LEAF OPEN FARM SUNDAY 2017

Discover the World of Farming

MEDIA BRIEFING NOTE FOR FARMERS

This document provides information about LEAF Open Farm Sunday 2017, including key facts and information that can be used for any media interviews.

This year’s theme for Open Farm Sunday is:

**Discover the World of Farming.**

**Overview:**

LEAF Open Farm Sunday (LOFS) is firmly established as the farming industry’s annual open day. Now in its twelfth year, LOFS has welcomed more than 1.8 million visitors to farms since it started in 2006.

Managed by LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), with support from leading food and farming organisations, the event provides an opportunity for the public to meet farmers and build their knowledge and trust in British farming and food. The evidence shows that Open Farm Sunday is having a really positive impact on raising awareness of farming amongst the general public: 88% of visitors reported learning something new during their visit.  In our follow-up survey, 91% of visitors said it had made them appreciate more the work farmers do; 89% said they feel more connected with the farmers who produce our food; 73% said they now actively look for British produce to buy.

In 2017, our messages to the public are to **discover the world of farming on LEAF Open Farm Sunday and find out how farming affects us all every day**.

British farming is facing significant challenges over the coming months. We know that there are lots of changes ahead but what those changes will be, is not yet clear. So now, more than ever, it is vital that British farmers demonstrate all that they deliver for the public good, so that the public understand and value the work farmers do. Farmers are responsible for so much - food, energy, medicines, clothing and much, much more, as well as being stewards for the environment; they are also responsible for protecting our valuable natural resources. LEAF Open Farm Sunday is the ideal opportunity to explain to people what you do – and why. And importantly how that matters to them! More information can be found at [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org)

LEAF is the leading organisation delivering sustainable food and farming. LEAF 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. There is more information about LEAF later on in this document and at [www.leafuk.org](http://www.leafuk.org).

**Be prepared - POSSIBLE QUESTIONS:**

* **Who is LEAF?** *LEAF is a registered charity which is the leading organisation promoting sustainable food and farming. They help farmers to use the best of modern science and technology with traditional methods to farm productively with care for the environment.*
* **What is LEAF Open Farm Sunday?**  *LEAF Open Farm Sunday is the farming industry’s annual open day.*
* **What can people see on LEAF Open Farm Sunday?** *There will be around 400 events taking place across the country. Just as each farm is unique, each Open Farm Sunday event is different.*
* **Why should people visit a farm?** *Visiting a farm is a great way to learn more about how your food is produced, meet the farmers who produce it and gain a better understanding of the vital role farmers play in managing the countryside and our precious natural resources.*

**The following questions may also be asked – if so please answer as appropriate for your farm and business:**

* **What is your passion?**
* **What do you do on a typical day?**
* **How can people discover the world of farming?**
* **How can visitors show their support for British farming?**
* **How do you ensure you are farming sustainably?**
* **Why is sustainable farming important?**
* **What do LEAF farmers do for the environment – what practices do you implement on your farm?**
* **Why did you become a member of LEAF? What are the benefits to the public buying LEAF Marque produce?**

**Brexit:**

Given the current political situation it is also possible you may be asked about Brexit and its impact on British farmers and farming. LEAF respects that you will have your own personal view on this, and / or the business that employs you. It is therefore up to you to decide how to respond. If you do not want to discuss Brexit and its implications with media then you can advise the journalist that this isn’t a topic you wish to discuss. If you work for a business or organisation we recommend that you seek their advice before responding.

Below is the response LEAF staff members will be using to respond to questions around Brexit:

***British farming is facing significant challenges over the coming months. We are in a period of great uncertainty – we know that there are lots of changes ahead but what those changes will be, is not yet clear. So now, more than ever, it is vital that British farmers demonstrate all that they deliver for the public good so that the public understand and value the work farmers do. Farmers are responsible for so much - food, energy, medicines, clothing and much, much more, as well as being stewards for the environment; they are also responsible for protecting our valuable natural resources.***

***LEAF Open Farm Sunday is the ideal opportunity to explain to people what you do – and why. And importantly how that matters to them!***

A letter issued by Caroline Drummond, LEAF Chief Executive, to the food and farming industry can be found in the appendix to this document.

**General Media Interview Guidelines:**

**When speaking to media here is some helpful advice:**

* **Take your time** – do not allow the interviewer to rush you.
* **Don’t feel you have to answer a question** – if you aren’t sure of the answer say you will find out and let them know.
* **Prepare bulletpoint answers to potential questions** – If you have any queries, contact the LEAF Press Office at Ceres: David, Emma or Jennifer on 01189 475956.
* **Don’t stray from the agreed topic** – keep focused on Open Farm Sunday! If the interviewer asks for comment on other issues, such as the badger cull, try and steer it back to OFS and say that ‘farmers have a very varied job and have to face a number of challenges. Visiting a farm on OFS is a great opportunity to hear first-hand from farmers.
* **Nothing is ‘off record‘** - when you are speaking to a journalist, do not say anything that you are not expecting to end up in print, on film, radio or TV.
* **Keep your answers short and simple**
* **Silence is golden** – avoid the temptation to keep talking to fill a gap. Once you have given an answer wait for the journalist to follow it up.

**Key messages for Open Farm Sunday 2017**

**Farmers:**

The following are the key messages we would like to communicate to other farmers to encourage them to open for Open Farm Sunday:

* Open your gates on LEAF Open Farm Sunday and show people why farmers are proud of what they deliver
* LEAF Open Farm Sunday is the farming industry’s annual open day and a great opportunity to tell people what farmers do (the crops you grow and food you produce; the land and natural resources you manage; your contribution to the local community and the contribution the industry makes to the UK economy. At a time when we are facing many uncertainties, it is vital that farmers engage with the public - your customers. themany ways you contribute to people’s everyday lives)
* LEAF Open Farm Sunday has a real positive impact in helping the public understand the value of British farming and all that it delivers
* It makes good business sense to open your gate on the 11th June
* On Open Farm Sunday you can explain how you care for our valuable natural resources like water, soil and energy
* LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is the leading organisation delivering more sustainable food and farming

**The Public:**

The following are the key messages we would like to communicate to visitors for Open Farm Sunday events:

* **Discover the World of Farming** on LEAF Open Farm Sunday (Call to action)
* LEAF Open Farm Sunday, is a fun and informative day out for the whole family
* Farming is diverse and vital to all our futures
* Famers produce food and fuel, as well as products for construction, clothing, medicine and packaging
* LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is the leading organisation delivering more sustainable food and farming
* Visit a farm on LEAF Open Farm Sunday and discover the world of farming.

**Where can people go to find out more?**

* Visit [**www.farmsunday.org**](http://www.farmsunday.org) to find your nearest participating farm and find out more about the work farmers do.
* You can also find Open Farm Sunday on Facebook [www.facebook.com/LEAFOpenFarmSunday](http://www.facebook.com/LEAFOpenFarmSunday) and Twitter [www.twitter.com/OpenFarmSunday](http://www.twitter.com/OpenFarmSunday)

**More on Sustainable Farming and why it matters:**

**How do farmers farm sustainably?**

* **Farmers are bright sparks...** they save energy and keep emissions low. Many farmers help provide alternative fuel sources by growing crops that can be used in heat and electricity generation or by using their land for wind or solar farms.
* **Farmers hedge their (and our) futures...** providing habitats and food for wildlife through careful management of hedges, field margins, ponds and woodland. Farmers look after more than 5 million kilometres of hedges on farms across England and Wales – the equivalent of 500 million double decker buses parked end to end!
* **Farmers have got worms (and are proud of it!)...** millions of them in fact, helping to make rich fertile soil for the best crops. An average field has a network of earthworm burrows equivalent to the entire network of UK roads – that’s 245,000 miles! Many farmers consider soil to be their greatest asset so it is vital that they look after it.
* **Farmers have knowledge on tap...** the world’s water resources can no longer be taken for granted. Farmers use water wisely, monitoring and measuring change, to protect our streams and rivers and conserve precious natural capital. In the past 15 years, more than 50,000 new ponds have also been created on farms in England alone, providing an important habitat and drinking source for a host of wildlife, enhancing the biodiversity of the land. Farmers also store water in reservoirs they build on their farms which provide year round habitats for some animals and birds.
* **Farmers care…**farmers join organisations like LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) to ensure they are following best practice in sustainable farming.

**How can people find out more about sustainable farming?**

* **A visit to a farm is a great place to start and farmers are a friendly bunch...** they love to support their local community and welcome visitors, especially on LEAF Open Farm Sunday – the farming industry’s annual open day. This year Open Farm Sunday takes place on the 11th June 2017, so circle the date in your diary, visit [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org) to find your local open farm, pull on your wellies and get set to discover the world of sustainable farming!

**Farming and the community:**

* Many farmers open their farms to visits from the public, including to schools and organised groups

**Health and Safety:**

LEAF works closely with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to ensure the information and support we are providing to host farmers are in line with HSE guidelines.

The industry Code of Practice regarding preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at events on farms has been produced with input from LEAF, along with other rural and farm attraction organisations. All information regarding Health and Safety is available on our website [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org/).

If you receive any questions on Health and Safety please refer the journalist to Annabel Shackleton at LEAF on 024 7641 3911 or the Open Farm Sunday Press Office on  
01189 475 956.

**LEAF Open Farm Sunday 2017 Principal Sponsors**

Thanks to the national sponsorship of Open Farm Sunday there is no cost to farmers to register their event and host farmers can access a range of free resources and support. Our 2017 Principal Sponsors are: AHDB (Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, with direct support from the Beef and Lamb, Cereals and Oilseeds, Dairy, Horticulture, Pork and Potatoes sectors), Arla Foods, Asda, BASF plc, Co-op, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, National Farmers Union, Sainsbury’s, Tesco and Waitrose.

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**CONTACT DETAILS:**

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**Ceres – LEAF Open Farm Sunday Press Office:** [**openfarmsunday@ceres-pr.co.uk**](mailto:openfarmsunday@ceres-pr.co.uk)

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**Appendix: Chief Executive Caroline Drummond MBE’s open letter encouraging farmers to open for LEAF Open Farm Sunday 2017**



February 2017

Sir,

**Help build public trust in farming on 11th June 2017**

As we prepare to leave the European Union, it is clear that the farming sector will be greatly impacted by this change. Smart, practical and reasoned approaches will be vital as we draw up a new UK Food, Farming and Environment Policy. Equally important is the support of those that need farming most - the public.

The future viability of UK farming relies on the public trusting and respecting what farming delivers. For this to happen people need to feel truly engaged with how their food is produced and the countryside around them. Strong public support will lead to market demand, fairer prices and favourable government policy.  Which is why, never before has it been so important to showcase farming’s vital role in growing our food, contributing to the economy, managing the countryside and enhancing our natural resources.

LEAF's Open Farm Sunday, held this year on the 11th June, enables us, as an industry, to come together to make our case and provides a highly effective way of engaging with the public. Over a quarter of a million people annually now visit a farm on what is recognised as the industry's open day.  The day helps visitors understand the breadth, skills and diversity of the farming industry and how it impacts on all our lives.  Research shows it is having a huge impact on changing people’s perceptions of our industry.

I am urging all farmers to take part this year either by staging their own event or helping a neighbour. Open Farm Sunday is for everyone. Size is not important, whilst some farmers hold large open days, many events are a small private farm walk for an invited audience.  Large or small, EVERY event matters.

Open Farm Sunday is our chance to showcase the pride we all feel in *our* farming industry and all that it delivers.  We cannot be complacent.  Please get involved. For more information and to register an event visit [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org).



**Caroline Drummond MBE**

**Chief Executive LEAF**