Animals, Land and Environment

Do you like working outdoors in the fresh air, or like the idea of working with animals? You might enjoy working with engines or machinery or want to help save the world from the impact of global warming! If this all seems wide ranging, then you will find that this career area stretches across many disciplines, abilities and areas of expertise, from science or forestry to fishing or mechanics.

Lantra (the Sector Skills Council for food based and environmental businesses) have developed a new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) resource, which highlights how STEM is used within landbased, environmental conservation and aquaculture careers. This helps to demonstrate the range of careers available in these sectors.

What areas can I work in?

This career area is concerned with the natural world and appeals to those interested in animal care, the countryside, planting and landscaping, and the environment.

Jobs and courses are available in agriculture, aquaculture and fishing, arboriculture and forestry, horticulture and landscaping, earth studies, environmental and rural resource management, environmental services, forestry and working with animals.

To see the routes to getting into each of these sectors, take a look at our Career Pathway.

What kind of companies can I work for?

Possible employers include:

- gardening centres
- agricultural chemical manufacturing companies
- arable or livestock farms
- fisheries
- veterinary surgeries
- educational institutions
- stables and riding schools
- zoos and wildlife parks
- conservation trusts.

What's the job market like?

In many cases, job prospects can depend on where you live, or are prepared to live, as well as on the type of work you do and your qualifications.

In 2025, the Scottish Food and Drink Primary Production sector (which includes crop and animal production,

hunting and related service activities, and fishing and agriculture) was estimated to have a workforce size of 29,800 people, compared to 40,900 in 2024. The top job postings between July 2024 and June 2025 included farm workers and large goods vehicle drivers. Specialised skills and knowledge requested by employers in this period included: machinery; production process; environmental health and safety; forklift truck; auditing; and warehousing. [1]

Future demand in the mid term (2025-2028) forecasts employment to decline by 0.6% (200 people), although there could be demand for 7,300 people in the sector, primarily because of the need to replace workers leaving the market. It is also predicted that the top employing occupation in 2028 will be in skilled agricultural trades. [1]

According to the Royal Horticultural Society, environmental horticulture is essential to nature-based climate solutions, reporting that access to green spaces and gardening improves mental and physical wellbeing as well as strengthening communities by fostering social inclusion. This sector contributes £38 billion to the UK economy and supports over 722,000 jobs. By 2030, it could be worth £51.2 billion, supporting 763,000 jobs. [2]

Meanwhile, the timber industry makes a vital contribution to the Scottish economy. Forestry and timber processing accounts for £878 million of Gross Value Added (GVA) every year. It provides more than 34,000 jobs across the wood production, forest management, haulage and processing sectors. [3]

Looking at nature-based jobs as a whole, Nature Scot predicts further growth due to activities relating to meeting Scotland's net zero targets. Growth in jobs in nature-based sectors such as blue carbon, woodland planting and restoration and peatland restoration between now and 2030 is expected to be significant. [4]

Facts and figures

- In 2024 there were 6,097 workforce, 8,637 coaches and 40,473 volunteers working in the equestrian sector in the UK. [6]
- In 2025, the top employing regions for food and drink primary production were: Highlands and Islands – 7,800; Aberdeen City and Shire – 5,000; Tayside – 4,800; South of Scotland – 4,600.[1]
- In 2025, Scottish employment figures for the following occupations were: Skilled Agricultural and Related Trades – 30,400; Animal Care Services Occupations (excluding vets and vet nurses) – 9,600; Vets – 3,100; Conservation and Environment Professionals – 12,600. [5]
- The Scottish fishing industry value in 2024 was £734 million. This is the highest value (adjusted to 2024 prices) of the last ten years. [7]
- The real time median advertised salary for jobs in the Food and Drink Primary Production sector between July 2024 and July 2025 was £27,300 per year, an increase of £1,300 from 2024. [1]

Want to find out more?

You can find more information about careers and training pathways on the Lantra Scotland Careers website.

Sources

[1] Sectoral Skills Assessment: Food and Drink Primary Production, Skills Development Scotland (October 2025)

[2] State of Gardening Report 2025, Royal Horticultural Society

[3] The Timber Industry, Forestry and Land Scotland (April 2026)

[4] Nature-based jobs and skills, Nature Scot (April 2026)

[5] Annual Population Survey - Occupation by sex - Scotland, Nomis (December 2025)

[6] State of the Nation 2025, British Equestrian

[7] Scottish Sea Fisheries Statistics 2024, Scottish Government (27 February 2026)