

News Release
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*For immediate use*

**Quality Meat Scotland encourage farmers to help tackle the skills shortage**

In celebration of National Apprenticeship Week, Quality Meat Scotland is encouraging farmers to support pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programmes, which are important vehicles to steer young people onto agriculture’s career path.

Initiatives such as LANTRA’s Modern Apprenticeship programme and the Land Based Pre-Apprenticeship Pilot programme gives young people the chance to work on farms producing world class Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork.

Andrew Rodger, who runs a mixed farm in the Scottish Borders producing Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI, and has taken on two pre-apprentices so far. Andrew explains:

“It’s really difficult to get staff and you’re always hearing that no one young wants to come into the industry; but there are young people out there that do, but they need a chance to develop and that can only happen if there are farms willing to take them.

“It’s been a learning experience for me as the mentor as well as the apprentice. Having an apprentice really makes you think about farming practices, especially why you do what you are doing, as you have to explain your reasoning, particularly if they’re from a non-farming background.

“It’s extremely rewarding when you have managed to pass on your knowledge and see them taking it in. We had our early lambing in the first week of February and I didn’t think our apprentice would be that interested, but he was really keen and it was nice to see him learning.”

Demonstrating the benefits of the industry operating in some of the world’s strictest environmental and animal welfare standards, welcoming an apprentice or pre-apprentice on farm can help invigorate interest in farming as a career.

Kate Rowell, Chair of Quality Meat Scotland, said that while it might not appeal to everyone, bringing in a young person can help provide a fresh perspective.

“By training the next generation of farm workers, you’re benefiting the Scottish red meat industry as a whole, and if you enjoy working alongside a young person, then taking on a pre-apprentice or apprentice is absolutely for you.

“By welcoming a young person onto a Scotch Assured farm, they also get an understanding of the important role of Scotland’s whole chain assurance, which underpins the integrity of Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork.”

Andrew concluded by putting a challenge out there for farmers to tackle the labour skills shortage head on: “I would really encourage any farmer out there to think about taking on a pre-apprentice or apprentice.

“You do have to take a bit of time to teach them and you sometimes might think it would be easier doing it yourself, but it will be just as rewarding and worthwhile for you teaching the next generation.”

In 2019, the Land-Based Pre-Apprenticeship Pilot Programme (LBPAPP) was launched nationally, involving three Machinery Rings (Ringlink Scotland, Tarff Valley Services and Borders Machinery Ring) covering the South West, North East and South East Scotland. The programme is delivered with other partners including the Scottish Rural College (SRUC) and Borders College.

Recruitment for the 2021 Land-based Pre-Apprenticeship programme is underway, with a target of recruiting up to 60 pre-apprentices throughout Scotland. If you are interested in mentoring a young person please contact: Ringlink Scotland, Borders Machinery Ring or Tarff Valley Ltd.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors:**

QMS is the public body responsible for promoting the PGI labelled Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb brands in the UK and abroad and also promoting Scottish pork products under the Specially Selected Pork logo.

Please note that the use of the word Scotch in the Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI brands is correct and should not be substituted for an alternative such as Scots or Scottish. The history of the use of the word Scotch in this way, traces back to the 18th century.

QMS also helps the Scottish red meat sector improve its sustainability, efficiency and profitability and maximise its contribution to Scotland's economy.

The quality assurance schemes run by QMS cover more than 90% of livestock farmed for red meat in Scotland. They offer consumers in the UK and overseas the legal guarantee that the meat they buy has come from animals that have spent their whole lives being raised to some of the world’s strictest welfare standards.

Scotland’s beef, lamb and pork producers make an important contribution to the country’s economic, social and environmental sustainability, contributing over £2 billion to the annual GDP of Scotland and supporting around 50,000 jobs (many in fragile rural areas) in the farming, agricultural supply and processing sectors.

For more information visit www.qmscotland.co.uk or follow QMS on Facebook or Twitter.