



NEWS RELEASE
31 October 2018

LEAF Open Farm Sunday announces plans to support new host farmers

LEAF has today announced new plans to support host farmers opening their gates for the first time for LEAF Open Farm Sunday.

Following extensive research carried out this summer to better understand the barriers and challenges to farmers hosting a LEAF Open Farm Sunday event, the outcomes have been used to shape a new programme of support for farmers opening their gates to the public in June.

A new information pack, specifically for farmers considering opening for the first time, has been developed. The pack is full of information and ideas to give farmers a better understanding of how they can take part in LEAF Open Farm Sunday, what is involved and answer frequently asked questions – before farmers take the decision to register an event.

Annabel Shackleton, LEAF Open Farm Sunday Manager explains: “The research highlighted an opportunity to help more farmers at the start of the decision-making process. 95% of experienced hosts found the Host Farmer Handbook invaluable and 91% valued the free resources. However, amongst the farmers surveyed who had never taken part, over half said they would consider hosting a LEAF Open Farm Sunday event but the majority (63%) were not aware of the range of tools and free resources available from LEAF. So this new pack bridges that information gap.”

The pack has been developed ready for the launch of LEAF Open Farm Sunday 2019 on **Wednesday 7th November** at the Farm Business Innovation Show at the NEC Birmingham (7th & 8th November). Copies will be available on the LEAF stand **2306** and the LEAF Open Farm Sunday team will be there to answer questions throughout the show.

On Wednesday 7th at 15.30 in Theatre 6, LEAF Open Farm Sunday Manager, Annabel Shackleton and local farmer, Teresa Pickworth, will be sharing their top tips on what makes a great LEAF Open Farm Sunday event.

Other support planned over the coming months to address farmers’ needs includes a regional support network to provide help and advice to host farmers and share top tips and tricks, access to a ticketing service to help farmers control the number of visitors to their event – a key concern for many new host farmers, plus access to a communications toolkit to provide all the skills and know-how to engage with visitors

Ms Shackleton explains:

“Just over 360 farmers opened their gates this year, 26% taking part for the first time. We are keen to support and encourage more farmers to take part in 2019 to really showcase the amazing breadth and diversity of British agriculture.

“Over the summer, we have talked with farmers, listened to their experiences and examined the perceived barriers that may be stopping them from hosting an event. Our new programme of support is being developed in response to their feedback and is aimed at making it as easy as possible for farmers to get involved. The main message that we will be conveying is that *every* event matters. Farmers should not think that events have to attract hundreds of visitors. A farm walk for friends and neighbours is just as powerful in shining a light on what farming delivers.

“Most of all, we want to inspire, motivate and ignite that spark that will encourage more farmers to get involved in this special day – our farming industry’s annual open day.”

The new pack will also be available to download from the LEAF Open Farm Sunday website www.farmsunday.org after 7th November 2018.

If you are a farmer and wish to host a LEAF Open Farm Sunday event then please register at www.farmsunday.org/open-my-farm from the 7th November 2018.

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For further information and images please contact Susannah at Jane Craigie Marketing on susannah@janecraigie.com or 07841 194 897.

To keep up to date on Twitter follow @OpenFarmSunday, @LEAF_Farming and @AnnabelOFS #OFS19

Editors notes:

- LEAF Open Farm Sunday is managed by LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming). LEAF is the leading organisation delivering more sustainable food and farming. It works with farmers, the food industry, scientists and consumers to inspire and enable sustainable farming that is prosperous, enriches the environment and engages local communities. LEAF has organised Open Farm Sunday since it began in 2006. (LEAF is a registered charity no: 1045781)
- The host farmer research was conducted by Jane Craigie Marketing, specialists in agricultural communications www.janecraigie.com
- LEAF Open Farm Sunday offers an opportunity for all farmers to open their gates and welcome people onto their farms to discover the world of farming.
- LEAF Open Farm Sunday 2019 takes place on the 9th June. Farmers wanting to host an event are asked to register at www.farmsunday.org from the 7th November 2018.
- LEAF Open Farm School Days run alongside LEAF Open Farm Sunday. The programme supports hundreds of farms across Britain to host on farm school visits throughout June. They provide thousands of school children with the opportunity to visit a farm to learn more about where their food comes from and how it is produced.
- Sponsors of LEAF Open Farm Sunday include: Arla Foods, Asda, BASF plc, Co-op, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, The National Farmers’ Union, Sainsbury’s, Tesco, Waitrose and the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board.