



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **LEAF Open Farm Sunday is Best Public Access for Public Goods says Chief Executive**

LEAF Open Farm Sunday is the single most effective and supported way for farmers to provide public access, said Caroline Drummond, LEAF's Chief Executive, in an exclusive interview this week (16.01.2019) with Rock and Roll Farmer, Will Evans. Emphasising the benefits of opening the UK's farm gates for 'managed' visits to the countryside – the 'access to all' proposed in the new Agriculture Bill - the organisation's chief also said it is essential for winning over public minds for public money.

*“There is huge disruption in our politics, in our climate and in the marketplace, and our changing relationship with the EU means any funding needs to be strongly defined and certainly demonstrated as value for money. Farming is such an important industry – it holds the solution to improved health and diets, our gut health and our wellbeing; climate change mitigation, and the services we provide beyond food productivity: water, soil and air quality, and of course nature and biodiversity. We are at a pivotal point and we really need to make sure we, as farmers, are demonstrating what we do.”*

Defra Secretary of State, Michael Gove, who regularly references LEAF Open Farm Sunday in his speeches, has proposed funding for farmers who open up the countryside to the public. Ms Drummond, who works with farmers across the globe, knows this is not always practical:

*“Freedom to roam is okay but a farm is a working environment, so managed access to the countryside is so, so important. Having a tangible direct way, for one day a year, is a really key aspect of connecting people to the countryside. Hosting LEAF Open Farm Sunday you have plenty of support and resources from LEAF, as well as our sponsors. It can be tailor-made to suit your situation, as well as the people you want to connect with.”*

More than 12,000 people across the industry are involved every year in delivering farming's annual open day. For the last three years LEAF Open Farm Sunday has attracted over a quarter of a million visitors each year. Eighty-nine percent of visitors in 2018 said that they now had a more positive attitude to farming. Visitors have included former Radio 2 presenter Chris Evans and HRH The Countess of Wessex.

Ms Drummond also discussed how bringing the public on-farm is a powerful opportunity to demonstrate the public goods that farmers deliver which is essential to gain support from the public going forward for a sustainable farming industry.

*“About 88% of the UK is urban so they are becoming more and more distant from how we grow our food, the seasons and nature. We forget the valuable day-to-day activities and the excitement that we take for granted but farming is the ultimate 5-D cinema – it touches every sense and the more senses you touch the more you embed a memory. That creates an understanding, a better love. The recent survey shows the power of those farmers who are doing such a fantastic job and are connecting the story of farming with people’s everyday lives. Often you can forget how it fits into your life as an individual. The more people we get out on a farm before the age of 11, the more you have sown a seed that is about an appreciation and love for nature and for farming.”*

Time, effort and health and safety are barriers often cited by farmers for not hosting their own LEAF Open Farm Sunday event. Many farmers are also concerned that they do not have enough to show the public. Ms Drummond counters this by recommending that farmers start small and that there is plenty of support available from LEAF, industry contacts and farmers who have hosted before:

*“As an organisation we help and support farmers in making sure that they have an event that they feel happy about delivering and one they can manage, and that it’s a great experience - fun, enjoyable and educational – for those attending. People just love the experience of going out on farm. If you plan well, it doesn’t have to be too complicated. Through our ticketing service you can easily manage visitor numbers.”*

Ms Drummond added that showing the range of skills and technology involved in farming is equally valuable in changing the public’s perception of farming and for encouraging young people into the industry.

**LEAF Open Farm Sunday is on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2019. For farmers interested in taking part, download the Information Pack from the website [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org). The website also has case studies and tips for hosting a successful open farm day. Register your event online at [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org) to access the free support and resources from LEAF.**

**Listen to the podcast on [Rock and Roll Farming](#) from Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019.**

**For further information and images please contact Rebecca at Jane Craigie Marketing on [rebecca@janecraigie.com](mailto:rebecca@janecraigie.com) or 07792 467730.**

**Editor’s notes:**

- For further information about LEAF Open Farm Sunday, please contact Annabel Shackleton, LEAF Open Farm Sunday Manager, on 024 7641 3911, 07912 463151 or [annabel.shackleton@leafuk.org](mailto:annabel.shackleton@leafuk.org)
- 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 managed Open Farm Sunday since it began in 2006. (LEAF is a registered [charity no: 1045781](#))
- LEAF Open Farm Sunday offers a chance for all farmers to open their gates and welcome people onto their farms to discover the world of farming. Events can be as simple as a farm walk for a small group to fully fledged events for over 1000 people. LOFS offers advice and support for all types of event.
- LEAF Open Farm Sunday will return on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Registrations are open at [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org)
- 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.