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agrobiotech
ACADEMIA TO CAREER

Interview Report

Prepared by Tomas Bata University in Zlin

Recommended Handbook Content Based on Interviews with Sector Representatives

SUA Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra
Tomas Bata University in Zlin
UNIVERSITAS Miguel Hernández
Education Agency for Development and Innovation IDEA
MELLIS KNOWLEDGE TO PRACTICE

1. Overview

The interviews with Ing. Vít Paulíček (Project Manager – R&D, EPS Biotechnology) and Mgr. Tereza Bojdová (Scientist, Czech Academy of Sciences & Palacký University) provided valuable insights into the skills, attitudes, and learning paths necessary for professional success in the agro-biotechnology sector.

Their reflections covered a range of topics directly relevant to the AGROBIOTECH+ handbook: the evolution of the sector, the growing importance of transferable and digital skills, the role of networking, mentorship, and continuous professional development.

2. Sector Developments & Skills Expectations

Key Insights to Include in the Handbook:

The agro-biotech field increasingly requires a blend of scientific and managerial competencies.

- *Paulíček* highlighted the importance of combining technical expertise (bioengineering, microbiology, molecular biology, physical chemistry) with project management, business economics, marketing, and communication skills.
- *Bojdová* emphasized analytical thinking, problem-solving, and proficiency in English, along with early exposure to bioinformatics and international networking.
- Employers value graduates who are flexible, motivated, and open to technological tools such as coding, AI, and statistical modeling.
- Participation in mobility programs (e.g., ERASMUS) and professional courses enhances employability.

Suggested handbook subsection:

"Evolving Skill Sets in the Agro-Biotech Industry"
Include a table contrasting *Core Scientific Skills* (laboratory techniques, data interpretation) and *Cross-Cutting Competencies* (project management, digital literacy, communication).

3. Self-Assessment & Goal Setting

Relevant Themes for the Handbook:

- Career goals evolve with time and experience. *Paulíček*'s initial aim was professional stability; his long-term goal became becoming a national expert in yeast biotechnology and building a collaborative R&D team.
- *Bojdová*'s focus shifted from job security to academic growth and developing leadership potential for future research management.

- Both interviews stress the need for realistic self-assessment: early-career professionals often lack infrastructure or confidence to start a business, but can still set progressive learning goals.
- Success is linked to expertise depth, teamwork, and continuous specialization, not merely hierarchy or financial gain.

Suggested inclusion:

A reflection activity titled *"Re-defining Success and Setting Realistic Career Goals"* encouraging students to map short-term learning aims and long-term impact ambitions.

4. Networking, Job Search & Interview Strategies

Highlights for the Handbook:

- Professional visibility and participation in conferences are critical career tools. *Paulíček* was recruited through a student conference, showing that engagement in academic events can lead directly to employment.
- Both experts emphasized networking with academic supervisors, peers, and industry representatives as a continuous process.
- Recommended channels: LinkedIn, university networks, and research conferences.
- Effective interview preparation includes:
- Researching company background and financial performance.
- Reviewing published projects and online activity.
- Demonstrating awareness of the company's culture and values.
- *Bojdová* added that motivation and willingness to learn often outweigh technical skill parity among candidates.

Suggested handbook tools:

A *"Job Interview Preparation Checklist"* and a short case box titled *"How Networking Creates Career Opportunities."*

5. Module 4 – Training & Professional Development

Essential Content to Integrate:

Both interviewees confirmed that lifelong learning is central to agro-biotech careers.

- *Paulíček* continuously studies because managing R&D projects demands up-to-date knowledge; he supplements literature review with consultations from experienced clients to align research with market needs.
- *Bojdová* uses digital research tools such as ResearchGate alerts and journal subscriptions, and follows team knowledge-sharing practices to expand her skillset.

- Continuous improvement relies on self-reflection, mentorship, and leaving the comfort zone. Managers should assign developmental challenges to staff and encourage independent thinking.

Suggested section title:

"Continuous Learning and Reflective Practice in Agro-Biotechnology." Include a diagram showing the learning cycle: *Reading → Experimenting → Feedback → Application → Reflection*.

6. Module 5 – Career Advancement & Mentorship

Insights to be incorporated:

- *Paulíček* highlighted ethical leadership, clear communication, and team trust as essential for sustainable success. His guiding principles—meeting deadlines, maintaining transparency, avoiding gossip, and promoting collaborative decision-making—illustrate professional integrity.
- Motivation often stems from both positive and negative examples: striving to improve existing standards and learning from mistakes.
- *Bojdová* underscored the transformative role of mentors and supervisors in developing technical and leadership skills.
- Decision-making and confidence grow through internships and early practical exposure.
- Both experts advise students to pursue challenging opportunities rather than comfortable ones and to evaluate priorities (family, work–life balance, growth potential) before choosing positions.

Suggested handbook features:

Case study box *"Mentorship as a Driver of Growth"* plus reflection prompts on workplace ethics and leadership development.

7. Pedagogical Implications

Incorporating these expert insights will:

- Enrich the handbook with authentic professional perspectives.
- Support Project-Based Learning by linking academic study to real sector expectations.
- Encourage students to reflect on career values, adaptability, and soft-skill development.
- Provide educators with discussion material and self-assessment exercises to reinforce employability outcomes.

8. Summary of Recommended Integration

Handbook Module	Key Additions from Interview	Educational Focus
1. Sector Developments & Skills Expectations	Interdisciplinary skill sets (science + management + digital tools); importance of AI and coding	Technological literacy & adaptability
2. Self-Assessment & Goal Setting	Evolving definitions of success; passion, expertise, and teamwork as success markers	Self-reflection & personal growth
3. Networking & Interview Strategies	Conferences, LinkedIn, proactive outreach; motivation > skill parity	Employability & social capital
4. Training & Professional Development	Lifelong learning, reflection, mentorship, leaving the comfort zone	Continuous learning culture
5. Career Advancement & Mentorship	Ethical leadership, mentorship, challenging work choices	Integrity & professional maturity