



## **LEAF's Open Farm Sunday continues to drive forward public engagement with farming and food production**

- **LEAF's Open Farm Sunday once again sees more than 250,000 people visit a farm**
- **One in five visitors had never visited a farm before**
- **One in four farmers hosted an Open Farm Sunday event for the first time**
- **LEAF announces new Public Engagement Conference for 12<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

With public engagement in farming a key focus of LEAF's (Linking Environment And Farming) new five year strategy, the organisation is delighted to confirm that for the second year running, more than a quarter of a million people visited a farm for this year's Open Farm Sunday. The final visitor analysis released today, shows that more than half of the 261,000 visitors had never been to an Open Farm Sunday event before and one in five had never visited a working farm before.

The results of the visitor survey and feedback from participating farmers indicates that LEAF's Open Farm Sunday continues to lead the way in engaging the public with farming and the breadth of goods and services it delivers. The theme this year was *Discover The World of Farming* and it certainly achieved this with 88% of visitors saying they learned something new about farming.

One in four farmers hosted an Open Farm Sunday event for the first time this year, showing that farmers increasingly realise the importance of reaching out to their customers to build trust and understanding in farming. Events ranged from small farm walks, to large open events, with the biggest attracting over 8,000 visitors over the weekend. The average was 683 visitors per event. New resources developed in conjunction with the Biotechnical and Biological Sciences Research Council and John Deere, were used by a quarter of host farmers to highlight the science and technology behind modern farming.

LEAF drove engagement online through its social media channels with 29% of visitors finding out about Open Farm Sunday via Facebook. On the day, #OFS16 was the second largest trending topic on Twitter. Traditional local and national media was also maximised throughout the campaign, securing 1,000 mentions for Open Farm Sunday including on BBC Radio and ITV's morning programmes, and many farmers were interviewed on local radio stations.

Once again, there was fantastic cross industry support for farming's national open day, especially from Open Farm Sunday's sponsors: Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, Arla Foods,



Asda, BASF plc, the Co-op, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, Jordans, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, National Farmers Union, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose. On the day over 8000 people helped at events, ranging from sponsors to suppliers and scientists to Young Farmers.

Caroline Drummond, LEAF Chief Executive said: "Open Farm Sunday is an excellent example of how, working together, we can help people understand what farming delivers – from the food we eat, to the clothes we wear and the medicines we need, as well as the vital work farmers do to enhance the environment. As the agricultural industry faces a new era following the EU Referendum, this knowledge is a critical step in helping us deliver a more sustainable future for everyone and secure the funding and support needed. On behalf of LEAF, a huge thank you to the farmers who opened their gates, our sponsors and to everyone that helped make Open Farm Sunday 2016 the resounding success that it was.

As LEAF celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and embarks on its new five-year strategy, the focus on public engagement continues with strengthening the reach of Open Farm Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and beyond, as well as broadening the breadth and scope of LEAF's public engagement activities. On Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September, LEAF is holding its first Public Engagement Conference at The Auditorium, Sainsbury's, in London, titled *How can we make a step change in public engagement in food and farming?* For more information and to book your free place visit:

[http://www.leafuk.org/leaf/home/leaf25/public\\_engagement\\_conference.eb](http://www.leafuk.org/leaf/home/leaf25/public_engagement_conference.eb)

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**Editor's note:**

- 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 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 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 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 2016 were: Arla Foods, Asda, BASF plc, Co-op, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, Jordans, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, National Farmers Union, Sainsbury's, Tesco, 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](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).

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