



## **Farmers call on consumer support in face of Brexit**

New research\* reveals consumers are more concerned about how Brexit will impact the price and choice of food available than they are about the implications for British farmers.

Only one in four people said that they were worried that leaving the European Union might force farmers out of business, whereas 61% were worried about rising food prices and one in three about what EU foods will be available post Brexit. The majority of shoppers also admit they don't always buy British even when it is available.

LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) surveyed shoppers about their Brexit fears, ahead of this year's Open Farm Sunday on 11<sup>th</sup> June. The foods that consumers were most worried would be harder to find post Brexit were continental cheese (21%), soft fruits such as raspberries and strawberries (18%), tomatoes and peppers (15%) and chocolate (14%).

The sustainable farming charity, LEAF, also polled farmers about their concerns\*\*. Nearly six in ten farmers (59%) claim that without the support of consumers the British farming sector would find it hard to compete with food produced in other nations post Brexit, and an overwhelming 85% of farmers believe the public need a better understanding of British agriculture.

The results revealed a lack of understanding about the overall value of farming. UK agriculture contributes nearly £47bn to the economy - more than £7 for every £1 invested\*\*\* - yet only 10% of consumers recognised this significant contribution. This includes money earned through countryside recreation, with farmers managing more than 70% of the country's landscape. In addition, those surveyed believe farmers grow just 37% of the food we eat in Britain, when in fact it is actually 61%.

Four in ten farmers believe people should be willing to pay more for British foods, however nearly one in five consumers (17%) believe that British produce should actually be cheaper than its foreign counterparts. Just half of those questioned said they always buy British meat when available, with fewer always buying British cheese (42%), fresh vegetables and salad



(35%) or fresh fruit (28%). Even those willing to pay more were only willing to spend an extra 11 percent on average for British foods.

Commenting on the findings, LEAF Chief Executive, Caroline Drummond said: “It’s essential that as we work towards leaving the European Union, the public understand and value what farmers do for us all. Farmers play a vital role – not just in producing the food we eat and caring for the countryside but they also contribute to so many aspects of all our daily lives – from medicines and cosmetics, to fuel and even what we wear, the cars we drive and the buildings we live and work in. LEAF Open Farm Sunday is the perfect opportunity to speak with farmers and hear at first-hand about what happens beyond the farm gate – and why they need our support.”

For farmers, their biggest concerns are payments from government decreasing (76%), business costs increasing (60%) and an increase in imports from non-EU nations (51%). Less than one in five (18%) farmers believe Brexit will be good for British farming, with nearly half (47%) feeling they will be worse off afterwards.

Three quarters of farmers (78%) feel they themselves should be doing more to promote the farming industry to the public. LEAF Open Farm Sunday on 11<sup>th</sup> June will see hundreds of them doing just that by opening their gates so people can see modern farming at first hand. Details of farms opening can be found at [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org).

#### References:

\* Online survey of 2,000 UK adults carried out by One Poll on behalf of LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), May 2017

\*\* Online survey of 146 farmers carried out by LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), May 2017

\*\*\* <http://www.nfuonline.com/assets/9341>

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For more information visit [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org). To keep up to date on Twitter follow [@OpenFarmSunday](https://twitter.com/OpenFarmSunday) and [@LEAF\\_Farming](https://twitter.com/LEAF_Farming)

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Editor's note:

- 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](#))
- LEAF's twelfth annual Open Farm Sunday will take place on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2017. It is the farming industry's annual open day. A day for farmers to open their gates and welcome people onto their farms to discover the world of farming.
- Alongside LEAF Open Farm Sunday, farms across Britain also host Open Farm School Days which runs 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 Open Farm Sunday 2017 confirmed to date are: Arla Foods, Asda, BASF plc, Co-op, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, National Farmers Union, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose, The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, with direct support from the Beef and Lamb, Cereals and Oilseeds, Dairy, Horticulture, Pork and Potatoes sectors.
- Keep up to date with LEAF's activities via twitter [www.twitter.com/LEAF\\_Farming](http://www.twitter.com/LEAF_Farming) and [www.twitter.com/OpenFarmSunday](http://www.twitter.com/OpenFarmSunday) and our regular blogs at [leafmarque.wordpress.com](http://leafmarque.wordpress.com).