

Consumers unaware of farming's scope and value

- Two thirds of consumers are unaware farmers grow crops for medicine, cosmetics, rope and paper
- Over 90% of consumers are unaware how much UK land is used for agriculture and the value of the sector to the UK economy
- Less than half of those questioned realise that farmers care for and manage the countryside

When it comes to understanding what modern farming delivers, most of us are unaware of just how vital an industry it is and how much it contributes to our day to day lives. A new survey released today reveals that most people do not know that many British crops are used for much more than food, or appreciate the value or scale of farming.

Farmers have a significant role in the production of many commonplace items we use all the time, from fuel to medicine and clothes to paper and much more besides. Two thirds of those questioned though were unaware farmers grow crops for essentials like medicine (65%), cosmetics (67%), rope (62%) or paper (66%).

Although knowledge of more traditional crops such as wheat (88%), potatoes (79%) and barley (74%) was reasonably high, knowledge of the diverse range of crops British farmers grow was not. Just one in ten people (10%) knew oilseed rape could be used in motor fuel, despite this crop covering 675,000 hectares across the UK. Just 4% of people surveyed knew that hemp could be used in printing ink. Only one in ten people identified sea buckthorn as a crop grown on a commercial scale, and just one in 20 knew the same was true for miscanthus. Nearly one in four people (23%) did know though that farmers grow borage, which is used for many dietary supplements and ointments.

Farming is a hugely important part of our economy, yet less than one in 10 people correctly knew that it contributes £10bn (0.6%) to the UK economy each year.* In fact, 15% of people thought it was just £10m or less. Just 6% of people questioned correctly identified that there are approximately 200,000 farms in the UK**, with 64% believing it was fewer than this. Likewise, just one in 20

consumers recognised that close to three quarters of total UK land area is used for agriculture** - the equivalent size of over 17million international rugby pitches.

Less than half of those questioned (47%) realised that farmers care for and manage the countryside, although 55% said it was important we farm sustainably.

More than a third of farmers are using wind, solar and energy crops to produce low-carbon energy* but 90% of consumers were either unaware of this or believed the figure to be lower. Just one in five consumers were aware that farmers can play a part in electricity production. A quarter of UK power comes from renewable sources but again, consumers did not realise this or make a link to agriculture.

This lack of knowledge is not helped by many people's disconnect with farming. The survey, which was carried out by LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), the organisers of next weekend's Open Farm Sunday (5th June), revealed that, on average, those questioned had not visited a working farm in over nine years. A quarter of those questioned (26%) said they had never visited a farm.

Open Farm Sunday events will show consumers the diversity of modern farming and the work farmers do to farm sustainably. Annabel Shackleton, Open Farm Sunday Manager at LEAF said: "People may not realise it but our lives depend on farmers for much more than just nutritious and delicious food. That is why we are calling on as many people as possible to visit a farm on the 5th June for Open Farm Sunday and discover the world of farming for themselves. The majority of people we surveyed said that there is a lot to thank farmers for, but it seems they don't realise just exactly how much."

For more information on Open Farm Sunday and to find participating farms visit www.farmsunday.org. A new video has been produced by LEAF to show consumers how farming impacts their everyday lives: <https://youtu.be/0TZHVcHcv7A>

Five British crops and some of their applications:

- 1. Hemp:** Used in cosmetics, rope, printing ink and the building and automotive industries
- 2. Sea Buckthorn:** Used in cosmetics and nutritional supplements
- 3. Borage:** Used in skin care creams, cosmetics and medicine
- 4. Miscanthus:** Used in heat and power generation
- 5. Oilseed Rape:** Used in motor fuel and lubricants

*NFU

**Defra, Agriculture in the UK

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Editor's note:

- All stats One Poll survey carried out for LEAF's Open Farm Sunday, May 2016. 2,000 UK adult respondents.
- 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 eleventh annual Open Farm Sunday will take place on 5th June 2016. It is the farming industry's annual open day. A day for farmers to open their gates and welcomes people onto their farms to discover the world of farming.
- Alongside Open Farm Sunday, farms across Britain also host [Open Farm School Days](#) which will run throughout June. They will 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 Open Farm Sunday 2016 include: Arla Foods, Asda, BASF plc, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, Jordans, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, National Farmers Union, Sainsbury's, Tesco, The Co-operative Food, Waitrose plus the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, with direct support from the following AHDB sectors: Beef and Lamb, Cereals and Oilseeds, Dairy, Horticulture, and Pork.
- Keep up to date with LEAF's activities via twitter www.twitter.com/LEAF_Farming and www.twitter.com/OpenFarmSunday and our regular blogs at leafmarque.wordpress.com.

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