

Status of Professional Qualifications “EcoFarmer ” and “EcoExpert - AP”

in the partners Countries



Pilot project :

Training on European standarts for ecological agricultural production – EcoJob -
AP

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Project Partners:

- Higher School “Agricultural college” – Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Coordinator and Contractor Bulgarian Farmers Association, Bulgaria
- Hobro – Aalborg Farmers Union, Denmark
- University of Thessaly – Faculty of Agriculture, Crop and Animal Production, Greece
- ComuNET Education solutions, Spain
- University of Padova, Italy
- Stichting International Foundation Sustainable Agriculture Training, the Netherlands
- Slovak University of Agriculture, Nitra, Slovakia
- UltimoConsulting, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom
- <http://www.ecojob-ap.org>

The needs of new knowledge and skills to acquire professional competence based on the questionnaires filled in BULGARIA

Introduction. The EcoJob-AP questionnaire analysis presents the responses of farmers and experts from Bulgaria. The survey was carried out basically by Internet (73%). Some of the questionnaires were accomplished by face- to-face interview with the rest. The total number of Bulgarian farmers answered the questionnaire is 15 and the number of experts is 16. /Appendix: Questionnaire and Survey results/.

EcoExperts-AP

There is a great interest of the interviewees to the ecological agriculture, but their needs of new knowledge and skills are in the following areas:

1.Technological processes of ecological (organic) agriculture

- Introduction to organic production and Organic farming methods - 19% and 56% respectively
- Organic production standards - 62%
- Sowing - 19%
- Soil Cultivation and management - 25%
- Pest control - 25%
- Food hygiene and safety - 25%
- Irrigation - 19%
- Livestock handling and welfare - 12.5%

2.Control and certification of eco-produce and organic standards

- Compliance with Quality Assurance Schemes - 56%
- Satisfying Environmental obligations - 50%
- Compliance with Organic Standards - 37.5%
- Identifying and compliance with funding sources including EU schemes - 37.5%

3.Setting up channels of distribution (marketing produce) - 25%

4.Managerial knowledge and skills

- Managing and Administrating the Enterprise - 31%
- Business Planning and Finance Planning - 19% and 12.5%

5.Use of computers

Interested in doing a course over the Internet - 62.5%

EcoFarmer

1.Technological processes of ecological (organic) agriculture

- Organic production standards - 73%
- Organic farming methods - 53%
- Introduction to organic production and Organic farming methods - 40%
- Soil Cultivation and management - 40%
- Good farming (environmental) practice - 40%

2.Control and certification of eco-produce and organic standards

- Compliance with Organic Standards - 47%
- Identifying and compliance with funding sources including EU schemes - 47%
- Identifying marketing trends and requirements - 47%

3.Setting up channels of distribution (marketing produce) - 47%

4.Managerial knowledge and skills

- Managing and Administrating the Enterprise - 27%
- Finance Planning - 27%

6.Use of computers

- Interested in doing a course over the Internet - 53%

The needs of new knowledge and skills to acquire professional competence based on the questionnaires filled in GREECE

EcoExpert – AP

The needs of new professional competences for training of Expert / Adviser are:

The needs of new professional competences for training of Expert/ Adviser are:

1.Topics of training related on the technological process of ecological production. Especially they are interested on the following topics:

- Organic farming methods (93.33 %)
- Food hygiene and safety (73.33 %)
- Organic standards (60 %)
- Livestock handling and welfare (46.67 %)
- Waste treatment (46.67 %)
- Introduction to organic production (40 %)
- Manure / slurry storage and spreading (26.67 %)
- Good farming (environmental) practice (20 %)
- Weed control (20 %)
- Hedge planting and care (13.33 %)
- Soil Cultivation and management (13.33 %)
- Livestock feeding (13.33 %)
- Livestock selection and breeding (13.33 %)
- Equine care (6.67 %)
- First aid on the farm (6.67 %)
- Milking (6.67 %)

2.Topics of training related to control and certification of eco-produce. Especially they are interested on the following topics:

- Compliance with Quality Assurance Schemes (86.67 %)
- Compliance with Organic Standards (73.33 %)
- Satisfying Environmental obligations (73.33 %)
- Identifying and compliance with funding sources including EU schemes (60 %)
- Identifying marketing trends and requirements (53.33 %)

- Compliance with legislative requirements (53.33 %)
- Setting up channels of distribution (marketing produce) (33.33 %)
- Managing and Administrating the Enterprise (20 %)
- Finance Planning (13.33 %)
- Meetings with suppliers (6.67 %)
- Meetings with the Public Administration (6.67 %)
- Meetings with banks (6.67 %)
- Business Planning (6.67 %)
- Accounting and finances (6.67 %)

3. The topics of training which they are interested to attend in order to improve their advisor/ educational work are:

- Identifying business development / change needed (80 %)
- Identifying the people development needs to deliver the change needed (60 %)
- Identifying and achieving own training / development needs (53.33 %)
- Achieving agreement to the implementation plan (46.67 %)
- Working with others (teamwork) to deliver outcomes (46.67 %)
- Design and delivery of training and education programmes (46.67 %)
- Monitoring and evaluating progress (40 %)
- Establishing credibility with clients. (33.33 %)
- Supporting the people through the training / development programme. (33.33 %)
- Communicating with farmers and colleagues -- oral. (26.67 %)
- Applying appropriate specialist and professional expertise to practical situations. (20 %)

B. Farmers

All the farmers consider important for their business to receive training courses but they have not enough time to spend for it.

Although they have not done any course over the Internet a proportion of 88.89% is interested to do course over the Internet due to little time they have to spare for it.

Especially, they prefer to attend training courses by

a. Distance, over the Internet (35.71 %)

b. Taught at a training centre, together with other professionals in your sector (35.71 %)

c. Taught at your own farm / business / enterprise. (21.43 %)

According to the questionnaire, Farmers are interested to obtain knowledge and skills on the the technological process of ecological production. Especially they are interested on the following topics:

- Organic farming methods (85.71 %)
- Organic standards (71.43 %)
- Soil Cultivation and management (42.86 %)
- Use of computers (35.71 %)
- Weed control (35.71 %)
- Introduction to organic production (28.57 %)
- Livestock handling and welfare (28.57 %)
- Good farming (environmental) practice (28.57 %)
- Food hygiene and safety (21.43 %)
- Livestock feeding (14.29 %)
- Livestock selection and breeding (14.29 %)
- First aid on the farm (14.29 %)
- Sowing (7.14 %)
- Hedge planting and care (7.14 %)
- Waste treatment (7.14 %)
- Irrigation (7.14 %)

Also they are interested to obtain knowledge on the market requirements. Especially their interest focus on the following topics :

- Compliance with Organic Standards (71.43 %)
- Identifying and compliance with funding sources including EU schemes (64.29 %)
- Setting up channels of distribution (marketing produce) (64.29 %)
- Compliance with Quality Assurance Schemes (57.14 %)
- Identifying marketing trends and requirements (57.14 %)
- Compliance with legislative requirements (28.57 %)
- Satisfying Environmental obligations (21.43 %)
- Business Planning (21.43 %)
- Meetings with the Public Administration (21.43 %)
- Meetings with suppliers (14.29 %)
- Accounting and finances (14.29 %)
- Meetings with banks (7.14 %)
- Finance Planning (7.14 %)

In conclusion, the needs of new professional competences for Expert /Advisor and Farmers in Greece are focused on:

- Organic farming methods
- Organic standards
- Setting up channels of distribution (marketing produce)
- Compliance with Quality Assurance Schemes
- Compliance with Quality Control Systems
- Identifying marketing trends and requirements
- Satisfying Environmental obligations

According to our country needs of new professional competences for Expert /Advisor and Farmers we would like to suggest two more modules to be added in training courses.

- One module on the application of Quality Assurance Schemes and
- Another module on the application of Quality Control Systems of ecological production.

The needs of new knowledge and skills to acquire professional competence based on the questionnaires filled in DENMARK

Introduction

The EcoJob-AP questionnaire was an element in the training and education analysis carried out for the Leonardo Da Vinci Project. The aim was to identify special training needs for organic farmers and their advisors in Denmark.

234 questionnaires have been distributed among farmers and advisors. 10 farmers and 10 advisors have answered.

The 234 questionnaires is the total numbers of registered eco farmers in the region covering the same area as Hobro-Aalborg Farmers union (Partner)

The respond from the Farmers were devastating low, only 4!! Responded to the questionnaire on the internet.

The rest (6) of the questionnaires have been carried out on farm visits and interviews on location with farmers.

The intention is to get some more questionnaires from the farmers, but then they will be carried as telephone interviews.

Results

The questionnaire included eco-farmers, eco-experts, enterprise managers and farm workers.

The findings are summarized in different tables and charts. As seen only eco-farmers and eco-experts have answered.

All the eco-experts are employed in the Danish Agricultural Advisory services employed in Hobro - Aalborg Farmers union.

Eco-farmers

Out of the group of farmers 87, 5 % were owner of the farm. The rest are tenants. 62, 5 % are full time occupied with their farm business. The rest are part time farmers. Half of them have the “green certificate”, 25 % have attended special courses, 12, 5 % have a university degree and 12, 5 % an other kind of education. Three quarter deals with cropping and 87, 5 % with animal husbandry. Ecoform is full organic for all of them. As far as understanding the

standards and to implement the standards the majority did not have any problems in this context.

All farmers have a PC on their farm. All of them have access to the internet. In general, they are comfortable in the use of PC's and the internet.

As far as courses are concern about 12 % have done a course on the internet, but none of them a distance course (understood as done mail snail mail). 50 % show no interest to make use of internet in the future, although that 75 % prepare to have a course together with professional colleagues in a centre.

The most important topics of training in the years to come were in the field of:

- Satisfying environmental obligations
- Managing and administration of the enterprise
- Compliance with legislative requirements
- Business planning
- Financial planning

Eco-experts

The eco-experts are all in the advisory and extensions services. They are all characterized by having a university degree or technician on higher level (bachelor). Twenty nine % of them are active with production (or their husband/wife).

All of them have access to internet both at their job and at home. (The job normally supplies them with lab tops).

The most important topics of training in the years to come were in the field of:

- Good farm practice
- Soil cultivation and management
- Weed control
- Manure/slurry spreading and storage
- Waste treatment

Additional comments and points to rise

Regretting the little response some comments shall be given based on the on location interviews and own reflection and experience.

In general the eco-farmers can be divided in two main groups: full time professional eco-farmers and smaller part time eco-farmers/weekend eco-farmers.

Full time professional eco-farmers have a proper educational background as skilled farmers (“Green Certificate”, which is compulsory by law if you want to own a farm of more than 30 Ha, until 1995 of more than 5 ha).

Through more than a century, Danish farmers have been organized in Farmers’ Unions and farmers cooperatives. Through the Farmers Unions the farmers receive advises and vocational training. In Denmark we have in this system about 2.000 advisors, whereof 50 are specialized in organic production. The advisors are situated in 32 regional centers. They are typically divided in to sections dealing with:

- Animal husbandry, which again is divided into milk production, meat production (cattle and sheep), pig production and poultry
- Plant production – field crops, divided into traditional cropping and alternative cropping organic and integrated Plant production – edible crops, divided into traditional cropping and alternative cropping organic and integrated
- Young farmers
- Others, e.g. social affairs
- Management and economy, which support every farmer

Besides giving individual advises the advisors makes courses and seminars, especially in the winter. (In the general educational and training system in Denmark, the state pays the teacher for your courses if you gather more than twelve participants. That means that as soon as you have 12 participants you can make tailor made education and training programs).

As far as professional farmers are concerned organic products are processed and marketed through the existing cooperatives such as milk, meat and field crops. As far as edible crops are concerned about 50 % is sold through cooperatives, where the producers have an obligation to deliver all their production, 30 % is sold on the Copenhagen wholesale market and the rest at farm gate. Organic fruits and vegetables for processing are manly produced on long term contracts. Although all farmers are interested in the price of their products they are not directly involved in the day by day marketing.

The non professional organic farmers (hobby/week end farmers) mainly sell their products from farm gate.

The use of PC and internet – distance learning.

Danish farmers are busy. In general they do not want to sit behind a desk. A lot of the

Tasks they have to carry through are outsourced to the advisory service, e.g. book keeping, planning of crop rotation, planning of fertilizing, fodder plans etc.. The farmers demand advisers, plans of actions etc. to be short and simple. They may make a multi-annual plan of action in co-operation with their advisors, but the plans are normally divided into sections according to a priority.

The use of PC and internet is widespread in Denmark. In agriculture it is used for communication with relevant partners such as colleagues, the cooperatives, the bank, farm suppliers and the advisory service. It is used for making calculations and in the planning and management together with the advisory services (often 95 % done by the service and 5 % by the farmer). The advisory service sends regularly information through the internet. Farmers subscribe on these services. Also farmers can have a direct dialogue and interaction with the advisors on the internet.

Distance learning

By learning and training the farmers prefer to have the possibility to have a dialogue with the teacher/trainer and with he's colleagues.

Distance learning was used to support young farmers in Danish agriculture until the beginning of the 60'ies while they had their practical training on farms. Snail mail was used.

The development has led to that we do not have distances anymore. So distance learning is not an issue.

By learning and training the farmers prefer to have the possibility to have a dialogue with the teacher/trainer and with their colleagues. It is for certain that the farmers in many cases learn more from their colleagues than the professors.

Needs for education and training.

From my discussions with the advisors and the farmers it is my conclusion that in the most areas mentioned in the questionnaire there are very few indications

of those organic producers need other training courses than traditional farmers. That is for certain in the technical areas, management, administration, planning and finance. All farmers have their individual conditions, wishes, challenges and demands. There is a tradition in the Danish vocational training to deal with this situation. Advisory service and vocational training is integrated. .

With about 3.500 registrated organic farmers having about 105 advisors to help and support them (not all advisors are 100 % dealing with organic farming only); there is a close contact between farmers and advisors.

The needs for education and training are normally answered by making courses in the advisory centers. Many of the courses are a mixture of education/training/information and updating. There is a tendency to a higher degree of individual service.

Experience circles (often called twelve men's clubs – a meeting per month) are popular. Normally advisors attend these meetings.

A. Expert/consultant

Education:

66.7% from the university

11.11 % Technical College (Green certificate + 2 years)

22.22 % other education????

Experience:

11.11 % up to 3 years

88.89 % more than 5 years

Work Profile: 66.67 % is using 100% of their time for advisory

22.22 % up to 75 % for Advisory

22.22 % for Teaching/education

11.11 % for other jobs

There seems to be a mess in the answers here, but knowing the profile of all the consultants, the profile is typical 75% direct consultancy and 25 Administrative and meetings. The only exception is head of departments which is typical opposite 25% consultancy and 75% Administrative job.

What will they be interested in studying?

66.67 % related to their present job

22.22 % into management

22.22 % in practical skills

33.33 % Advisory

22.22 % into career opportunities

The main interest in studying is concentrated into being better advisors and being better into their specialty as Plant production-Animal Husbandry, no experts which wasn't directly involved into advisory in eco farming haven't felled in the questionnaires.

Familiar with the organic standards:

11.11 % says fully familiar

44.44 % says some what comfortable

11.11 % says not to comfortable

33.33 % didn't answer

The answers is a bit choking knowing that one is considered as an expert and four of the experts is doing nothing else than advisory work to professional eco farmers. The reason can be that legislation and standards are changing that it takes a lot to say 100% familiar with both legislation and standards.

Computer and internet:

77.78 % is saying yes to have computer and 22.22 is not giving an answer. The consultants are all employed in the Advisory centre where all work places are having a computer and all employees are having a lap top as well.

88.89 % have access to internet
11.11 didn't answer

77.78% is very comfortable with the internet and
11.11% is somewhat comfortable and 11.11% didn't answer

88.89% is familiar with the internet and 11.11 didn't answer

On the question how comfortable are you in using the internet
55.56 % is very comfortable
33.33 % is somewhat comfortable and 11.11 % didn't answer

In the frequent use of the internet
55.56 % is using it daily from home
44.44 % from the advisory centre
22.22 % from laptop during consultancy on farm location

**In the use of software programmers excel were having the highest score
88.89 % word 77.78 % power point 66.67 and access the lowest with 44.44 %**

Where have the consultants received some training and courses?

88.89 % have had courses in compliance with legislative requirements
77.78 % in Satisfying environmental obligations
22.22 Compliance with EU schemes and funding
33.33 % in both communication and in business planning

Half of the consultants have received training less than a year ago and the other half more than three years ago and 88.89 % consider it very important to receive some training.

22.22% have done a distance training course and
11.11 % have done a course over the internet

Top 5 Topics for training the next 5 years

Teamwork with 77,78 % and Applying appropriate specialist and professional expertise to practical situations 66,667% Credibility with clients 55,56% Business development 55,56% and communication with farmers and colleagues 55,566 %

The consultants are specialists in following are

- 1 Eco expert (regional expert)
- 4 Eco advisers in animal husbandry
- 4 Eco advisers in field planning

The advisors working in all other areas haven't been asked, like business – construction and building accounting etc. this advisers are giving advise to all kind of farmers.

Farmers:

Ownership/ Time in business

Out of the group of farmers 90, % was owner of the farm.
The rest are tenants. 10%

Time into the business
50 % are full time occupied with their farm business.
50% are part time farmers.

Educational background

Half of them have the “green certificate”
20% Secondary education
10% University
10% College
40% Vocational training
20% Special courses

80% deals with arable farming (combined production)
70% Deals with Milk production (combined production)
10% Deals with Sheep (combined production)

Eco form

100 % Full organic for all
As far as understanding the standards and to implement the standards the majority did not have any problems in this context.
40% said completely familiar

50% almost completely familiar
10% somehow familiar

Farm size

10% up to 20 Ha
40 % between 20 and 50 Ha
50 % more than 50 Ha

Crops

The major crops is Pasture (clover grass) Oats – Barley -Rye – Alfalfa and wheat

Technical resources

All needed machinery is available on the farms like tractor and telehandler etc. Most of them is however using contractor for silage making and harvesting. One is indicating a Sprayer!!!!!! Hope it is not for use otherwise it is out of eco form status.

Computer and internet

100% have a PC on their farm
100 % have access to the internet.
50 % are very comfortable in the use of PC's.
40 % are somewhat comfortable in the use of PC's
10 % not comfortable

90 % are comfortable with the internet
10 % not

80% is using the internet daily
60 % is using internet from the farm

The most used software programmers are
90 % word
90 % Excel

Training

80 % says that it is important to receive training

20 % says no

20 % says that they have enough time

70 % very little time

10 % no time

Distance learning

None have ever done it

20 % have done a course over the internet???

80 % haven't

50 % show no interest to make use of internet in the future for a course

50 % not

Although that 60 % prepare to have a course together with professional colleagues in a centre.

The most important topics of training in the years to come were in the field of:

Satisfying environmental obligations

Managing and administration of the enterprise

Compliance with legislative requirements

Business planning

Financial planning

The needs of new knowledge and skills to acquire professional competence based on the questionnaires filled in ITALY

A. Expert/ Adviser

We received only 3 answers, therefore, the following comments are . About these 3 expert/advisers are 2 Part-time with a 67% of technical College studies level, and with more of 5 years of experiences (100%). All of these experts/advisers have familiar with internet (100%) and their consider important for their business to receive training courses (100%) over the Internet (100%) in particular on Good farming practice (100%), organic farming methods (67%), organic standards (67%) and introduction to organic production. For the next five years their identified the following important topics of training :

- Applying appropriate specialist and professional expertise to practical situations. (66.67 %)
- Identifying and achieving own training / development needs. (66.67 %)
- Working with others (teamwork) to deliver outcomes. (66.67 %)
- Communicating with farmers and colleagues -- oral. (66.67 %)

B. Farmers

We recorded in total 45 answers.

- 69% of the farmers → Owner occupiers
 - 11% of the farmers → Partner
 - 7% of the farmers → Tenants
 - 13% of the farmers → Other (4%, family worker 2%, did not answer 7%)
-
- 73% of the farmers → full-time employed
 - 22% of the farmers → part-time employed
 - 5% of the farmers → seasonal employed
-
- 36% of the farmers → secondary education
 - 22% of the farmers → primary education

- 16% of the farmers → University
- 13% of the farmers → Technical college
- 9% of the farmers → vocational training
- 4% of the farmers → Specialized courses

Viticulture (38%), arable (36%), fruit (33%), horticulture (31%) are the main business farmers are involved.

Ecofarm status → 82% fully organic

Most of the farmers (72%) declares to be familiar with Organic Standards (scores 4 and 5).

Most of the farmers (84%) has a computer and has access to an Internet connection. Moreover, the farmers declare to feel sufficiently comfortable using computer and 71% of them declares to be familiar with the Internet. The software programmes farmers use are mainly Word Processor (e.g. Word) and Spread Sheet (e.g. Excel).

The principal tasks the farmers carry out on their farm are: harvesting (51%), waste treatment (49%), driving a tractor (40%), organic standards (38%), good farming practice (36%), organic farming methods (29%), weed control (33%), irrigation (27%), soil cultivation (27%), sowing (24%).

All the farmers (93%) consider important for their business to receive training courses but they have not enough time to spend for it (even if 78% of the respondents have already done training courses, particularly on use of computers (33%), soil cultivation and management (33%), organic farming methods (31%), organic standards (31%), food hygiene and safety (22%).

They have done course over the Internet only for a proportion of 11% indicating to be interested to follow a course over the Internet for a 38%.

Especially, they prefer to attend training courses by:

- 1) taught at a training centre, together with other professionals in your sector (71 %)
- 2) distance, over the Internet (16 %)
- 3) taught at your own farm / business / enterprise (13 %)

According to the questionnaire, farmers are interested on the following topics:

- Organic farming methods (64 %)
- Good farming practices (60 %)
- Food hygiene and safety (44 %)
- Organic standards (44 %)
- Soil Cultivation and management (42 %)
- Weed control (33 %)
- Introduction to organic production (27 %)
- Use of computers (22%)
- Livestock feeding (20 %)
- Maintenance of farming structures (20%)
- Irrigation (16 %)
- First aid on the farm (11 %)
- Sowing (9 %)
- Harvesting (9%)
- Waste treatment (2 %)

**The needs of new knowledge and skills to acquire professional competence
based on the questionnaires filled in SLOVAKIA**

A. Expert/ Adviser

7 answers

- 7,14% fulltime experts,
- With University education 85.71 %
- More than 5 years of experience in agricultural sector have 85.71 %
- Experts are interested in equal share 28.57 % in following areas of study:

- related to management skill development
- related to practical skill
- related to advisory / teaching methods which open new career opportunities.

- 57% of experts are fully organic experts
- Completely familiar with organic standards are 71,43 % of experts
- 85,71 % have a computer on the farm
- 42,86 % have access to an internet connection on the farm the rest 28,57% have internet connection at home and 14,29% in both places
- 42,86% experts feel very comfortable by using internet

Experts mostly use word proc and ppt - 85,71%

Experts received training in following fields :

Organic farming methods -57,14%

Food hygiene , safety , Weed control and food farming practice and organic standards received -42,86%

Use of computers and livestock handling and welfare state -28,57% of experts .

As for training the less courses received experts in managing and administrating the enterprise as well accounting , finances, people management.. -14,29%

85,71 % of experts state they had training course less than 1 year ago .

All experts consider training courses important. Reality is that 42,86 state that they have time enough and 42,86% have little time for attending course.

28,57 % of experts were involved in distance training course via internet . 57 % state that they are not interested in internet training course –they prefer learning in a training centre together with other professionals in the sectors. As to the ability

to be up to date ,28,57% of experts think that it is rather difficult in area Finance and record keeping .Easier is in the field –production system , marketing trends and prices.

Recommended topics for training in the next 5 years are:

- Good farming practice 71,43%
- Organic farming methods 57,14%
- Organic standards , sowing ,harvesting and weed control 42,86%

Experts provide advice mainly 28,57% in field Viticulture, horticulture-vegetables ,less in fruit -14,29% .

Most -71,43% provide advice in the field compliance in organic standards and 57,14% in the field compliance with legislative requirements .

In Managing and administrating the enterprise provide advice in 42,86%. The most of experts received training in above mentioned field .Principal practical tasks on which experts provide training are Food hygiene and safety (57,14%), Weed control and good farming practice (42,86%). All experts received training on the previous fields.

B. Farmers

At the present we have 11 answers.

From the analysis of the 11 answers received until now:

- 45,45% of the farmers → owner occupiers
- 9,09% of the farmers → owner occupiers - tenants
- 27,27% of the farmers → employee
- 90,91% of the farmers → full-time employed
- 9,09% of the farmers → part-time employed
- 18,18% of the farmers → secondary education
- 81,82% of the farmers → university education

81,82 farmers are involved in arable type of business

54,55% farmers are involved in beef cattle type of business

Ecofarm status → 45,45% fully organic

Most of the farmers (45,45 %) declares to be familiar with Organic Standards.

90,91 % find it easy to implement organic standards in to there business

All 100% farmers state that have computer on farm and has access to an Internet connection. Moreover, the farmers declare to feel sufficiently comfortable using computer and are familiar with the Internet. The software programmes farmers use are mainly Word Processor (e.g. Word) ppt and (e.g. Excel).

All the farmers consider important for their business to receive training courses .90% attend some of course .The most courses they have was from the field : compliance with organic standards and satisfying environmental obligation -63.64% The respondents have done also training courses, particularly on food farming practices and managing 54,55%. They have not done any course over the Internet but 54,55% indicated to be interested to follow a course over the Internet.

Especially, they prefer to attend training courses by:

1) taught at a training centre, together with other professionals in your sector (63,64 %)

2) distance, over the Internet (18,18 %)

3)taught at your own farm / business / enterprise (18,18 %)

According to the questionnaire, farmers are interested on the following topics:

- Organic farming methods (72,73 %)
- Good farming practices (72,73 %)
- Organic standards (54,55 %)
- Manure and livestock selections and breeding (18,18%)

81,82% farmers would be interested in dealing into areas directly related to their current job.

The needs of new knowledge and skills to acquire professional competence based on the questionnaires filled in UNITED KINGDOM

Introduction

The eco-job-ap questionnaire was an integral part of the training needs analysis carried out for the Leonardo da Vinci Project. The aim was to identify the main issues relevant to eco-producers within the UK that should be addressed through the training programme.

Methodology

In total, 23 ecojob questionnaires were completed for the United Kingdom – 9 eco-expert, 10 eco-farmer, 2 enterprise manager and 2 farm workers. The survey was completed through a combination of farm visits or via a telephone interview. This provided the opportunity to explain and clarify questions and also to collect additional information over and above that contained in the structured questionnaire by way of background information.

The sample size was limited by budget and time constraints and, hence the findings are therefore not of a scale that could be considered to be fully representative of the eco-farming sector across the UK. However, it does provide an indicative picture of training need that can be further refined with time.

Results

The findings of the survey are summarised in the range of tables and charts for each category within the study under the categories of :

- 1.Eco-farmer
- 2.Eco-expert
- 3.Enterprise Manager
- 4.Farm worker

The majority of the farms within the study were owner occupied and a range of farm sizes were included, distributed throughout the UK. A number of common themes were evident from the results and the two main categories are outlined below.

Eco-farmer

70% of the interviewees in this category were owner occupiers with 60% of the sample being part time. 40% were fully organic with a further 30% being in transition to a fully organic system and 20% involved in integrated production. As such, the majority of the farmers were familiar with organic standards to some degree and approximately 50% indicated that they found it easy to implement the organic standards within their business. Beef and/or sheep were the most common enterprises.

The majority of the farmers interviewed within this group (90%) had a computer on the farm, all having an internet connection they could access. Of those with computers, 60% felt comfortable or very comfortable using ICT and, 70% felt comfortable using the internet. Most had used at least one software programme. When asked if they felt training was important to their business, 80% responded positively with 70% stating that they had very little time to attend training. None of the farmers interviewed had completed a distance learning or internet based course, although 60% responded that they might be interested in such training if available.

The 5 most important topics for training perceived by interviewees within the next 5 years were identified as:

- Business Planning (70%)
- Compliance with organic standards (60%)
- Identifying and compliance with funding sources including EU schemes (60%)
- Satisfying environmental obligations (50%)
- Setting up channels of distribution – marketing (40%)

Eco-expert

The eco-experts interviewed during the survey were predominantly in extension advisory or education related roles within the UK. They were characterised, by a relatively high base level of qualification, with 7 of the 9 interviewees holding University degrees. A significant number also had some role in managing a production unit, which in 66.7% of cases was fully organic with a further 11.1% in transition. The majority were familiar with organic standards, although only 44.4% found them easy to implement within the business.

89% of those interviewed had access to the internet and felt confident in using computers in general and, the internet in particular. Two thirds of the respondents in this group considered training as important for their business, however all indicated that it was extremely difficult to find the time to attend courses. Only 1 of the 9 respondents had completed an internet based e-learning

course, although 55.56% indicated that they might be interested in such a course if it was relevant to their business needs.

The 5 most important topics of training in the next 5 years within this group were identified as:

- Applying appropriate specialist and professional expertise to practical situations (33.3%)
- Design and delivery of training and education programmes (33.3%)
- Supporting people through the training/development programme (33.3%)
- Monitoring and evaluating progress (33.3%)
- Identifying business development/change needed (22.22%)

Additional points raised during discussions

The attraction of internet based learning for the majority of those interviewed centred on increasing flexibility in terms of time and place of study. Most respondents indicated during discussions that, they would if possible, like units to be stand alone so that study could be completed at a time that suited the farming cycle. Bite sized learning modules of 1-1.5 hours were preferred as most of the interviewees had outdoor lifestyles and were not used to long periods of study, particularly computer based.

The need to keep units short, simple and practical was also reinforced by respondents during discussions. The objective was not the acquisition of knowledge, but rather to acquire the practical skills needed to develop their business further.

The decision to switch from conventional to organic production is complex and dependent on a series of interrelated business factors. Feedback from the survey suggested that potential converters in particular would appreciate a blended learning approach with business and technical mentoring support.

Potential converters were generally keen to work as part of a group in the early stages of conversion and indicated that they would find it particularly valuable learning from the experiences of others and, perhaps having the opportunity to visit existing units and participate in group based study tours. As such, experience within NI has led to the incorporation of the following activities within organic training courses available to farmers:

- Half and full-day seminars and Advisory events
- Half and full day farm walks, workshops
- Development Group meetings (group of approx 12 farmers)

- “Walk the Supply Chain” days - marketing
- Study visits and tour

Feedback during the study also indicates that the following principles are important to all considering a switch to organic production:

- Implications of change in practices relating to certification body needs and

requirements

- The pathways through organic conversion
- Changes in farming practices required to gain organic certification
- Implications of conversion for the business
- Market outlets and potential for organic produce

Existing eco-producers were mainly interested in issues related to the expansion or development of their business such as marketing, finance, environment and sources of grant aid.

Conclusion

The survey provides an indication of training needs in relation to the eco-farming sector within the UK. It highlights the potential for an e-learning or blended learning approach to address the training and development needs of the target groups and, reinforces the necessity to ensure that course content and module design are directly relevant to the needs of the business, and are sufficiently flexible and practical to maximise impact and encourage participation.