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Farmers, forestry workers and fishermen happier than the rest of us, ONS study to find

Anyone who lives there knows it, but now it looks like the Government has found the proof: workers who live and toil outdoors in the British countryside are happier than the rest of us.



Those who work outdoors in the countryside are happier than the rest of us Photo: Alamy

By Christopher Hope, Senior Political Correspondent

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Results from the Government's first ever survey of National Well Being, published by the Office for National Statistics, are likely to show that people who work in farming, forestry and fishing are happier than others.

The ONS – more used to weighing up public sector finances or crime statistics – was given the rather subjective task of asking how happy Britons are by Prime Minister David Cameron in 2010.

Ministers want to use the information to allow young people to make informed choices about

their jobs – asking whether they will be happy, rather than whether they will earn a lot of money.

The prime mover behind the 'happiness index' has been Mr Cameron who said when he became Conservative leader in 2005 that gauging people's wellbeing was among the "central political issues of our time".

He said then: "It's time we focused not just on GDP but on GWB — general well being." Previous surveys have suggested that Britons' happiness has remained static for 25 years

According to provisional data from the ONS's Well Being study - which have been seen by The Daily Telegraph – 20 different industry sectors were ranked according to “mean life satisfaction”.

The study - which is published in full on Tuesday morning - found that at the top of the satisfaction list were people who work in “agriculture, forestry and fishing”.

That was followed in the top third of the satisfaction index - perhaps surprisingly - by “people working in mining, quarrying, “real estate activities”, electricity and gas supply and “water supply, sewerage and waste”.

Propping up the list were those working in “admin and support services”, transport and storage”, “accommodation and food services” and “wholesale repair of vehicles”.

Even people who are paid to cheer us up did not appear to be a very happy with their lot, with those working in “arts, entertainment and recreation” ranked below bankers and insurers for job satisfaction.

The study covered the quality of life of people in the UK, environmental and sustainability issues, as well as the economic performance of the country.

The ONS wants the new well-being survey to “provide a more coherent measure of 'how the country is doing' than standalone measures such as GDP”.

The news came amid fears that voice of Britain’s countryside in Government is being silenced after the 100-year-old post of the independent rural advocate was abolished.

A letter to today’s The Daily Telegraph, signed by four bishops and the high sheriff of Cornwall, calls for the advocate’s role to be reinstated, urging “ministers to retain an independent adviser on rural affairs across government”.

They say: “There has been an independent voice for rural communities in Government since the

Rural Development Commission was established in 1909.

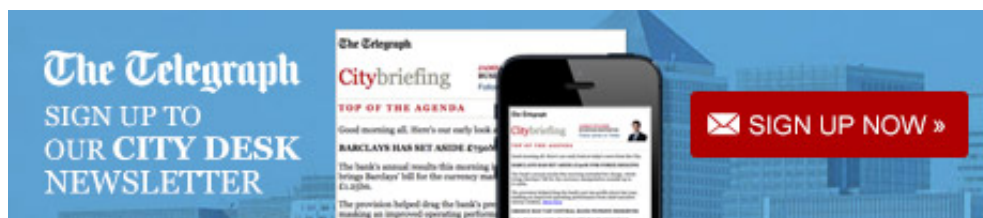
“In the current economic circumstances, it is more important than ever that the voices of rural communities are not lost and that an independent adviser — distinct from the range of rural pressure groups — exists to speak up for rural interests.”

Mary Creagh, the shadow Environment secretary, said: “People in rural areas still need this independent champion, as their Tory and Lib Dem MPs are silent on rural problems, neutered by ambition, government propaganda or quiet despair.”

Stuart Burgess, who was rural advocate between 2004 and 2010, told The Daily Telegraph: “I am personally concerned about the loss of the independent rural champion who can give voice into the very heart of Government.

“The voice is going to be lost. The rural unit has been set up in Defra – but that does not provide that independent voice that Lloyd George in 1909 that was so important to have.

“The strength in the independent rural voice is the ability to go around the country, to gather evidence and to listen rural communities – and getting those messages into the heart of Government.”



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