‘Good work’ in food, farming and rural communities: first look at Populus polling data

We are keen to explore what a focus on ‘good work’ can contribute to the strategic discussion of how to build a workforce fit for the future in agriculture and horticulture.

Does a person-centred perspective – understanding what people want and need from their working lives – reveal new opportunities to develop attractive opportunities for good work in farming, rural communities and the food sector?

Could such an approach highlight latent features of land-based work that are potentially attractive to young people, or place-based opportunities to develop careers across sectors?

This note summarises initial observations. Further analysis will follow. Please do not circulate.

Who responded to our survey

This survey of young people aged 16-24 had 1,006 respondents, across a representative spread of social groups and educational attainment level.
Thinking about your ideal working situation, how important or not are the following? (% important)

- I have a secure job: 85%
- I am well remunerated financially: 80%
- My employer shows they care about me: 75%
- People respect me for what I do: 70%
- I gain a rich variety of experience: 65%
- I can develop specialist professional or technical skills: 60%
- I can progress to senior jobs within my chosen industry: 55%
- I enjoy being part of a team: 50%
- My work makes a positive difference to society: 45%
- My work stretches me mentally: 40%
- My work makes a positive difference to the environment: 35%
- My work challenges me physically: 30%
- I spend a lot of time outdoors: 25%

Basic foundations of ‘good work’

- Aligned with policy & strategic priorities facing agriculture

A focus for current Agri-skills Strategy

This expression of ‘purpose’ is not the priority, but still important to most

Lowest rated but still important for 28%

Imagine you have two opportunities for work that are the same in every way but one. Which would you choose?

Just under half prefer the bright lights...

...and even a quarter in cities would rather choose the countryside

Welcome news for less familiar sectors like farming

Imagine you have two opportunities for work that are the same in every way but one. Which would you choose?

For your ideal working situation, how willing or unwilling would you be to do the following?

- Willing to join the ‘gig economy’
  - Try a type of work I hadn’t considered before
  - Have more than one job
  - Accept short term contracts
  - Commute for more than 45 minutes each way
  - Earn less than my friends
  - Live away from my friends and family
  - Live in an area with fewer services like shops and restaurants or...
  - Live in an area with poor public transport
  - Live in an area that is noisy or polluted
  - Live in an area with poor broadband

Unwilling, Willing