



PRESS RELEASE

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NEW poll shows now is the time for farmers to open their gates to the public

In preparation for the 15th anniversary of its Open Farm Sunday event, Linking Environment And Farming (LEAF) undertook research to determine how British people feel about visiting our nation's farms.

The online research, conducted in October 2019, revealed 91% of respondents felt it is more important than ever for farmers to open their farms to the public. The poll attracted 522 responses from both consumers and industry with comments including:

- “As a person brought up on a council estate in a city, it wasn't until I moved away to rural settings did I appreciate our countryside.” (a consumer)
- “It is very important for day-to-day engagement between farmers and public.” (a consumer).
- “From all the thousands of visitors over the last 20 years, the most common comment is an admiration of how complex and scientific agriculture / land management is and how much people appreciate what we do.” (a farmer)

Commenting on the findings, Annabel Shackleton, LEAF Open Farm Sunday Manager said: “The poll results support the findings from our 2019 visitor impact survey which found 93% of consumers feel more connected to the farmers who produce their food after visiting a farm on LEAF Open Farm Sunday, an increase of 7% from 2018.

She added: “The general public are increasingly more curious and interested in how their food is grown and what farmers are doing to protect and enhance the countryside. By offering them the opportunity to visit a farm, we can dispel myths and provide consumers with the confidence and reasons to buy British produce.”

The research also found 97% of visitors were more appreciative of the work farmers do (92% in 2018) with 92% reporting they have a better understanding of the term “sustainably produced food.”

One visitor commented, “As parents and adults we need to be re-educated before it's too late and yet another generation grows up not knowing how to respect and be grateful for what we have around us.”

Another added “LEAF Open Farm Sunday made me more aware of farming issues and how they affect the farmers' livelihoods.”

With registration now open for 2020, LEAF Open Farm Sunday is calling for farmers to register to take part on Sunday 7th June.

“This year over a quarter of a million visitors went out on farm to see for themselves the fantastic work farmers do as the custodians of our land and producers of safe nutritious food. With visitors citing ‘stories about the farm’, ‘animal welfare’ and ‘sustainable farming’ as key areas of interest, LEAF Open Farm Sunday events are an extremely powerful marketing opportunity for the agricultural industry. We are very

grateful to all those who take part and hope to encourage more to get involved in 2020,” Mrs Shackleton added.

All farmers can take part (you do not need to be a LEAF member) and you can host an event of any size from 20 people to several hundred. Once registered you can access a free ticketing system to help manage visitor numbers along with a range of free resources and guidance from a team of LEAF Open Farm Sunday co-ordinators.

A speak-out tool kit is available for all sectors including arable, horticulture, sheep, beef and dairy offering some top tips on how to engage with visitors on farm.

All farmers considering hosting an event are encouraged to take a look at the LEAF Open Farm Sunday Information Pack available to download from www.farmsunday.org or to receive a copy by post, email your name and address to openfarmsunday@leafuk.org.

To register an event visit www.farmsunday.org. A handbook will be sent to all farmers following registration which takes farmers through the key steps of organising and hosting an event.

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Editor's notes:

- For further LEAF OFS survey figures, please contact Annabel Shackleton on 024 7641 3911, 07912 463151 or 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 organised 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 7th June 2020. Registrations are open at 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.

