

# **Project AGRI-TRANS: Transparency in agricultural vocational training**

European Standards using the example of livestock farming (pig farming)  
29.09.2008 – 30.09.2010

## **National report on general and agricultural vocational training system**

United Kingdom (UNITE)

Presented at the  
regional conference in Amsterdam



GD Bildung und Kultur

Programm für lebenslanges Lernen

## Overview of agricultural employment in England and Wales

Agricultural output represents less than 1% of GDP. About 130,000 workers are employed full or part-time in the industry.

A seasonal, largely migrant workforce of some 250,000 is employed by the industry. The majority are employed harvesting seasonal crops; flowers, salad vegetables, strawberries, potatoes and other field scale vegetables. A minority are recruited through agencies for stock work on farms. Many from Eastern Europe, especially Poland and Czech Republic.

The pig sector employs < 2,000 full and part time workers. Only 365 units employ paid labour. The majority of pig units are outdoor with indoor intensive finishing only. There has to be noted that national animal welfare rules are tighter than on continental farms.

## Working conditions

Wages and condition in all sectors are controlled by statutory annual agreement of the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB) where they are negotiated between employers (National Farmers Union), trade union (Unite) and Independent Board members.

A basic week is about 39hrs work. But an average week for working staff is about 46hrs long.

Basic pay rates range from £5.74- £8.45 depending on skills, experience and responsibility. Overtime rates grew 150% (time and a half).

## Vocational Training in UK in relation to Pig Breeding

Overall control of national qualifications and Certificates of Competence belongs to the Quality and Curriculum Authority (QCA = GOD)<sup>1</sup>. They approve both National Occupational Standards for skills and Qualifications to demonstrate competence.

Programmes approved by QCA are eligible for funding by the Learning & Skills Council (LSC)<sup>2</sup>, although not all approved programmes get funding (see later)

The first step in developing COCs and Qualifications is to determine the skills needed. This is carried out by Skills Councils, specific to each sector. The Sector Skills Council for Pig Breeding is LANTRA SSC<sup>3</sup>. They, with industry, determine the skills needed to carry out particular jobs.

Once these were approved by QCA, the ABs offered the qualifications to Agricultural Colleges and Training Providers. Lantra Awards tend to work with Colleges, while NPTC tend to be more practical land based local delivery.

## Certificates offered for pig workers

Lantra Awards offer the following certificates for pig workers:

- Training in pig production
- The causes, prevention and treatment of infertility in pigs
- Pregnancy testing in sows
- Practical gilt selection
- Care of boars and effective service
- Serve sow/gilt using al

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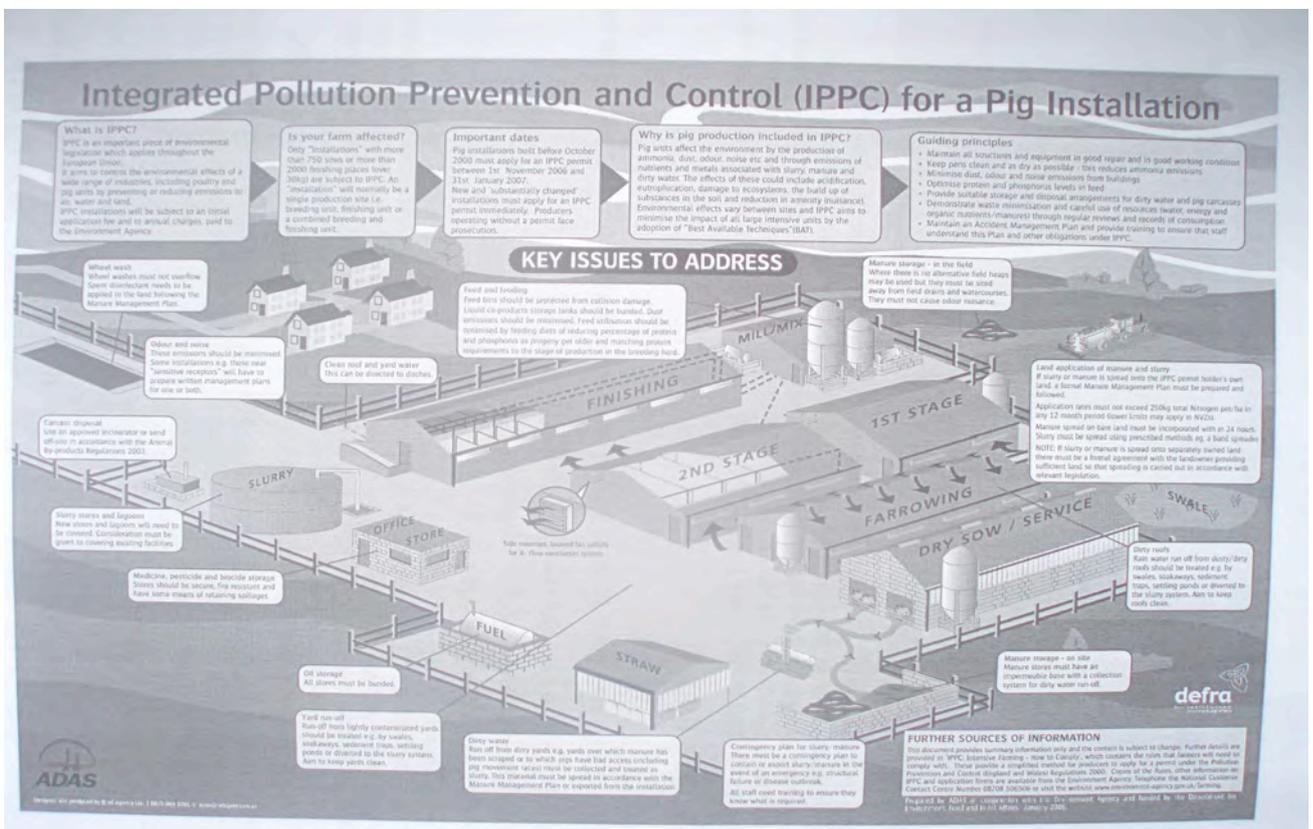
<sup>1</sup> <http://www.qca.org.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.lantra.co.uk/>

- Service house management
- Aiming at maximum conception
- Monitoring performance to solve problems
- Outdoor pigs – establishing the successful herd
- Outdoor pigs – overcoming problems in the farrowing paddock
- Feeding the productive sow
- Rearing more weaners in the finished herd
- Feeding for performance in the finished herd
- Overcoming problems in farrowing
- Condition scoring sows
- ADAS sow condition scoring system
- Sow feedings, condition and performance
- Disease control and prevention in the pig unit
- Lameness in pigs
- Reducing piglet mortality
- Basic principles of pig health and disease control
- Codes of recommendations for the welfare of livestock – pigs
- Better pig management through the welfare code
- Targeting for performance in the pig herd
- Ear marking young pigs
- Controlling the pigs environment

Apparently these courses developed particularly with regard to the environment. This is due to the new requirements being put on the industry from environmental constraints. Only in the past few years have UK farms had to comply with industrial waste regulations and other environmental laws, such as pollution control. The following graphic is how pig units would be affected by IPPC (Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control).



### **Health & Safety in Pig Industry**

As a useful example for how the vocational learning system can work for trades unions, we can examine how RAAW worked with the Employers NFU and Lantra SSC to develop a set of skills to improve the health and safety of agricultural /horticultural enterprises including pig breeding.

We took this route as we are very concerned at the high rate of fatalities in agriculture twice the next worst workplace – construction<sup>4</sup>, while there was little legal inspections and we are not recognised to have roving reps.

We first developed a “strategic agreement” where we agreed what H&S functions could be carried out in small enterprises such as pig breeding. See [www.epaw.co.uk/farm](http://www.epaw.co.uk/farm) for details of that agreement.

Once these H&S skills were agreed, under the careful eye of QCA, these were passed to Awarding Bodies (ABs) for them to turn into qualifications. The two main Awarding Bodies involved with land-based industries are Lantra Awards<sup>5</sup> (separate from Lantra SSC) and NPTC<sup>6</sup> – part of City & Guilds. For the H&S qualifications, we also worked with industry and H&S Executive to decide which skills were appropriate to respective vocational levels – 2 (all workers) 3 (skilled workers) and 4 (managers).

Since their introduction about 1000 people have completed the level 2 certificate, with about 30-40 completing the level 3 and a handful for the management qualification.

Click for [free online learning materials](#)

### **Wages Board: Qualifications in Pig Breeding and Pay**

Workers are graded into 6 categories to reflect skill, experience and responsibility.

Grade 1	No skills manual work.
Grade 2	Standard worker, 1 recognised competence.
Grade 3	Lead worker, 4 competences some sector specific.
Grade 4	Craft Worker, 8 competencies, nvq 3 level skills many specific.
Grade 5	Supervisory grades, supervise workers implementing management decisions.
Grade 6	Farm Management grade, responsible for farm or individual enterprise.

A worker can pass from G1-G4 by acquiring competencies or qualifications as part of continuous professional development. Recognised skills relevant to the sector of employment result in upgrading and pay increases. Levels G5 and G6 result in pay increases by employer appointments only.

Sector profiles with qualification requirements are set out as appendices to the annual AWB order. For a Pig sector worker these would include:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Competencies</b>	<b>Specific skills</b>
1	Non	Non
2	1	Non
3	4	Basic stockman ship and animal welfare
4	8	Pig husbandry skills Safe use veterinary medicines (pigs) Pig unit supervision

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.healthandsafetypractices.co.uk/level3/lo\\_1\\_understand\\_how\\_peoples\\_knowledge\\_experience\\_and\\_attitude\\_affect\\_their\\_perception\\_of\\_risk.html](http://www.healthandsafetypractices.co.uk/level3/lo_1_understand_how_peoples_knowledge_experience_and_attitude_affect_their_perception_of_risk.html)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.lantra-awards.co.uk/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nptc.org.uk/>

## The particular part in Appendix 2 of AWBO

Other Certificates	Beef			Milk			Sheep			Pigs			Machinery			Product Hortic.			Forestry		
Certificate in Working Safely in Agriculture/Horticulture (NPTC or Lantra Awards)	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○			
Certificate in Controlling Risks to Health and Safety in Agriculture/Horticulture (NPTC or Lantra Awards)	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○			
Certificate in Managing People's Health and Safety in Agriculture/Horticulture (NPTC or Lantra Awards)	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○			

Other Accredited learning (Quality assured by a nationally recognised certifying body)	Beef			Milk			Sheep			Pigs			Machinery			Product Hortic.			Forestry		
First Aid at Work (3/4 days course)	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○	✓	○	○

\*\* Fork Lift Truck Operations: Accepted evidence would be either the NPTC Certificate of Competence in Fork Lift Truck Operations, or a certificate of training from one of the accrediting bodies recognised in the Approved Code of Practice for Rider Operated Lift Trucks

## Standards

Increasingly in the UK there are new voluntary standards for food and farm production. For instance there is Little Red Tractor<sup>7</sup> that assure the quality of the product. There are many variations, including LEAF which takes in environmental concerns<sup>8</sup>, and many retailers now have their own standards e.g. Tesco's Nature's Choice<sup>9</sup>. All these standard go beyond mere legal compliance and reflect what are considered the concerns of consumers.

Pig farmers in UK are a bit fed up of having these "higher" standards, particularly for animal welfare<sup>10</sup>. Yet enough of our consumers eat pig meat from other countries who do not conform to these standards. Trade unions have a key role in deciding how we work to these higher standards, and what role should we play with them. It is possible that trade union representatives could use the standards as checklists for themselves. RAAW has discussed the idea of a Little Red Tractor DRIVER scheme which would be a standard that would be as concerned with worker safety aspects as food safety concerns.

However, we have managed to introduce these qualifications into an "Ethical" standard adopted by four of UK's big retailers – Marks & Spencer, Co-operative Retail, Tesco and Waitrose. This is run by the Ethical Trading Initiative<sup>11</sup>. We have added the following paragraph to encourage those in these retail supply chains to encourage the uptake of these qualifications..

### SHOULD DO (ETI Base Code)

All ETI requirements are achieved by meeting the legal requirements above. However, guidance and information from the Health and Safety Executive is available to assist you in achieving best practice, and ensuring that you and all of your workers are safe both at work, and travelling to and from work.

Issue	Type of worker covered	What you need to do – Requirements	HOW to do it – what it looks like in practice (tick the box <input type="checkbox"/> when you have completed the action)
3.15 Training	All workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The HSE has developed learning qualifications to National Standards of competence for workers and managers, which enable them to acquire the skills and knowledge to maintain good H&amp;S practices. Gaining one of the qualifications entitles workers to raise their grade, and therefore salary.</li> <li>The training is provided in stages and it is possible to complete stages online.</li> <li>By incentivising workers and managers to improve their understanding of health and safety, it is possible to ensure that the workforce is trained and skilled and to better reduce any risks present in the working environment.</li> <li>For more information about the qualifications and training, and how this can benefit your workplace follow this link: <a href="http://www.healthandsafetypractices.co.uk/learn/">http://www.healthandsafetypractices.co.uk/learn/</a></li> <li>Information about pay grades can be found here: <a href="http://www.healthandsafetypractices.co.uk/wagesboard.html">http://www.healthandsafetypractices.co.uk/wagesboard.html</a></li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that workers and management are aware of the training opportunities that are available to them. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage workers to participate in training activities and qualifications. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that workers are compensated accordingly when they have completed a qualification. <input type="checkbox"/> It may be necessary to focus on supervisors and managers before offering training to workers. This will ensure that the workplace sees the benefit of more training, whilst reducing the initial financial impact on the employer. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that workers are able to take the training should they wish to. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a funding system which allows workers and management to undertake training without incurring financial costs themselves.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.redtractor.org.uk/site/REDT/Templates/Home.aspx?pageid=1&cc=GB>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.leafuk.org/leafuk/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.tescofarming.com/tnc.asp>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/farmed/pigs/index.htm>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ethicaltrade.org/index.shtml>

## Qualification offers concerning initial and continued vocational training

It is now some 2½ years since the Pig Industry approved the skills strategy consultation document "*from Sustainability to Sustained Ability*". It is pleasing to report that the pig industry now has an absolutely first class skills development "offer" that is the envy of some and admired by all. These include:

- > **Certificates of Competence** - designed by the industry with the working stockman firmly in mind but fully accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. These certificates currently cover 3 levels - Basic Stockmanship and Welfare, Pig Husbandry and Pig Unit Supervision and operation.
- > **Training Manuals** - for trainees and trainers alike. These manuals are designed to be used by people working towards the certificates of competence but are also a valuable source of information for any pig business.
- > **Pig Industry Professional Register (PIPR)** - the pig industry's own Continued Professional Development scheme. Open to all in the industry at 6 different levels - New Entrant, Skilled Stockman, Supervisor, Manager/Owner, Adviser/Associate and Pig Veterinary Society. PIPR records and recognises **all** personal development activity be it attending formal training courses, attending a BPEX technical meeting, an internal company technical meeting, veterinary visit or whatever.
- > **Trainee of the Year Award** - now in its second year as a national award, this recognises the development of skills and contribution made to businesses by individuals. It also recognise the commitment of their employers to skills development.
- > **Nuffield Award** - the pig industry has its very own Pig Industry Nuffield award jointly sponsored by BPEX and Merial. This annual award is open to all from right across the spectrum of the industry right from production to processing. It will allow the successful applicant to make a study of some aspect of the pig industry anywhere in the world with the intention of delivering benefits to their own business or business that work in and the UK industry as a whole.
- > **Management Development Programmes for Existing Managers and Supervisors Leading to Formal Accreditation** - these courses are already well established, highly respected and run by Cedar Associates. But, whereas, in the past perhaps some people may have attended these courses on an *ad hoc* basis, people will soon be able to effectively link the courses that they attend and have their participation recognised and accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management.
- > **Management Development Scheme for Graduates** – is in its final stages of development but will offer newly employed graduates and their employers an opportunity to quickly build on the academic and technical skills by fast tracking them with management development activities - formal training courses, being part of a group of similar people from across the industry and "parachuting" in to many of the different sectors that make up our industry.
- > **Training Groups / Pig Clubs** - it can be seen from the vast array of potential skills development activity that there is also a need to ensure that producers are able to participate. One of the key elements of this has been the development of training groups or pig clubs. There are now over 20 of these across the country.
- > **Skills Development Manager** - the BPEX board recognised the crucial importance of skills development and appointed a full time Skills Development Manager.

## Implications for Trade Unions

The downside of the development of the outlined vocational training system is that it is difficult to understand the language of vocational learning and the institutions involved are quite complicated. These H&S qualifications for Pig Breeding took at least 5 years to develop. The other difficulty in

negotiating this territory is that it is constantly changing. During this period the Sector Skills Councils were reorganised from about 70 down to about 20, and the Learning & Skills Council changed its funding regime.

Hence trade union representatives have to be well versed in the learning language. In UK we have Learning Representatives<sup>12</sup> who know this terrain, so that is useful. But even so the length of time to introduce changes would be substantial. This contradicts how the nature of our work may change over the next few years. We are looking at a 20 year period for change, where climate change, oil & water constraints will all kick in. We need to look at the likely skills ahead – particularly environmental and computer skills, and how they will become part of the future skills set in agriculture.

Can trade unionists help speed up the process? Perhaps first by forecasting changes and skills needed and then making the qualification process more transparent and flexible.

The wider role of trade unions in relation to these emerging standards needs further discussion. Standard such as Global GAP<sup>13</sup> have implications for farm employees everywhere. Who ensures that decent conditions are being met? We can see the need for skills to be developed by trade union representatives to inspect/check/use these standards for benefit of our members. An international standard we could all work to would be the World Banks Social & Environmental Sustainability Standards<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/about/learn-2395-f0.cfm>

<sup>13</sup> GlobalGAP for Pigs [http://www.globalgap.org/cms/front\\_content.php?idart=144&idcat=48□=1&client=1](http://www.globalgap.org/cms/front_content.php?idart=144&idcat=48□=1&client=1)

<sup>14</sup> for more on World Bank Standards see [www.epaw.co.uk/CSR](http://www.epaw.co.uk/CSR)