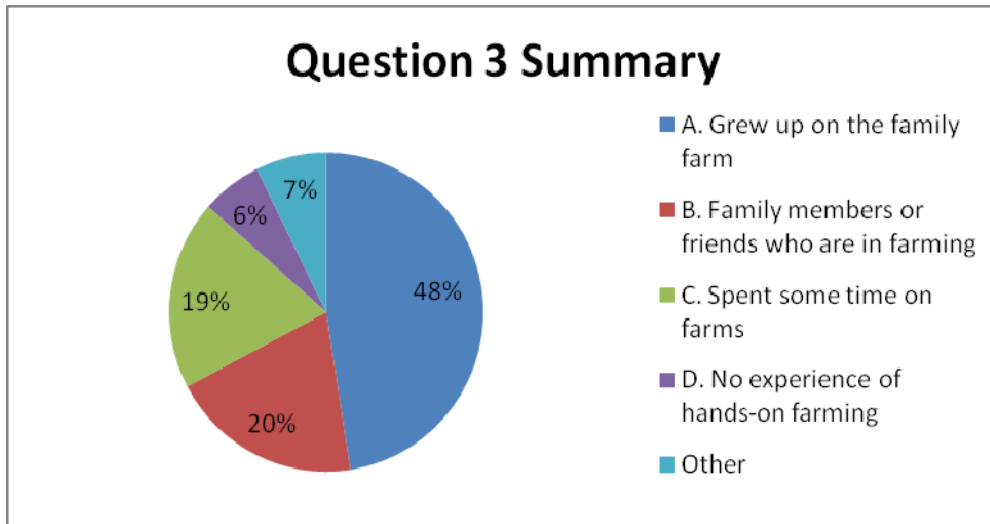
Question 1: Please tell us your age



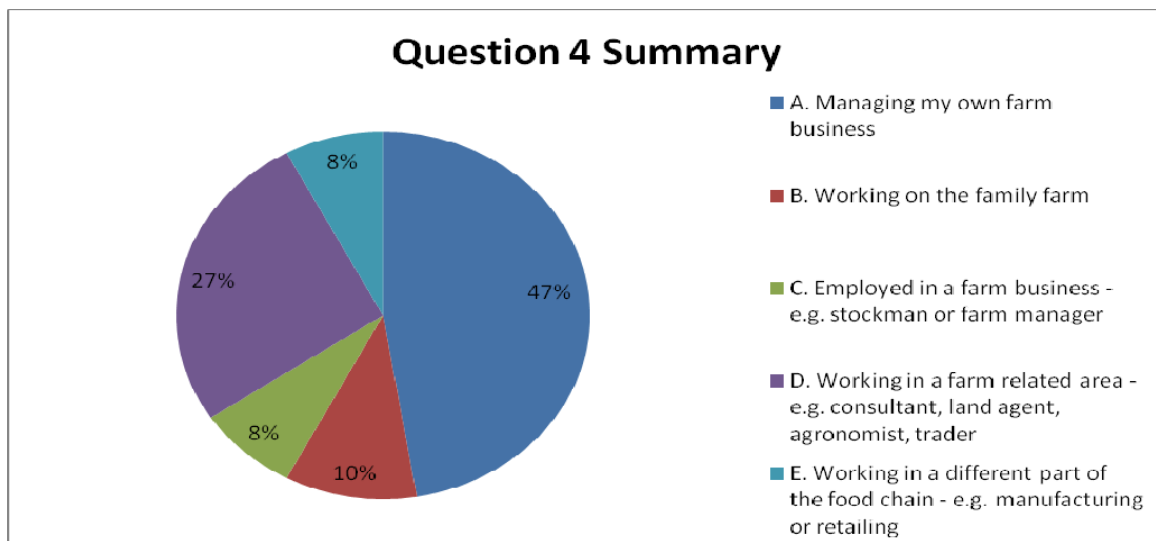
Question 2: What best describes the area you currently work in?



Question 3: Which of the following best describes your background?



Question 4: Where do you see yourself in 10 years time?

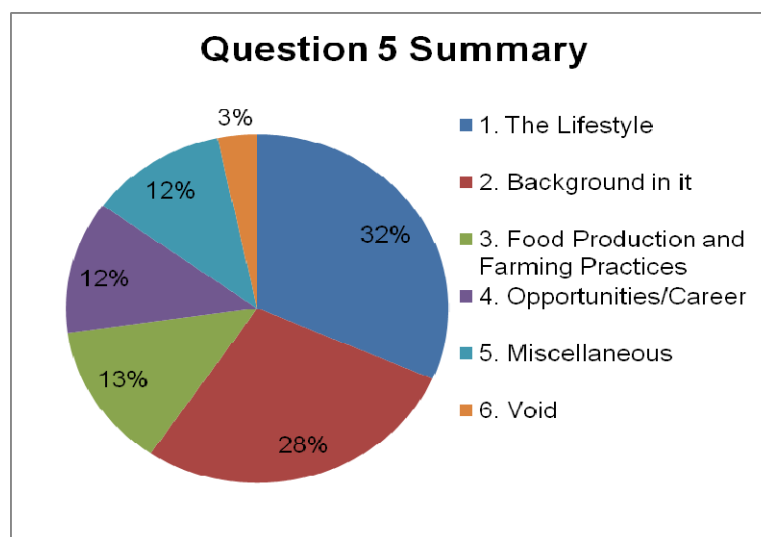


Question 5: What attracted you to the world of food & farming?

From the responses received, over half noted that the lifestyle, including being able to work outdoors with animals and with the environment, as well as having some kind of background within the farming world were the main things that attracted them to farming. Comments received included ‘... I love the countryside and all that can be produced from it’, as well as, ‘The outdoors, animals and a love of the countryside and food’. Those that had some form of background within farming mainly saw it as an opportunity to carry on a family business, with ‘The chance to continue the legacy started by my great grandfather’, and, ‘...gradually taking on more responsibility now parents are retiring.’ There were some comments that showed that farming was just what they were brought in to out of ‘Necessity and sense of obligation’, as well as, ‘it’s a way of life not a job.’

There were two other main areas pertaining to respondents attraction into food and farming, which were; the opportunity to join food production and engage in different farming practices, and the opportunities and career prospects that it offered. There were comments relating to their desire to grow organic crops, as well as the ability to learn a variety of skills that were on offer. Future farming technology was also noted and commented upon, one respondent noting that, ‘Looking at the machinery and engineering sector of agriculture - it is an expanding and ever changing sector which is often employing new technologies in order to produce more for less. It is becoming an industry which requires technically minded individuals in order to ensure continual improvement and development for future generations.’ The opportunities and career prospect comments showed a desire to be able to be independent, to manage their own business, and to be challenged.

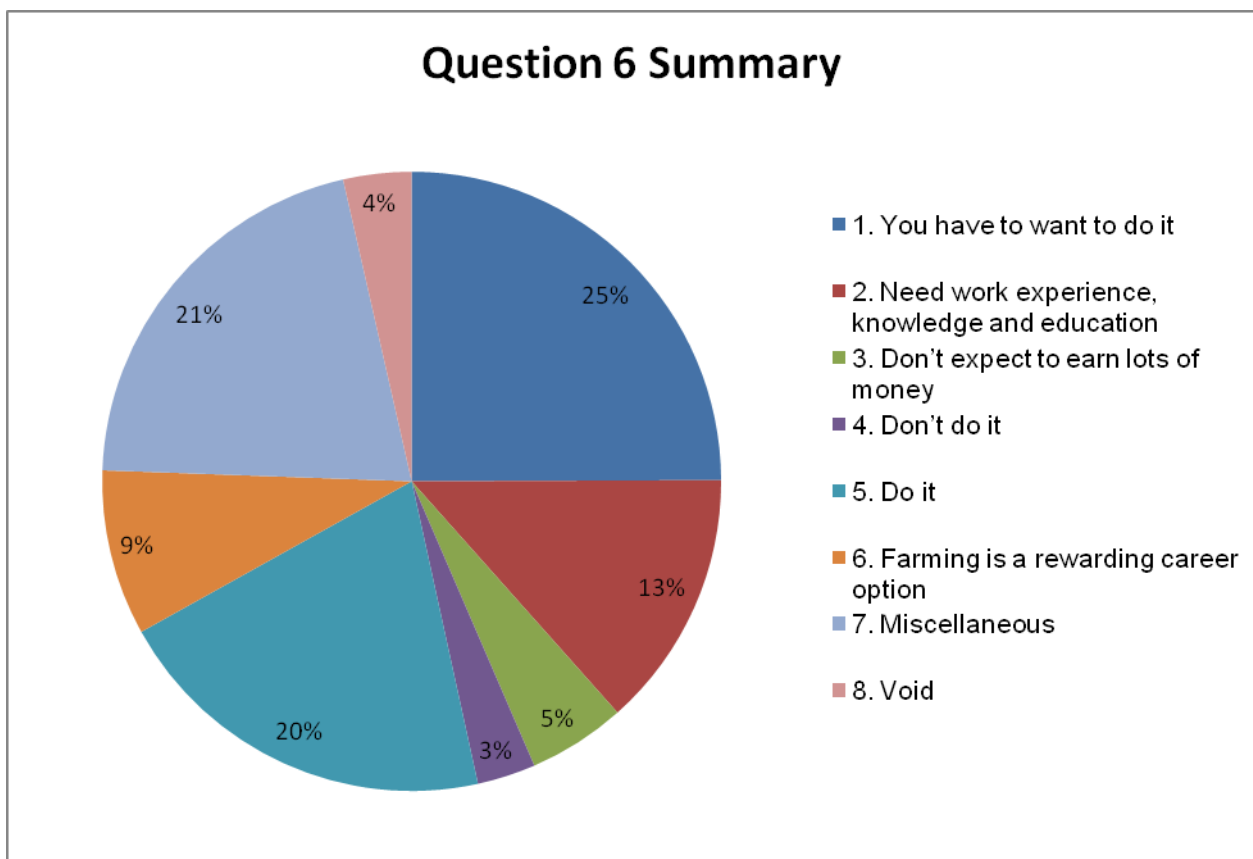
Miscellaneous comments included not wanting to work in an office, that they thought farming in general was important, and engagement with the Young Farmers Club. Throughout, there appeared to be a willingness and desire to engage in sustainability within food and farming.



Question 6: What would you say to someone who was thinking about going into farming?

From the responses received, the highest proportion said that you have to want to go in to farming. The hours are long, it is not very well paid, and it is hard work. Many said that 'it was a way of life, not a job'. Other responses were that people wanted to get as much work experience, knowledge and education about the industry as possible. Comments included; 'Get as much experience as possible, there are so many different branches of farming to explore: arable, dairy, horticulture, sheep...the list is endless', as well as, 'If you are not from a farming background make sure that you get a LOT of work experience; especially if you are going to enrol on an agricultural course. Without practical knowledge you will be of no use to anyone, and far too many people go to agricultural college with a ridiculous twee, idealised view of agriculture and the countryside'.

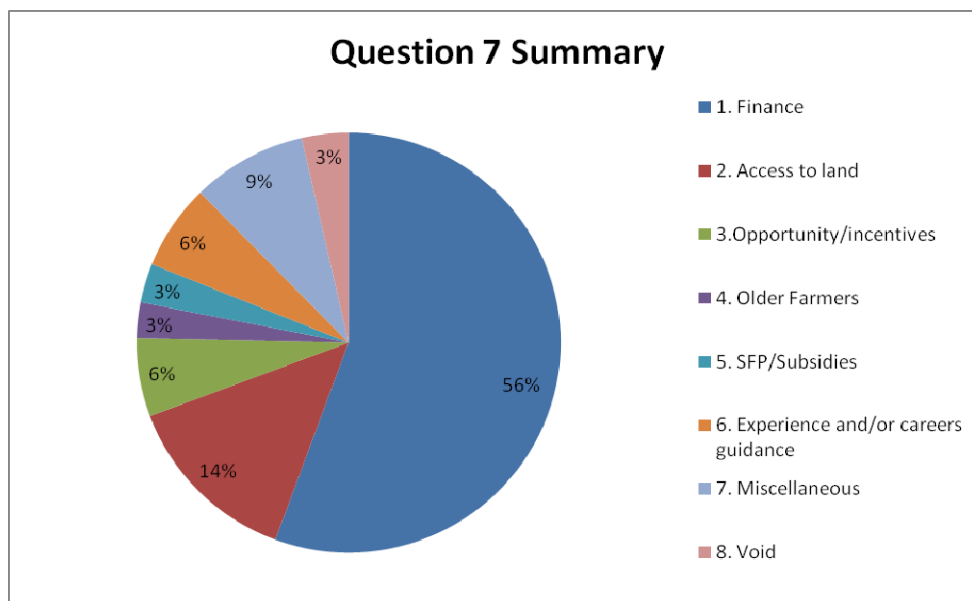
Responses which commented about money were common, telling people not to expect to earn a lot of money, and to make sure you have financial support and/or savings behind you. There were a number of responses which actually said it was not advisable to go in to farming. A smaller number of responses included comments on being able to go forward in to farming, diversification, and that it is a good and rewarding career, with plenty of opportunities.



Question 7: What do you think is the single biggest barrier to young people establishing a career in farming? E.g. owning their own farm business

There was an overwhelming majority of responses which said that money/capital was the biggest barrier in people establishing a career in farming. The lack of access to money in order to start, or the general high set-up costs in stock and equipment, combined with a lack of funding opportunities have significantly impaired the prospects of many. Access to land was the second biggest response, with comments such as; 'Getting land to farm. Not everyone who wants to go into farming is lucky enough to inherit land', and, 'The monstrous land rights situation... i.e. Not having any/access to land.' Both of these points were closely linked, with some saying that access to land was inhibited by costs, causing one to impact upon the other. Other responses included the lack of incentives and opportunities available, the problems around legislative frameworks such as the SFP and subsidies, as well as the attitude of older farmers. Comments pertaining to the older generation of farmers included; 'A lot of the older generation of farmers are not prepared to spend time teaching people how to do things, but not everyone is fortunate enough to have been brought up on a farm', as well as, 'Older farmers not willing to take on someone with little or no experience'.

Miscellaneous comments included such things as the working hours, supermarkets and their monopolisation of the industry, as well as people who have lived in cities, and are just 'playing' at farming.

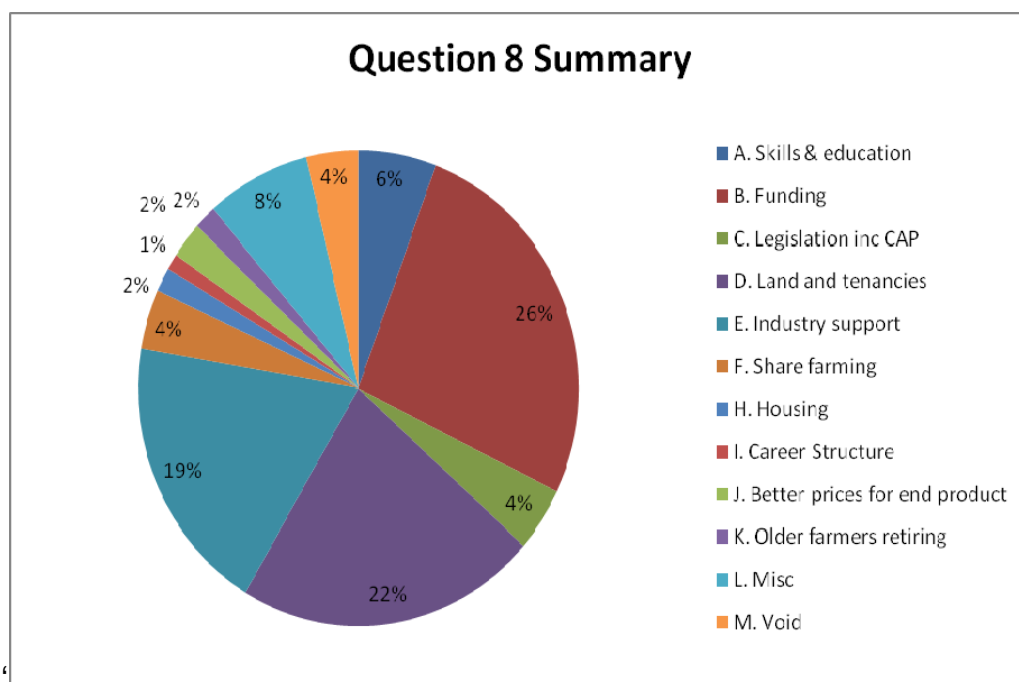


Question 8: What do you think is the single biggest thing that most help young people establish a career in farming e.g. owning their own farm business

The bulk of the answers in this question stipulated the most significant things that would help a young farmer would be more available funding, more access to land and tenancies, and greater industry support. A common theme in the financial support asked for was in the form of start up funding, usually in the form of a grant like a 'A government grant scheme to assist genuinely hardworking young entrepreneurs gain a foot on the ladder ... when a suitable business plan has been put forward'. Some also called for specialised or low interest loans 'to help them through the first year of trading especially (sic) as there is no income from crops for a whole year' or simply 'low interest on borrowing'

Access to land and tenancies was focused on the affordability of land and increased availability of small or starter farms. Availability of council farms was a particular concern with many asking for 'More county council farms ... of a type, size and price that is achievable'. The calls for industry support ranged from a general wish for more involvement from industry organisations to requests for more support from experienced farmers in the form of opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and advice.

Further down the scale more education and skills provision was cited as beneficial for new entrants. Changes to legislation, particularly changes to CAP although there was no clear consensus with some calling for their subsidy abolition, and others making entitlements more available to new entrants. Joint ventures were also mentioned as a valuable entry route.

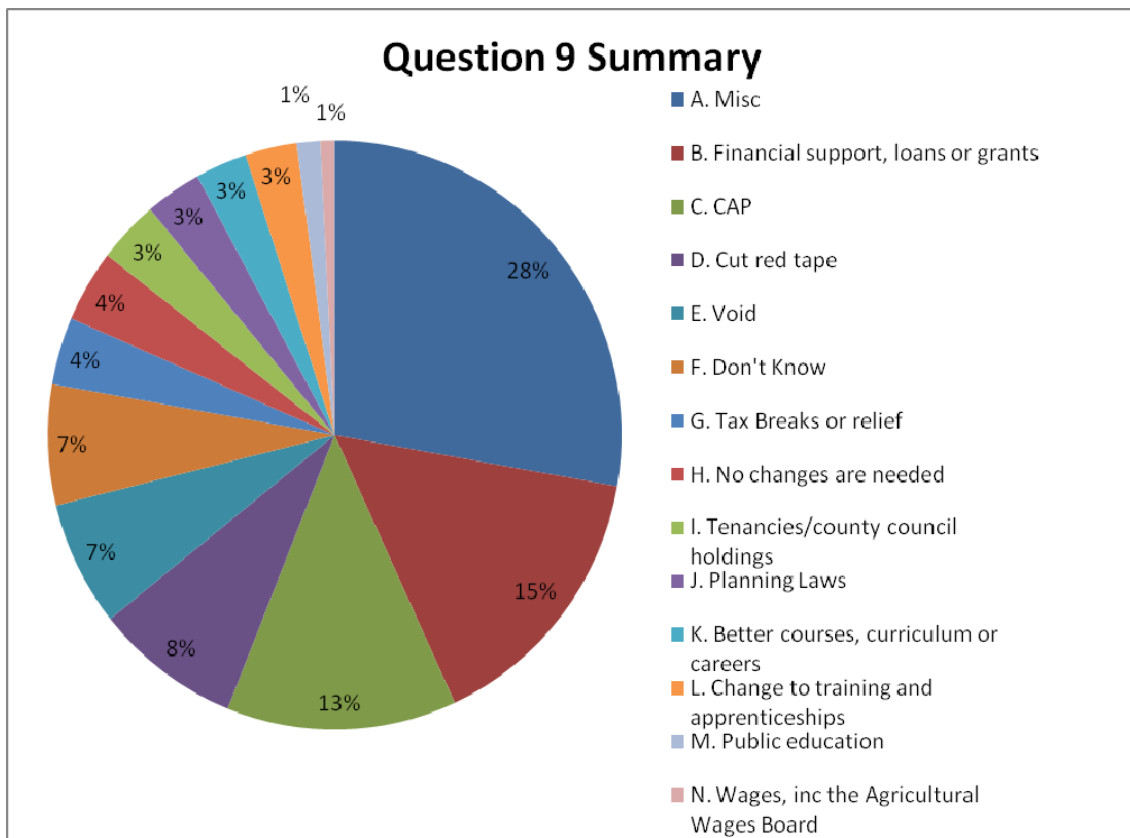


Question 9: What changes to regulation, legislation, or available support, if any, would you think are necessary to help more new entrants into farming?

There was no clear consensus to this question, with respondents raising a very broad range of points and many people commenting that there simply needed to be a reduction in red tape across the board. The most consistently raised point was that there needed to be clearer provisions or requirements to make funding available to new entrants although views on how this should happen were varied. A large number of people felt that reform of the Common Agricultural Policy would be hugely important, but views on the nature of the reform varied from the need to increase direct subsidies for new entrants right through to the benefits of removing subsidies for everyone.

Some respondents commented on the tax framework, either specifically in relation to for example inheritance tax arrangements, or simply stating that tax relief of some kind that favoured new entrants would be beneficial. A similar number called for changes to tenancy legislation or the arrangements that oversee County Council holdings, and a similar number again felt that amendments to national planning legislation would be beneficial.

There were a considerable number of people who felt that no legislative or regulatory changes were needed, or who were simply unsure.

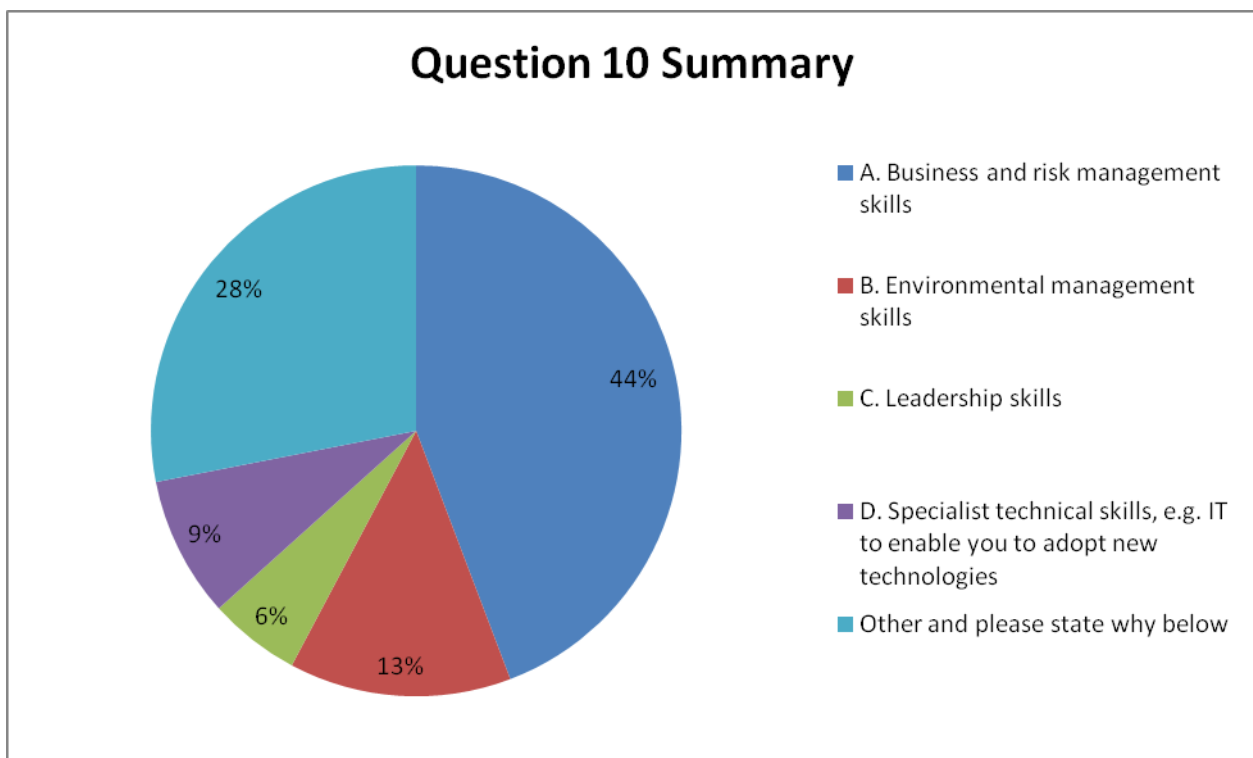


Question 10: What skills do you think are the most important for you now, and in the future, that will help you build a successful career in agriculture? And why?

The overwhelming majority of responses said that business and management skills were the most important skill for their future. Comments were mainly based around the ability to make a profit, and that without good business and management skills, there would be no business to run.

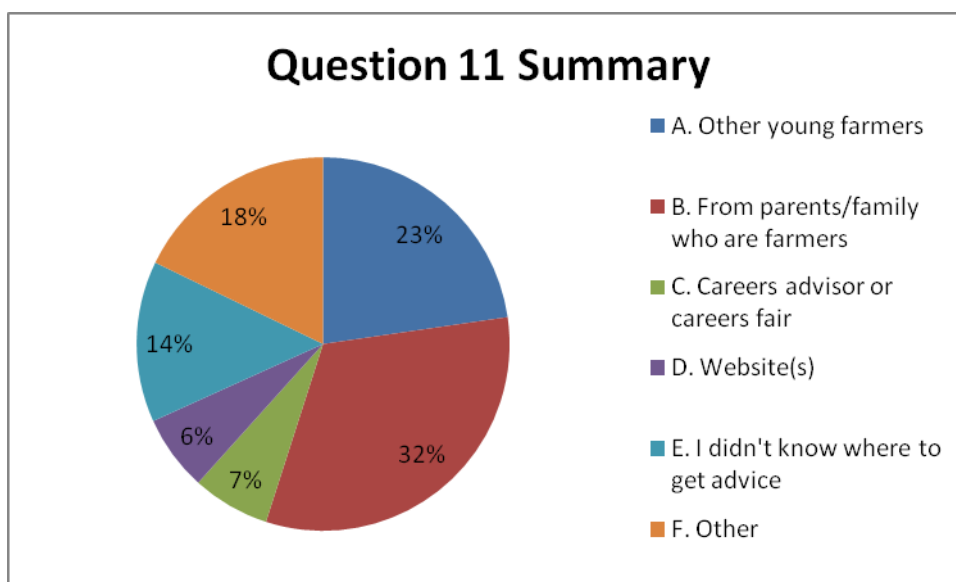
The ability to have good environmental management came in second, with comments noting that a good understanding of the environment is vital for an understanding of successful growing practices, as well as the ability to use less fertilisers and pesticides. One comment said; 'without a concern for the wider diversity and environment there can be no farming.'

Leadership skills were chosen in a smaller percentage, but comments showed that the ability to lead a good farming team, being charismatic, being fair, and having vision were key in being successful. Many comments noted that I.T was becoming more advanced, and would be key in future farming practices. Specialist skills were noted to broaden knowledge, and ultimately help make a successful business.



Question 11: Where did you seek advice before deciding on a career/course in agriculture?

Over half of the responses for this question said that parents, or family members who are already farmers, were the source of any advice for going in to agriculture. Some comments said that as it was in the family and it just happened. Another large proportion of the responses showed that the Young Farmers Club played a large part in the decision to go in to agriculture. Comments showed that it was the YFC that allowed them to gain work experience, gave them advice on the right way to begin a career in agriculture, and helped develop them to begin a successful career in the industry. Another respondent said; 'We need to get into schools to promote farming as an attractive career', which is particularly important given that other comments said that no advice was given to them by their careers service/advisor in school, and that 'it wasn't recognised as a profession or a considerable industry'. Some respondents also said they were advised not to go in to the industry, or actively discouraged from it. Websites such as Harper Adams, Royal Agricultural College, and Defra were named as important sources of information to enable them to make a decision.



Question 12: Do you think that farming and food production will change over the next 10 years, and if so how?

Nearly half of the responses received said that yes, farming and food production would change over the next 10 years. Many said that it would be due to the change in the amount of produce needed, the technology that is coming in, and any changes that are due to CAP and legislation.

There were a proportion of comments which said that the industry would have to, or needs to, change in order for it to survive. The main thread to this thought was that due to a growing global population, there would be a demand on farmers to produce more. Other comments said that the industry needs to move back to small scale, local produce, with others also stating that land prices need to go down and the amount paid to farmers for produce needs to go up. General comments and responses which were noted said that more traceability and organic farming is needed, that farming will become even harder, the problem of attracting new entrants will get worse, and that over complicated and red-taped legislation will continue to be enforced upon farmers.

There was only a small minority which said that the industry would not change, and some comments also put this down to red-tape problems and the legislation that they have to enforce.

