

Possible careers within agricultural vocational training

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There are different ways for a young farmer-to-be to get a degree. The first decision is to be made, when he (*or very seldom she*) finishes secondary education, that corresponds to the British GCSE or the former O-level-examination.

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There is no American degree, that would fit exactly, but it's sort of a High School diploma. The farmer-to-be is about 17 years old then and has visited primary school for 4 years and secondary school for at least 6 years.

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If he intends to take over the farm from his parents or work as a farm help, he will probably start with an apprenticeship.

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An agricultural apprenticeship normally lasts 3 years, but if for example, he has got a higher secondary degree (the *ABITUR*, which corresponds to the A-level in Britain or the Junior College Degree in the USA) the apprenticeship can be shortened to 2 years. In Germany an apprenticeship is an institution, that is regulated in a very detailed way. The master has to train the apprentice according to rules, that are set and controlled by the government and these rules are obligatory, so within the country the same basic training is guaranteed to every apprentice. The farmer has to be qualified, if he wants to train apprentices, and besides that, the farm itself has to meet certain conditions. Size and equipment for instance have to be appropriate.

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A staff member of the local chamber of agriculture or *Landwirtschaftskammer* is responsible for supervising all agricultural apprenticeships in the district.

The apprentices have to attend a *vocational school* once or twice a week in order to receive an additional theoretical education.

At the end of their apprenticeship they have to take an examination.

Having passed the exam and having worked on a farm for another year most of our young farmers go on to an *agricultural college*, like the one you are in at the moment. Here they get 32 lessons a week for two years.

5 Having passed the final exams at this college, they get the degree "*staatlich geprüfter Landwirt*" (sort of *Master farmer, approved by Government*) and are entitled to train apprentices themselves.

This degree even entitles them to go on to a higher agricultural college and after that to university, but actually only very few do this. (As you can
10 *imagine, most of them are fed up with all that theoretical stuff, they have tried to put into their brains.*)

Most of the students at *higher agricultural colleges* or universities have passed the A-level exams, but they don't normally run a farm afterwards. They work as consultants, teachers, in administration or they do
15 scientific research. By the way, to become a teacher or head of an administration department one has to have a university degree as well as to pass a two-year-special-training for *higher agricultural civil service* afterwards.

It's one of the main tasks of the *chamber of agriculture* or
20 *Landwirtschaftskammer*, to provide life-long learning opportunities for farmers, especially for ex-pupils. This is done mainly by organising meetings, discussions, talks and lectures as well as trips to interesting agricultural objects.

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