Exploring calling to farming careers in the United Kingdom: a scoping review

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Exploring Calling to Farming Careers in the United Kingdom: A Scoping Review

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Abstract

Through a UK lens, this scoping review explores whether farming careers can be considered as a calling, and thus better understood through Work as Calling Theory (Duffy et al., 2018). A methodological approach aligned to Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage framework generated limited 'calling' focused literature in this space. However, studies meeting the inclusion criteria, which related to career choices, career motivation and/or career development in farming, display evidence of behaviours aligned to perceiving and living a calling: the discovery of meaning and purpose through work, passion, a sense of identity tied to work, barriers and challenges, and in some cases, a sense of burden related to living a calling. The authors suggest this is an area that warrants attention internationally to further investigate the need for practical and inclusive approaches to careers education, information, advice and guidance to facilitate the fulfilment of personal calling to farming careers.

Keywords: calling; farming; careers; guidance; SDG 2: Zero hunger; SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth.

Introduction

Internationally, theoretical and empirical literature about careers in agriculture is limited (McIlveen and McDonald, 2019). Yet, understanding the attractiveness, or otherwise, of farming careers, and the awareness and accessibility of farm work as a career option, is vital to the sustainability of the sector in each national context (c.f., National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2021) and across the globe. The principles of 'decent work' (SDG 8) in agriculture link to the endeavour towards 'zero hunger' (SDG 2), as enshrined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are international in scope (UN DESA, 2024), but it is essential to recognise that each country and region has its own unique agricultural eco-system (Dastagiri, 2017; Lillywhite et al., 2012), farm structures (Zagata and Sutherland, 2015) and legislative and policy landscapes, all of which mediate opportunities of access to work in the sector (Ryan, 2023). Such contexts provide bespoke lenses through which to explore agricultural careers.

Supporting new entrants to farming is deemed an 'increasingly important political and practical issue' (Zabko and Tisenkops, 2022, p.63) in European agriculture and more widely (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2021; Ryan, 2023). Yet efforts in Europe over the last twenty years, made available through European Union (EU) subsidies and related member state initiatives have met with some criticism as to the lack of practical support and affect to this end (Sutherland,

2023). Further, in a UK context, the agricultural industry continues to be characterised by ongoing structural change shaped by shifting socio-economic drivers and continual policy reform in the wake of Brexit[1]; the implications of which continue to impact access to opportunities for those seeking to enter the sector.

A variety of routes into the sector loosely define new entrant types, pathways that originate from two positions – those raised on a farm and those not (Creaney et al., 2023), each determined by the relationship with property and associated rights; access to land being a prerequisite to working in farming (Prince et al., 2022; Sutherland 2023). Entry points are therefore governed by the opportunities available to access land, capital and experience of work in the sector, challenges of inequality that have received much attention (Shortall and Marangudakis, 2022). However, despite these barriers, unequivocal in the literature is a determination on the part of new entrants to carve a pathway into farming. While motivations to enter the sector are reported as diverse, the presence of new entrants is widely acknowledged (c.f., Carolan, 2018; Sutherland and Calo, 2020) and there is "very little evidence of a shortage of young people interested in farming" (Sutherland, 2023, p.2).

It is against this backdrop that the authors specifically explore the nature of calling to agricultural roles in the UK. One third to a half of employees across a variety of occupational fields endorse the idea of there being a calling within their career (Dik et al., 2009, p. 626). However, there has been very limited exploration of working in agriculture as a calling, despite regular commentary in the mainstream agricultural press that many of those working in the sector perceive their work in this way. In her seminal paper (1973) on the Goals and Values of Farmers, Ruth Gasson alluded to a 'calling' inherent in farming occupations. However, in the subsequent 50 years there has been little academic focus on understanding farming careers through the lens of neoclassical calling, or via modern interpretations incorporating careers focusing on the greater good, or driven by individual passion (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2005).

In their Work as Calling Theory (WCT), Duffy et al. (2018) conceptualise calling as 'an approach to work that reflects seeking a sense of overall purpose and meaning and is used to help others or contribute to the common good, motivated by an external or internal summons' (2018, p.426). WCT configures three key aspects of work as calling. First, are the predictors of living a calling, acknowledging that a calling may be perceived by an individual, but without opportunity to follow this the calling may not be answered. Second, the variables that moderate and mediate the relationship between perceiving a calling to being able to live that calling, are reviewed, before, finally, considering the positive and potentially negative outcomes that result from living a calling.

The desire of people to get started in farming and the challenges that they face in so doing, have been recurrent themes in farming literature for decades and align with features of Duffy et al.'s (2018) WCT. The challenges facing newcomers to the agricultural sector, with farming or non-farming backgrounds (Creaney et al., 2023), remain intractable amid an ageing farming population and competing agricultural and non-agricultural demands for land. While the financial barriers inhibiting access to land and capital are well versed, more recently, the challenges of acquiring specific social and cultural skills attributed to a knowledge of farming and required to 'smooth' a way into the sector, have also received attention (Carolan, 2018).

A recent meta-analysis of young people's perceptions of agricultural careers across the world highlighted that young people keen to pursue an agricultural career, but who have no prospect of

[1] Following a referendum in 2016, the UK formally withdrew from the EU on 31 January 2020; commonly known as Brexit.

inheriting land, may move away from their desired path due to multiple complications relating to the acquisition of land, including expense, bureaucracy and risk (Consentino et al., 2023). With no way to navigate these challenges, agricultural ambitions become an 'unattainable dream' (p. 7). The issue does not solely affect those from non-agricultural backgrounds, the difficulties, or impossibility, of dividing an estate at inheritance affects land access for all (Coopmans et al., 2021). Traditions of primogeniture mean the significance of this challenge is frequently greater for women than men (Leslie et al., 2019; Price & Evans, 2009; Sutherland et al., 2023). Further complicating factors are presented as 'farming is less obviously understood as an occupation' (Shortall and Marangudakis, 2022, p.746) and more often navigated as a sector, potentially affecting the nature of careers-related support and understanding. Certainly, literature and research on farming careers is more commonly found in agriculturally-focused journals and publications than in careers-focused publications[2], potentially reinforcing the idea of farming as a sector rather than occupation with associated "embedded assumptions and biases" (Sutherland, 2023, p.7). This may also exacerbate issues related to limited agricultural careers studies (McIlveen & McDonald, 2019) with research only reaching an audience that is primarily already aware of careers within farming, rather than those with less understanding.

Subsequently, there are potential implications of the existence of calling to agriculture for careers education information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) to effectively support individuals who feel a calling to a field of work. Specific approaches may be needed to work with and advise those who experience a calling, with support focused on satisfying and fulfilling that calling (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007), rather than careers advice being willingly and consistently ignored due to the strength of calling, as suggested by Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas (2012). Careers theory has long considered the range of influences that exist around a person's career choice (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009) at different life stages (Mantler et al., 2022), but career theories that specifically incorporate calling are more limited. This paper seeks to draw attention to the notion of calling on two counts: firstly, through a scoping review, exploring whether farming careers, in a UK context, have previously been considered in terms of calling and secondly, the potential implications of this lens for related CEIAG.

Following a summary overview that highlights a potential connection between farming careers and calling, this paper reports the results of a scoping review methodology that explores whether UK farming careers can be considered as a calling and thus be better understood through the lens of calling theory. The discussion following the scoping review uses the three elements of Duffy et al.'s WCT to frame findings derived from a review of the literature meeting inclusion criteria. The paper concludes with recommendations intended to support practical and inclusive approaches to CEIAG which recognise and accommodate agricultural calling.

Scoping the potential of an agricultural calling lens

Perceiving a calling

When Duffy et al. (2018) consider predictors of living a calling, various aspects of the construct of calling are considered, including the calling being 'central to one's identity', 'an inner drive', 'a guiding force' and 'a sense of personal fit with a job' (p. 425); those identifying work as a calling are also more likely to have high career commitment, and to feel that their work has meaning. Research into agricultural identities, career paths and journeys has alluded to these elements of calling for many decades (Newby, 1977), without necessarily explicitly identifying them as such. Multiple studies have found that agricultural identities are more complex than being simply an occupation or job role (Bruno et al., 2022; Burton, 2004; Wuthnow, 2015). The intensity of farming identity is also seen at the end of

[2] Willock et al. (1999) and McIlveen & McDonald (2019) are notable exceptions.

the career, while retirement from farming can be practically challenging due to questions of finance and succession, it is also recognised as challenging to the farmer's sense of self (Conway et al., 2022; Nye et al., 2023). While some of this reflection on the depth of farming identity relates to family connections to the land, it is also potentially suggestive of the features of calling, as identified by Duffy et al. (2018).

Similarly, the importance of leaving the land in the same, or better, condition for those that follow you (Willock et al., 1999), acting as a custodian (Hammersley et al., 2021), is a motivator that could be linked to generational considerations but could also be perceived as pertaining to the greater good and the 'social function' (Dik et al., 2009) that is associated with calling. Research with Norwegian sheep farmers identified high levels of intrinsic motivation, with 'the experience of doing something valuable' as a component of that work motivation (Muri et al., 2020, p. 583).

Living a calling

Duffy et al. (2018) note that perceiving a calling does not necessarily lead to living a calling, with race, ethnicity, social class, gender, household income and geographic location all affecting educational opportunity, life chances and career choices (pp. 426-427). The frequency of perceiving a calling did not vary in accordance with these variables, but the frequency of living a calling did (p. 427). Agricultural career-specific research agrees with the potential for individual characteristics to affect how accessible a farming career may be, with race and ethnicity (Norrie 2017; Terry, 2023) and sexuality and gender (Leslie et al., 2019; Price & Evans, 2009; Shortall et al., 2020) all noted as factors that affect access and inclusion, thus potentially limiting the ability of any given individual to live out their perceived calling.

Those from an agricultural background may not acquire land, but their ability to both perceive and live their calling may benefit from their inheritance of tacit agricultural knowledge and networks (Coopmans et al., 2021; Wójcik et al., 2019). Without human and social capital new entrants can be limited in their ability to identify opportunities (Pindado et al., 2018) increasing their vulnerability to failure (Grubbström & Joosse, 2021). While tacit knowledge and networks exist in other career sectors, the extent to which they affect individual access and inclusion in agriculture appears to be particularly significant. As mentioned previously, career commitment and work meaning are linked to the perception of a calling, with Person-Environment (P-E) fit predictive of both factors. Those who perceive a calling are anticipated to be more likely to enter work environments which fit that calling or to use job crafting to shape their environment to 'build fit, meaning and commitment' (Duffy et al, 2018, p. 429).

Positive and negative outcomes from lived calling

Where an individual is able to progress to living their calling, both positive and negative outcomes are likely to result. Living a calling is predictive of both job satisfaction and performance (Duffy & Dik, 2013). However, those who live their calling have also been seen to experience workaholism, high levels of stress and burnout, and organisational exploitation (Duffy et al., 2018); the 'double-edged sword of deeply meaningful work' (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009, p. 32).

The level of intrinsic satisfaction that many agricultural workers experience is well documented (Muri et al., 2020; Willock at al., 1999). However, the contrary is also seen, often in the same studies, with stress, distress and burnout common (Hammersley et al., 2021; Price & Evans, 2009; Willock et al., 1999). Workaholic indicators are present, such as long hours and the sacrifice of personal and family time (Grubbström & Joosse, 2021; Hammersley et al., 2021; Price & Evans, 2009).

Approach: the literature

The lack of attention to decision-making and choice in relation to agricultural careers, and the relevance of calling to this matter, can be further explored through a scoping review 'to identify gaps in the existing literature' (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p.21). The methodological approach adopted in this paper follows the five-stage framework for scoping reviews outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005).

Stage One frames a research question, which, following an initial review of available literature for the purposes of this paper is identified as: can UK farming careers be considered in terms of calling, and thus better understood through the lens of calling theory? Stage Two requires a systematic approach to searching and identifying relevant literature to answer the question, before using inclusion and exclusion criteria to narrow down identified studies in the third stage. Stage Four appraises the selected studies for elements that are considered indicative of the study phenomena, in this case evidence of calling in line with WCT (Duffy et al., 2018). Results are collated and summarised in Stage Five.

Methods: the scoping review

Searches were carried out during Autumn 2024. An overview is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Search approach, results and inclusion criteria

Search number	Location(s)	Search parameters	Results for review	**Included in scoping review**	Duplicates excluded	New results excluded
1	Scopus and EBSCOhost databases*	Search term: career* AND (agric* OR farm*) AND (calling OR vocation) Region: UK Date range: 2010-2023	48	**0**	0	48
2	Scopus and EBSCOhost databases*	Search term: career* AND (agric* OR farm*) Region: UK Date range: 2010-2023	2269	**4**	48	2217
3	Google Scholar and BASE	Search term: career* AND (agric* OR farm*) First 50 results from each database checked	100	**0**	1	99
4	15 targeted organisational websites in UK farming and agriculture	• Approach 1 - Search term: (agric* OR farm*) AND (career*) for UK publications from 2010 to 2023, where the website search function supported a search of this nature. • Approach 2 - Where approach 1 was not possible due to limited website search function, search term (career*) was used, and results manually checked for inclusion for review. • Approach 3 - Where approaches 1 and 2 were not possible, the research publications section of the website was manually checked for inclusion for review.	367	**5**	1	361
		TOTALS	*2784*	***9***	*50*	*2725*

* Authors searched all Scopus content, as well as Business Source Premier, Education Research Complete, APA PsycInfo and Humanities International Complete using EBSCOhost, due to the potential for this topic to be covered in science, social science and interdisciplinary journals.

Scoping review inclusion criteria

- **Primarily focused on those working in, considering working in, or aspiring to work in, farming in the UK.**
- **Incorporating considerations specifically related to career choices, career motivation and/or career development.**
- **Based on robust and rigorous studies of any size, with sufficient detail provided to allow meaningful review.**

Search 1: Papers were sought that referred to either farms and farming or agriculture (as a potential synonym). Career AND calling OR vocation were required search terms to establish whether any publications existed on career 'calling' to UK farming. The searches were specific to the UK between January 2010 and December 2023, to ensure results were aligned and relevant to the UK context post-Brexit (Lillywhite et al., 2012), and that findings and recommendations could be focused accordingly. 48 papers were found and checked against the inclusion criteria shown in Table 1. No papers were suitable for inclusion.

This initial search established that no publications existed to fit the calling OR vocation search term, in relation to farming careers. To answer the research question, in line with Arksey and O'Malley's scoping review framework (2005), a less rigid set of search criteria was required. This was appropriate because although Search 1 confirmed that calling in UK farming careers had not been specifically considered or conceptualised in academic literature to date, it did not confirm that there was no evidence of calling within UK farming careers, which had yet to be understood or conceptualised as such. To explore the research question in more depth, all subsequent searches focused solely on careers in farming or agriculture, to gather potentially relevant research and literature, and then objectively review these for elements potentially indicative of calling, in line with WCT (Duffy et al., 2018).

Search 2: Due to no relevant publications being retrieved via the search terms calling OR vocation, the search was expanded by revoking these terms within the same time and location parameters. 2,221 new papers were identified (along with 48 duplicate papers). Each identified paper was examined against the inclusion criteria outlined in the final row of Table 1, giving four papers for inclusion in the scoping review.

Given the continued paucity of information, the search was extended to incorporate grey literature: widely understood to include "information produced on all levels of government, academia, business and industry in electronic and print formats not controlled by commercial publishing" (Mering, 2018, p.238). The decision to incorporate grey literature was taken due to its' potential to create a broader outlook, increase comprehensiveness and to help ensure research is not overlooked due to academic publishing timeframes (Godin et al., 2015; Paez, 2017). It is also noted that grey literature may be more freely available to those working in farming or CEIAG, than some of the academic literature explored in the initial searches. The grey literature search incorporated two searching strategies (outlined below in Search 3 and Search 4) to mitigate some of the challenges that can exist in finding meaningful and relevant grey literature (Benzies et al., 2006; Paez, 2017).

Search 3: Due to a lack of an agriculture specific catalogue, Search 3 used two widely available central databases, Google Scholar and Bielefeld Academic Search Engine (BASE), reviewing the first 50 entries on each for the search (agric* OR farm*) AND (career*) between 2010 and 2023, against the inclusion criteria in the final row of Table 1. One potential paper was identified, but this was a duplicate from search 2. A high proportion of irrelevant results were generated due to the inability to accurately geographically focus these searches, and it was decided to take a more focused approach.

Search 4: The final search focused on 15 targeted organisational websites in UK farming and agriculture, covering governmental, academic and farming sector organisations across the UK. These are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Organisations included in Search 4

Academic institutions	Government departments	Farming sector organisations
Aberystwyth University	England - Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)	Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB)
Harper Adams University	Northern Ireland - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF)
Newcastle University	Scotland - Agriculture and Rural Economy Directorate	National Farmers' Union (NFU) of England and Wales
Queen's University Belfast	Wales - Welsh Government (Farming and Countryside)	NFU Scotland
		The Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture (TIAH)
		The Worshipful Company of Farmers
		Ulster Farmers Union

The universities were selected using the Complete University Guide 2025 and The Sunday Times University Rankings 2025. The top five institutions for 'agriculture and forestry' in each league table were compared, and those appearing in both league tables were included. Seven diverse agricultural sector organisations and bodies were included to represent different elements of the farming sector and community, along with the government websites for each of the devolved nations' agricultural departments to capture governmental policy and/or associated reports.

The targeted websites were searched using the parameters and approaches shown in Table 1, producing a further 367 items for review, including one duplicate item. As with the academic literature, each identified item was examined against the inclusion criteria in the final row of Table 1; 361 were excluded, leaving five for inclusion.

Included papers and reports are summarised in Table 3. All were then objectively reviewed for elements potentially indicative of calling, in line with WCT (Duffy et al., 2018).

Included Papers

Table 3 – Overview of evaluated papers and reports

Search	Paper ID	Population and method	Reported findings	Relevance to scoping review
2	**Nye, 2021**	Mixed method approach including 45 semi-structured interviews with farm workers, agricultural contractors, and farm owner/operators/managers, and 1251 results from a postal survey of land managers across Southwest England.	This paper focused on constraints around farm labour in the UK. Findings demonstrated that farm labour frequently stemmed from an agricultural background, either directly, or via further/higher education or post-travel. Constraints at farm, local and national levels affected farm workers, and the ability of employers to recruit and manage a suitable and sustainable workforce.	Included considerations of how and why individuals enter UK farming, and reflections on their career experiences.
2	**Kempster et al., 2023**	A qualitative study with 8 individual semi-structured interviews with UK women in farming.	The research explored the self-identified roles of women in farming careers. Findings showed five emergent role characterisations: the mother; a decision-maker; a supporter; a labourer; and an entrepreneur. This highlighted the multiplicity and nuance of women's roles, beyond existing siloed job role structures.	Focused on women's career-making, motivations and role identification within UK farming.
2	**Chiswell and Lobley, 2018**	Semi-structured interviews with 29 farmers and 19 potential farm successors in Devon, England.	This work examined the process of intergenerational farm transfer for farmers and their potential successors. Farm transfer was found to be a collective process for all stakeholders, with farm successors evaluating farming as a career choice. The family farm's continuation was vulnerable to evaluation outcomes and external factors.	Focused on farming families and processes of career-decision making as connected to intergenerational farm transfer.
2	**Glover, 2015**	Data collected via 29 semi-structured interviews with family members from 10 farming families in the West Midlands, England.	An exploratory study which investigated dairy farming from a sociological perspective via application of Bourdieu's social theory of practice. Findings highlighted that dairy farming can be difficult to both enter and leave, and recognised varied factors constraining farmer behaviour,	Focused on farming families, and particularly the entry and exit points of a dairy farming career.

			including farming families' social and cultural heritage.	
4	**Toogood, 2023a and Toogood 2023b**	Mixed methods approach with 129 online survey responses from 129 UK new entrants and 10 detailed semi-structured follow up interviews. Written up as a main project report (Toogood, 2023a) and an overview with case studies (Toogood, 2023b).	This research focused on reviewing and building understanding of the experiences of new entrants from non-agricultural backgrounds working in UK agriculture and agri-food. It evaluated the management and leadership experienced and found that new entrants benefited from individualised approaches from managers, mentors and colleagues, safe and supportive workplace environments, informal communication, mentoring, and workplace learning, development and training.	Focused on UK agriculture. Includes consideration of new entrants' career choices, motivations and development.
4	**Nye and Lobley, 2021**	Mixed methods research combining a desk-based study and 21 semi-structured interviews. Participants included individuals working for farming or labour organisations, farm business managers, and operators of initiatives assisting individuals such as service leavers, young people, career changers, and ex-offenders.	This report explored UK farm labour shortages. It identified perceptions of the industry, poor farm culture and worker treatment, pay structures, traditional succession, poor industry promotion, lack of relevant skills, work location, and competition from other sectors for workers, as factors driving scarcity of permanent and seasonal workers. Solutions were proposed, including increasing awareness and attractiveness of farming, sector openness to varied new entrants, and clearer entry points, development and training.	Included specific examination of the factors that may mean people choose not to work in UK farming, and the factors affecting career development within UK agriculture.
4	**LEAF, 2023**	Initial quantitative survey of over 2,200 12-19 year olds across the UK. Followed by a qualitative discussion event for 80 young people and a residential event for 60 young people and 10 teachers to develop next steps and identify recommendations.	This research focused on four themes: Sustainable Food Production; Conscious Consumers; Diversity and Inclusivity; and Careers. The findings identified a general lack of awareness in all areas from the young people who participated, but a positivity towards potential careers in agriculture and agri-food. Work experience and placement opportunities, opportunities to engage with industry professionals and clearer guidance were	Reviewed agricultural understanding, awareness, and the factors affecting career choice and access for young people and their teachers.

			identified as apt next steps to support individuals and the sector.	
4	**Family Kids and Youth (FKY), on behalf of TIAH, 2022**	Phase 1 comprised 2 online focus groups with careers teachers and advisors. Phase 2 included 12 focus groups, 6 with young people aged 12-21, 2 with career switchers, 1 with teachers, 2 with parents and 1 with grandparents. Phase 3 involved online interviews with 1,014 young people aged 13-23, 532 parents/grandparents and 263 teachers.	This project explored interest and understanding around careers in agriculture and horticulture in the UK. The research found low awareness of the farming sector. There was a feeling of detachment from young, urban people, with little understanding of modern farming and growing, and dated perceptions. However, explanations of the sector supported more positive sector perception, particularly in relation to jobs and careers supporting the environment and sustainability.	Reviewed agricultural understanding, awareness, and the factors affecting career choices for young people and their teachers, advisors and families, and also for career switchers.
4	**Shortall et al., 2017**	Over 1300 women and 12 men from across Scotland participated in this mixed methods research which included a literature review, 9 focus groups, 30 interviews and 2 online surveys.	The project investigated women's roles in farming and agriculture in Scotland, focusing on daily life, aspirations, career paths, leadership and comparative analysis with women in other family businesses. The key, complex and varied roles of women were noted in the project findings. Primogeniture was the largest barrier identified; women were also notably under-represented in elected leadership roles in national farming organisations, and subject to conscious and unconscious bias.	Focused on women's experiences in farming in Scotland, and how this affected their career development and choices.

The presence of calling in UK farming careers? A critique

The scoping review generated nine publications for inclusion; an overview of which is provided in Table 3. The discussion that follows considers these papers for evidence of alignment with WCT (Duffy et al., 2018), within the agricultural context.

Perceiving calling

Breaking the idea of perception of calling into the key elements outlined by Duffy et al. (2018) allows further examination of how perceptions of calling present in farming. Career commitment was strongly visible, as shown in quotes such as 'Farming is what I was born to do' and 'Farming is a part of me' (Glover, 2015, pp.139-40). Participants in a later study expressed the same sentiments: 'Farming never goes out of your blood. No matter what you are, it's in there' and 'I think it is just born in you really' (Nye, 2021, p.206). The same imagery was present for participants in Shortall et al.'s work, who talked about farming 'being in their blood, almost as a calling that could not be ignored' (2017, p.49). The idea of calling was not explored further by Shortall et al., but the allusion is highly relevant. The very physical imagery and presentation of career commitment was also present for those who had come into farming from a non-agricultural background who felt agriculture 'resonates within your blood' (Toogood, 2023a, p.41).

There was also some evidence of language linked to religion, harking back to more traditional, neoclassical views of calling as something that one was 'put on the Earth to do' (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007, p.592). A new entrant described discovering farming as 'a revelation' (Toogood, 2023b, p.13), and an individual from a farming family shared their sense that agriculture was their pre-determined purpose (Chiswell and Lobley, 2018, p.642):

> 'It's personal, it's in your soul. Even if farming was going to die a death tomorrow, I'd still be here, doing what I do, because as I've said, it's what I was meant to do'.

Multiple new entrants highlighted that they were motivated by a greater good (Dik et al., 2009), stating more specifically that they were influenced by climate change, conservation, and environmental factors (Toogood, 2023a, p.27). Some young people exploring careers in the sector were similarly inspired by helping the environment (FKY, 2022; LEAF, 2023), and those from farming families focused on the importance of feeding the nation (Chiswell and Lobley, 2018).

Duffy et al. (2018) also identify job crafting and P-E fit within the elements that exist in perceiving a calling. As befits a sector known for pragmatism, job crafting was evident across the identified papers and reports. Women in, and adjacent to, farming were seen to select sectors more accessible to them, such as equestrian, horticulture and dairy (Kempster et al, 2023) and organic farming (Nye and Lobley, 2021). Kempster et al (2023) also focused on women's multi-skilled contributions and strategic career choices at different times in their lives and in relation to business need, which can be perceived as job crafting. New entrants chose to balance multiple employments to craft and develop a personalised route into agriculture (Toogood, 2023b), using job crafting as a strategy to mitigate initially limited networks and knowledge.

An innate sense of P-E fit is visible in some of the identified papers, with recognition of the importance of nature-connectedness and animal and place attachment (Nye, 2021), and the sense of community in agriculture, with those working in farming described as 'the warmest people on the planet' (Toogood, 2023a, p.42).

There was no evidence pertaining to those who perceived but did not live their calling. This is unsurprising given the nature of the research examined, but it should be noted, that the barriers to

entry examined in the section below, potentially mean a wider examination of this topic to include those who perceived an agricultural calling that they could not fulfil, would add further depth to any future exploration of this subject area.

Living a calling (and associated barriers)

The 'lived' circumstances of the agricultural calling of participants varied considerably. As might be expected, across the identified papers and reports, journeys to living a calling, and the challenges encountered, were shaped by the agricultural or non-agricultural background of project participants. The barriers facing new entrants to farming are well-documented, and present significant challenges to those individuals seeking to live their agricultural calling. The difficulties of access to experience, networks and capital played out in the accounts of new entrant participants (Shortall et al., 2017; Toogood, 2023a; Toogood, 2023b) and others already within the sector (Nye & Lobley, 2021).

For new entrants, accessing agricultural skills and knowledge to realise a lived calling presented several challenges. The lack of clear, inclusive, routes to access knowledge and networks (FKY, 2022; Nye, 2021; Toogood, 2023b), was problematic. Tacit knowledge is respected by those already in agriculture (Nye, 2021) who can be the gatekeepers of opportunity; for those outside, the lack of clear routes to access this knowledge and these networks can act as another barrier to living out a calling. On successfully identifying an opportunity, the prohibitive financial implications of accessing hands-on experience can still present a barrier, due to the lack of affordable accommodation and poor public transport in many rural locations (Nye and Lobley, 2021).

In line with Duffy et al. (2018), other mediating factors, particularly gender, were found to affect the opportunities available to living an agricultural calling. The ability of those from an agricultural background to live their calling may benefit from their inheritance of tacit agricultural knowledge and networks but still suffer from embedded attitudes pertaining to gender. A participant in Nye and Lobley's study (2021, p.13) recounted a conversation with a farmer:

> 'One individual a while ago was looking at succession opportunities for their business and we spent the whole time talking about one of this individual's sons who was neither eligible nor suitable to farm the holding. It wasn't until we got to the end of the conversation that he mentioned he had a daughter. The daughter lives on the farm, worked on the farm, was involved on a daily basis and was certainly passionate about it and I said why haven't you considered her for the succession and he just said "because she's my daughter"'.

Another farmer's daughter overlooked for succession because of her brother, was able to live her calling by working on a different farm and indicated that 'it doesn't really bother me personally. It just frustrates me that it's so sexist' (Nye, 2021, p.205). One female interviewee described a 'sticky floor', the daily barriers of everyday work and life affecting women's ability to focus on their farming career (Shortall et al., p.39); in the same study, both 'conscious and unconscious gender bias and overt sexism' (p.61) were noted in relation to women accessing career-advancing leadership roles. Kempster et al. (2023) found women persevering in agricultural careers despite the gendered expectations that 'can damage women's reputation, confidence, involvement and ability to work hard and means they constantly need to justify their credentials' (p.9), with participants repeatedly focusing on the need to prove themselves. New entrants highlighted that they had experienced old-fashioned beliefs from agricultural employers around women's abilities (Toogood, 2023a; Toogood, 2023b). However, outdated farm culture did not discourage these women, as all interviewees in this study continued to pursue agricultural careers.

Some of those already within agriculture had been explicitly discouraged from farming by family members, but had pursued it as a career nevertheless, driven by the 'personal values and meanings attached to the work itself [that] drive career pathway choices instead of them being dictated by local or familial constraints' (Nye, 2021, p.202). The hereditary nature of farming might imply that pursuit of such a career is driven by familial expectation or socialisation rather than a calling. However, in the contemporary agricultural climate, Chiswell and Lobley (2018) showed that individuals belonging to farming families are less influenced by the expectations and influence of their families, allowing them to choose to follow unrelated career paths should they so wish. The prominence of intrinsic motivators for younger successors was noted in this study. One participant described family and tradition as:

> 'It's not a reason for me to do it as such […] It's not *the* reason. But it's quite nice to carry it on, you have a lot of pride in what you do then…' (p.644).

The emphasis here, on a fundamental reason or motivation beyond the significant factors of tradition and family, could potentially point to a sense of calling, although it is not explored as such in Chiswell and Lobley's work.

Multiple farmers and farm workers were actively 'discouraged from going into farming' by advisors and teachers in educational settings, because they were told '… you're too smart for that' or 'they thought he'd be wasted on the farm' (Nye, 2021, p.212). Participants ultimately ignored these negative voices to pursue an agricultural calling, corroborating Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas' (2012) recommendations for advisors to better understand the depths and origins of calling in advisees. This perception of agriculture as a low-skilled sector rankled those who were living their calling as farmers: 'They don't realise that you need brains to do farming as well' (Nye, 2021, p.212), but a change in public perception was noted by Chiswell and Lobley's participants who felt there was a developing wider appreciation and understanding of the sector (2018). Recently, FKY (2022) and LEAF (2023) have specifically identified the need for teachers and advisors to have more awareness and training in agricultural career paths, and for more opportunities for entry and experience, via experiential learning and visits, placements and internships.

There also appear to be limitations on agricultural CEIAG in many settings, with only 18 percent of young people saying they have received information on a career in agriculture, which typically came via family, friends or geography teaching (LEAF, 2023, p. 33). Misconceptions around land-based careers were common (Nye, 2021; Nye & Lobley, 2021; Toogood, 2023b); potentially exacerbated by complex relationships to land, due to structural inequalities of access and ownership. Participants in FKY's work identified the need for 'relatable and diverse public figures' to promote farming and growing (2022, p.10). Once young people did find out about careers in agriculture, they perceived them as 'fulfilling' with the potential to make a positive impact (LEAF, 2023, p.13). Similarly, once agricultural careers had been explained, young people in FKY's study found it to be exciting and attractive, particularly in relation to 'jobs that will help and support the environment and sustainability' (2022, p.6).

The greater good (Dik et al., 2009) was considered alongside perception of agricultural calling, but was also seen in those potentially living their calling. Chiswell and Lobley (2018) found positivity around the societal imperative of providing food. This farm worker (Nye, 2021, p.207) explicitly articulated the idea of greater worth and purpose through work:

> 'I'd happily do it for less money, because money isn't everything. What's everything, is actually, if you're gonna do a job like this, you have to do it where your family and everyone around you can feel like it's worth it.'

Such findings demonstrate that commitment to a career can override potential barriers affecting access to opportunity, providing the critical link between perceiving and living a calling, but that this will be individual and circumstance-dependent, and not applicable to everybody experiencing an agricultural calling.

Positive outcomes from living a calling

The third part of Duffy et al.'s (2018) WCT posits that 'living a calling predicts satisfaction with one's job' (ibid: 430), with the ensuing implication being that work performance will also present as a positive outcome of living one's calling. Nye (2021) found intrinsic satisfaction amongst project participants, and Chiswell and Lobley identified pride amongst their farmers 'I'd definitely be proud to say I was a farmer' (2018, p.645). New entrants' feelings towards work in agriculture were repeatedly described with words like 'love' or 'passion' (Toogood, 2023b), with passion also used to describe dairy farmers feeling about their work (Glover, 2015, p.152) and love for their work expressed by women in farming (Kempster et al., 2023; Shortall et al, 2017).

Nye (2021) identified 'nature-connectedness, place attachment, [and] animal attachment' as factors contributing to the wellbeing and satisfaction of farm workers, and these themes also emerged as positive outcomes for new entrants (Toogood, 2023b). The farming way of life and working with animals was identified as a positive motivator and outcome by dairy farmers (Glover, 2015). This focus was echoed by one of Chiswell and Lobley's participants who articulated their experience of animal care, and its significance to them: 'every day you are making a difference to the livestock you look after and that matters.' (2018, p.644). Kempster et al.'s (2023) exploration of female identity in agriculture recognised the need for 'emotional strength' in aspects of farm work including caring for livestock and crops. These reflections on animal care and attachment raise parallels with Bunderson & Thompson's (2009) work on career calling amongst zookeepers; where the intertwined personal, social and professional led to both positive and negative outcomes.

The drivers behind levels of satisfaction felt by farm workers tend to continue to be steered by their own intrinsic reasons for wanting to work in farming, despite the economic and personal challenges it entails (Nye, 2021). One new entrant described their journey with agriculture as having 'changed my life, definitely for the better' (Toogood, 2023b, p.18). Considering those from farming families, the evaluative younger generation continued to choose farming careers over other options, after spells in other settings, drawn back to the land by multiple intrinsic motivators, not just familial connections (Chiswell and Lobley, 2018).

Negative outcomes from living a calling

Potentially negative outcomes of living a calling emerged across the identified papers and projects. Hours in the sector are long; 'a crop doesn't stop ripening at five o' clock on a Friday afternoon' (Nye & Lobley, 2021, p.47). One of Kempster et al.'s participants described themselves as '…a workaholic. I work seven days a week: but that's just farming. And I love what I do.' (2023, p.8). In Glover's work, self-declared weekly hours for the main farmer in each of the ten families interviewed averaged 72 working hours per week (2015, pp.136-7). Extensive hours and workload were reported by participants in Shortall et al.'s study; one participant justified their long working days and weekends by saying, 'Unfortunately farming is just what we love…' (2017, p.36). Despite the mitigating factor of loving what they do, the long-term implications of such workload and responsibilities may, for some, include poor health and wellbeing. Workaholism, burnout and exploitation have all been cited as potential negative outcomes stemming from living a calling (Duffy et al., 2018).

Experiences of living calling were also identity dependent: Toogood (2023b) found a new entrant reflecting on the difficulties they had experienced being openly gay within the agriculture industry, with strong underpinning heteronormative assumptions in most organisations, and another reflected on the lack of support or adjustment they had experienced as a disabled farmer. Female interviewees across multiple studies noted outdated gendered assumptions and bias (Kempster et al. 2023; Toogood, 2023b; Shortall et al., 2017). Complexities of identity also affected those who had been born into farming, in a different way; Nye describes farming as 'inherent' to identity and highlights a participant who describes agriculture as a disease (p.206). This is the natural counterpoint to something that is in the blood (as discussed earlier, under perceived calling) it is there whether you wish it to be or not, and it can prove impossible to leave.

Additionally, in contrast to Duffy et al.'s (2018) position that living a calling is likely to lead to higher levels of job performance, the demanding and all-encompassing nature of farming means that responding to a calling might not actually result in the best outcome for the individual or business. This can ultimately result in a negative lived experience due to mismatched expectations and subsequent disillusionment with an agricultural career, with wider ramifications for perceptions of agricultural careers amongst the non-agricultural public. Low pay, poor farm culture, lack of career progression, succession issues, work-life balance, challenging interactions with members of the public, and a lack of public understanding (FKY, 2022; Glover, 2015; LEAF, 2023; Nye, 2021; Nye & Lobley, 2021; Shortall et al., 2017), all potentially contribute to negative outcomes in the longer-term for the individual, the business and the sector. One of Glover's participants who experienced work-related stress also stated their reason for farming as 'I just have this affinity with my farm I had the opportunity to sell and move but I didn't—I couldn't.' (2015, p.141). The negative outcomes are recognised, but something more powerful overrides them.

Conclusion and recommendations

This scoping review illustrates that there is strong potential to conceive of farming careers in a UK context as a calling, as framed against Duffy et al.'s WCT (2018). This applies to both those from a farming background and to newcomers to the sector. This under-explored area is worthy of further investigation, as understanding farming in terms of career calling has the potential to make inroads to improving the awareness and accessibility of farming-related careers, education, and employment policy and practice. In addition, this approach can further understandings of employee behaviour, decision-making and motivation which may help employers satisfy and, particularly important in a climate of labour shortages, retain workers.

With regard to CEIAG, the projects and research explored in this scoping review found evidence where those who might be in a position to offer informal CEIAG, such as parents or teachers, used their power to actively discourage and dissuade individuals from following their calling. This highlights the vital importance of professional CEIAG, to remove the risk of personal bias affecting support; any advisor must comprehend the 'depth and origin' (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012, p.276) of their clients' connection to a specific career calling. This will be of critical importance to UK farming, given that public perceptions of agriculture can damage recruitment into the sector (Nye & Lobley, 2023). Professional careers counselling focused on satisfying calling, for those who feel such a pull, needs to be available at all career stages: supporting young people (Duffy & Sedlacek; 2007, p.600) but also via mid-career CEIAG offered to career changers, where calling may strengthen with age and experience (Mantler et al., 2022). CEIAG provided by trained and experienced careers guidance practitioners would utilise the latest research and labour market information, ensuring that knowledge from sources

such as those explored in this research underpins individual support. There is also a case for agricultural bodies to look at the reach of their campaigns, strategies and publications to facilitate public awareness and understanding of farming careers. This may help to ensure that any informal advice and guidance from parents or other trusted sources is more likely to be based on the realities of modern farming. Collaborating with careers practitioner bodies, schools, colleges and universities could support agricultural organisations in working towards mutually beneficial public engagement with farming careers.

More generally, the existence of calling should be surfaced and made 'explicit' in CEIAG to inform practice and discussion (Dik et al., 2009, p.627). Modern callings are perhaps less likely to be experienced as a divine summons so much as something that experientially develops and calls to an individual; CEIAG professionals need to recognise and share this understanding of the breadth and depth of potential calling when working with their clients. In the context of the findings of this work, this is likely to include specific reflection on job crafting as part of the CEIAG offered to those perceiving a call to farming. This could be particularly important to those from non-agricultural backgrounds and those without access to land and agricultural networks, to help them conceptualise development steps which would enable them to live their calling.

Finally, this scoping study focused exclusively on exploring calling within the UK farming context. Building on the insights gained, we suggest there may be value in conducting similar reviews in other national settings to determine whether our findings and recommendations resonate in countries facing comparable challenges regarding the awareness and accessibility of farming as a career path.

Data Availability Statement

The authors confirm that the data supporting this scoping review are available within the article.

Disclosure Statement

The authors confirm that there are no relevant financial or non-financial competing interests to report.

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