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Investing in landbased engineering is fundamental to the UK's future

Landbased engineering businesses' need to invest more in their people and not leave all the responsibility to the government, was one of the many opinions expressed at the recent Institution of Agricultural Engineers (IAgrE) virtual conference.

This year's format was a series of on-line webinars that culminated in an on-line event where the presenters fielded questions from the delegates.

The topic was lean agricultural engineering and resilience in the supply chain and speakers represented the world of food supply and distribution, alongside international agricultural machinery manufacturers and the UK dealer supply chain.

"There is a skills shortage across the board," said Martin Hamer, Fendt national sales manager. "We are not investing enough in growing our own. "Businesses need to invest more in their people, and we need to continue developing our employees' skills."

Charlie Nicklin, CEO of IAgrE said, "The biggest takeaway from the conference for me is how much importance we all need to place on making our industry not only visible, but an attractive place for young people to study and work in."

"We are not doing a very good job of selling agricultural engineering as a career. It's still seen as a dirty industry even though there have been massive changes in agri-tech developments recently."

"We have to create a platform to sell the industry to the public so parents will encourage youngsters to choose agricultural engineering instead of some of the softer options. It might be perceived by many youngsters as being too much hard work, but it is an extremely satisfying career," added Martin.

Professor Simon Pearson of the Lincoln Institute of AgriFood Technology gave the conference a fascinating glimpse of what the future holds in terms of autonomous fruit picking and how we can reduce risks associated with a labour-intensive process.

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Environmental uncertainty means it's wonderful to be an agricultural engineer and most importantly it is one of the disciplines that will deliver."

If British farmers are to meet the challenges of Brexit, climate change and food security we must act now to address these issues. Engineering is central to ensuring economic growth, but it also plays a major role in helping to tackle global challenges, such as climate change, health, food security, biodiversity, water security, population and energy security.

The big question for the Institution of Agricultural Engineers following the conference is do they have an important role to play to bring everyone together, acting as a catalyst to improve perceptions of the industry, attracting more young people and helping to promote professionalism and encourage commercial companies to invest more in skills development?



[Click here to download the image](#)

Pictured Martin Hamer and Charlie Nicklin

IAgrE:

IAgrE is the professional body for scientists, technologists, engineers, academics, managers and students working in the landbased sector and has an international membership base.

As a licensed body of the Engineering Council (EngC) and a founding Constituent Body of The Society for the Environment (SocEnv), IAgrE registers suitably experienced professionals as Chartered Engineers, Chartered Environmentalists, Incorporated Engineers and Engineering Technicians.

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