



“You are at a recruitment fair. Convince the young people attending that entering the UK dairy industry would be a good career choice”

Ask any farmer what their number one problem within their business is at the moment and 90% of the time they say staff. The main problem used to be milk price. Finding staff not only to work on farms but in the wider industry has always been difficult. However with ever advancing technology and the range of jobs that are now easily accessible to anyone from any background this is all starting to change. Not only is it an ever evolving job there is also a massive social side to the dairy industry which is opening the doors to get to know people from all over the world.

The most exciting part of the dairy industry at the moment is the way that the technology is advancing. This is vital in the new age of dairy farming by becoming the extra member of staff you didn't know you needed. The introduction of management software systems like Uniform, Dairy Comp and Bovisync make managing a herd of cows easier. The different software systems allows you to set up a number of different protocols to help gain the most out of your herd. One of the pieces of technology that I have found most important is Cowmanager. This is one of many ways to monitor the health and wellbeing of all the cows in the herd. When we have visitors on the farm they are always surprised how all of my cows are essentially connected to the internet and I can monitor them from wherever by an app on my phone. This part of the dairy industry I feel appeals to young people the most as they have been brought up with technology and don't know a world without it. There is always new hi-tech products appearing on the market so there is always something new to try out. This could be a new management software or a new robotic scraper that can scrape sand. This is always changing and I feel that young people would find this interesting as its bringing new ideas into farming. I feel that a lot of people outside the farming industry don't realise how modern farming has become and this I believe could be key with convincing young people.

Another reason that I feel would attract young people into the industry is how fast paced it is. Technology and consumer needs is always moving forward and this is key to the dairy industries fast paced nature. Genomic testing is a good example of this. It is one of the easiest and quickest ways to get raw data to see if you are getting what your trying to breed for. The way everything keeps evolving so quickly means you never know what the next game changing piece of technology will be. This fast moving environment however means that it can be quite challenging but as a young person myself I know that young people would enjoy the challenge. Additionally I feel this fast paced environment means that there is a lot of opportunity for progress. It means that young people coming into the industry will always have aims to accomplish making the job exciting.

Farming is so versatile and I feel this would be another way of encouraging young people into the industry. You are able to tailor the way you farm to exactly how you'd like. Some dairy farms have taken on a more seasonal approach in order to achieve maximum milk production solely of grass in the spring. Although the work on these farms is very intense during the calving period as all the calving's take place within 6 weeks they do have very quiet times in the winter where no milking takes place. I feel like this would appeal to young people as they are challenged through calving periods making sure they are achieving their margins to produce the milk in this short window. However even though there is a very intense times there is the period in the winter where it is very quiet. In this time there is opportunity for extended travel. I feel this would appeal greatly to young people and block calving is one of the only ways in dairy farming where this is possible. This would encourage young people as they would come back into the calving period energised and looking forward to the new calving season ahead.

Another way of milking cows and one of the most exciting ways at the moment is through robots. This is a more relaxed way of milking cows but you have a lot of data available to you. For example you constantly can see the cell count readings from each quarter and how many times a cow has been milked. The cows can choose when they want to be milked so you end up with a more relaxed shed environment. I feel that milking through robots would appeal to young people as it is a unique way of milking cows. Robotic milking is very data driven. You have to keep a close eye on all the notifications and alerts that the robot is flagging up to you. Also because you aren't seeing the cows twice a day through the milking parlour you have to be vigilant and walk through the shed a number of times during the day. This I feel would appeal to young people that are keen to join the industry as you have the opportunity to really understand your cows. When milking through robots you take out the fixed milking times and this helps make the job more flexible. This flexibility would appeal greatly to young people as they can still spend time with friends and do a job that they love.

It has never been easy to start your own dairy farm. Most farms have been passed down from generation to generation. With the value of land going up following the demand for housing it is even more difficult to buy affordable land. However you

President's Medal Award 2022

Pippa Tudor



don't have to work on a dairy farm to be a part of the industry there are many other roles that are key. For example you could be: nutritionalist's, vet tech's, a dairy engineer, consultants, work for government agencies and environmental roles to name a few. This broadens the opportunities for young people to explore the different enterprises available. These jobs are important to help keep a dairy farm running and farmers would be lost without them.

People that work in these roles supporting dairy farmers are very important but you can't forget the incredible skill set you develop whilst working on a farm. When you wake up in the morning you have no idea what sort of day you are going to have. You start the day with a plan and majority of the time the plan changes dramatically within an hour of stepping out the front door. Due to this it means that over time you start to develop not only the skills to work with and manage cows but to support the management of the farm from different angles. For example you will learn to become a plumber, a mechanic and an accountant to name a few. Social media has also had an impact on farming and has become a great tool to market dairy farming. By doing this you can learn great marketing skills in order to promote the many positives of dairy farming. These different skills I feel would become vitally important and exciting to a young person working in the industry. They are in a job where you are constantly having to push themselves and learn new skills to develop their career.

My final reason that I feel that coming into the dairy industry would be a good choice is the social side to it. As I mentioned earlier you are working with so many different people from different background's which really help build your confidence and means that you always have a number of people to ask advice from. Young Farmers is the biggest social group within farming which currently has 22,000 members nationally. This is an incredible group of young people who are all in the same boat when it comes to their job. This means that you have a lot of people going through the same problems you are and you are all able to give each other different advice.

You also have different breed societies which are hugely important in encouraging young people across the industry. By being in these different clubs you can take part in competitions nationally.

Holstein Young Breeders have a weekend rally in which young members take part in competitions over a weekend in August. These weekends are not only to meet up with friends from all over the country but to learn new skills like stock judging, reason giving, linear judging, clipping, washing, showmanship and photographing skills. This means that there is something for everyone. Even though this is highly competitive everyone is there just to have a good time.

Within these different clubs there are different ways of travelling across the world on exchange programs. Young farmers offer a range of different travel opportunities including Rural Youth Europe Seminars which bring together young people from around 20 countries to help promote and gain skills on rural issues. They also have a scholarship program to New Zealand when they sponsor 4 young people to have a three month working placement at a ranch.

These travel opportunities not only help you to acquire contacts from all over the world but also learn new skills. This industry means you can fly across the world learn new things and are able to bring them back home and apply them to your own farm.

When you see the amount of young people at these events it is encouraging that the industry is in safe hands.

In conclusion I feel that the dairy industry would be a good career choice for a young person as it is an exciting place to work in. Its ability to constantly evolve and challenge young people keeps it interesting. Not only is it giving young people the opportunity to gain new skills it's helping them create a group of like-minded friends from all over the world.