

your guide to being a host farm

All our host farmers and mentors on the **Future Grower** scheme believe passionately in nurturing the next generation of organic farmers and growers and teaching them the craft of organic growing.

Here we explain what is expected of host farms participating in the scheme.

Training and mentoring

As the Traineeship and Apprenticeship are work-based training programmes, most of the training is 'on the job' – on your farm or holding. The rest is provided either by the Soil Association or arranged by the trainees or apprentices, with our support.

As trainees and apprentices are paying to participate in the scheme it is essential that host farms recognise a commitment to provide training, support and mentoring which may go further than that provided for casual employees. All trainees/apprentices must be given an induction into their role which will include what they can expect to learn during their placement and how and when mentoring will take place.

Host farms are expected to provide on-going and regular mentoring from the start of the placement. This may happen weekly but we recommend that it averages out as:

Trainees 2 hours a month

Apprentices 4 hours a month

Guidelines on how to use the mentoring sessions are provided.

Contracts, pay and conditions

The trainee/apprentice is employed by the host farm and as such should have a contract of employment which details pay, hours, holiday etc.

The host farm is responsible for paying your trainees'/apprentices' wages and ensuring that their pay and conditions are in line with the Agricultural Workers Order 2012. Please see our Guidelines on pay and conditions for details and sources of further information.

Employment must be for at least 30 hours per week with approximately 80% of time spent in horticultural activities. There may be some variation here due to weather or other circumstances, particularly outside of the growing season (within the winter months) however this must be in agreement with the trainee/apprentice.

Trainee/Apprenticeship agreement

A further agreement which sets out the responsibilities of the trainee/apprentice, host farm and the Soil Association is to be signed once the placement is confirmed.

Trial periods

The Soil Association recommends that the following trial periods are adopted:

Trainees 1 month

Apprentices 3 month

Mentoring should take place throughout the trial period to allow both parties to fully experience the trainee/apprentice/host relationship. At the end of these trial periods, the host farm needs to communicate to both trainee/apprentice and the Soil Association that the placement is confirmed.

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Host farm and organic mentor criteria

We recommend that a host farm and organic mentor should meet the following criteria:

Skills and experience

- Ability to encourage learning, inspire and enthuse
- Skilled grower with a minimum of five years' experience of organic growing
- Experience of managing and supervising paid staff or volunteers
- Ability and readiness to explain reasoning behind day-to-day tasks and bigger picture

Farm or holding criteria

- Growing to organic principles, with certification or other stated commitment
- Variety of crops produced for sale
- Able to allow trainee/apprentice to work in as many different areas of production as possible (eg soft and top fruit, protected cropping, propagation)
- Willing to integrate trainee/apprentice into the rest of your workforce
- Good health and safety procedures adhered to
- Commercially viable and likely to continue to be for current growing season (trainees) or next two years (apprentices)
- Commitment to employ trainee/apprentice according to AWO pay and benefits
- For apprentices you should also be able to involve apprentice in the business planning, budgeting and marketing as well growing

Steps to recruiting a trainee or an apprentice

1. Deciding to take on a trainee or apprentice

Please contact us or an existing host farm if you have questions about the Future Grower scheme.

2. Application

Complete the online [application form](#) to be a host farm. We may then contact you to discuss the scheme and your placement.

3. Advertise your placement

You will send us a job advert and we will promote your placement, asking applicants to apply directly to you.

4. Selecting your trainee or apprentice

You will shortlist, interview and decide who to take on. You may ask for references.

5. Your train or apprentice starts their trial period

Your trainee or apprentice will start their trial period and attend the seminars that are part of the scheme.

6. Confirmation of traineeship or apprenticeship

After the agreed trial period you will confirm their traineeship/apprenticeship, and the Trainee/Apprenticeship agreements will be signed.